

# Uncovering Loopholes in Interagency Collaboration on Violence Against Women and Children: Toward a Unified Response Plan

Eugenio O. Dela Rosa Jr.<sup>1</sup>

1 – Wesleyan University-Philippines, Cabanatuan City

Publication Date: July 26, 2025

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.16533840

## Abstract

This investigation examines the deficiencies in interagency collaboration among the Philippine National Police (PNP), the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), and barangay units in the management of VAWC cases. The research surveyed 268 frontline personnel directly involved in VAWC casework, employing a quantitative-descriptive design with corroborating qualitative data. The results of this study suggest that all three agencies share common systemic deficiencies, including inefficient communication mechanisms, disjointed referral systems, and inadequate training. The absence of a cohesive operational framework often results in procedural inconsistencies and delays in service delivery, despite each agency fulfilling its mandated responsibilities. The quantitative results indicate that there are no statistically significant differences in the way loopholes are experienced, and a shared perception of collaboration-related

deficiencies exists among agencies. Notably, the frequency of encountered vulnerabilities is inversely proportional to the perceived strength of the partnership. These findings suggest that implementing more responsive and effective interventions for VAWC cases may be facilitated by enhancing interagency coordination. The study concludes with a suggestion for a unified interagency plan that prioritizes institutional reforms, centralized data systems, and capacity-building initiatives to address the current operational gaps. In order to safeguard the rights and well-being of women and children who have been affected by violence, as well as to improve service efficacy, it is suggested to improve interagency collaboration amongst. This research provides empirical evidence to support policy enhancement initiatives which can aim of creating a more comprehensive and survivor-centered response system.

**Keywords:** *Violence Against Women and Children, Interagency Collaboration, Systemic Loopholes, Public Service Coordination, Institutional Reform*

## INTRODUCTION

In the Philippines, violence against women and children (VAWC) remains a substantial public health and human rights issue (Puno-Balagosa et al., 2025). The prevalence of abuse remains alarmingly high, despite the implementation of progressive legislation such as Republic Act No. 9262 and the Anti-Violence Against Women and Their Children Act of 2004. The government entities, such as the Philippine National Police (PNP) and the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), and the barangay units are responsible for imposing protective actions and legal remedies (PNP 2008; Respicio, 2024; Turno et al., 2023). But the efficient delivery of services involves response arrangements that are multi-sectoral and coordinated, thus providing the victims with appropriate and timely interventions, aside from legislative interventions (Webadmin 2010; Sutarsa et al., 2024).

Despite the existence of interagency cooperative agreements which is specially in the partnerships, marred by persistent issues that arise in the field (Williams 2013). The objectives of existing policies are sabotaged by procedural inconsistencies, unclear mandates, bureaucratic red tape, and fragmented case management, as evidenced by agency reports and anecdotal evidence (Setyasih, 2023). Victims are sometimes caught in the interagency loopholes, which lead to denial of necessary services or re-traumatization of the victim. Previous studies of interventions for violence against women and children (VAWC) acknowledged the need for concerted activities, but there is limited empirical research on the operational "loopholes" particular to where partnerships fail or do not perform their intended role (Hale et al., 2024).

That critical gap is addressed in this investigation. It examines the procedural and systemic deficiencies in the partnership between the PNP, DSWD, and the Barangay in the context of VAWC cases. In particular, it aims to elucidate the nature and frequency of vulnerabilities encountered during coordination and to ascertain whether these issues vary across agencies. It is very important in instance to comprehend these disparities in order to promote victim-centered responses and improve institutional accountability (Sumiati et al., 2023).

The study is to determine if there is a statistically significant relationship between the rate of procedural error and the quality of interagency collaboration. It is to determine if the quality of the collaboration could be realistically improved by isolating some areas of improvement, for instance, communication, role definition, or sharing of resources. It also examines the attitude of front-line workers from all the agencies with a guarantee that those directly involved in case management have a chance to contribute their opinions.

The aim of this study is to recommend an integrated, evidence-based interagency program that would promote interagency coordination between the PNP, DSWD, and barangays in addressing VAWC. The research contributes to the formulation of realistic recommendations that enhance a unifying and responsive model for victim protection and justice by identifying and examining existing vulnerabilities in the present system.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Research Design

This study employed a quantitative-descriptive research design to assess and describe the loopholes encountered in the interagency collaboration among the Philippine National Police (PNP), the Department

of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), and Barangay officials in handling cases of violence against women and children (VAWC). The quantitative design enabled the collection of measurable data on the perceptions and experiences of frontline personnel across the three agencies, while the descriptive approach allowed for the examination of prevailing patterns and gaps in interagency practices. The study also incorporated limited qualitative insights gathered through open-ended responses included in the survey instrument to contextualize and enrich the interpretation of quantitative findings. This mixed-mode approach ensured a more nuanced understanding of the structural and procedural weaknesses encountered in VAWC interventions.

### **Respondents and Sampling Procedure**

The study involved a purposive sample of 268 respondents who were directly involved in VAWC case management in selected municipalities. Inclusion criteria required that participants had at least one year of experience handling or coordinating VAWC-related interventions within their respective agencies. Respondents were selected based on their availability and relevance to the research context, ensuring that insights came from personnel who were actively engaged in implementation. Confidentiality and informed consent were ensured prior to the administration of the instrument, and ethical clearance was secured from the institutional review board.

### **Research Instrument**

A structured questionnaire was developed and validated to gather data on the respondents' experiences and perceptions of procedural loopholes in the interagency handling of VAWC cases which consist of their demographic profile, assessment of interagency partnership performance, and identification of experienced loopholes. Items in the performance and loopholes sections used a 4-point Likert scale. Internal consistency was tested using Cronbach's Alpha, yielding a reliability coefficient of 0.95, indicating high reliability. The instrument also included two open-ended questions to solicit qualitative feedback on specific cases or institutional challenges encountered during interagency operations.

### **Data Gathering Procedure**

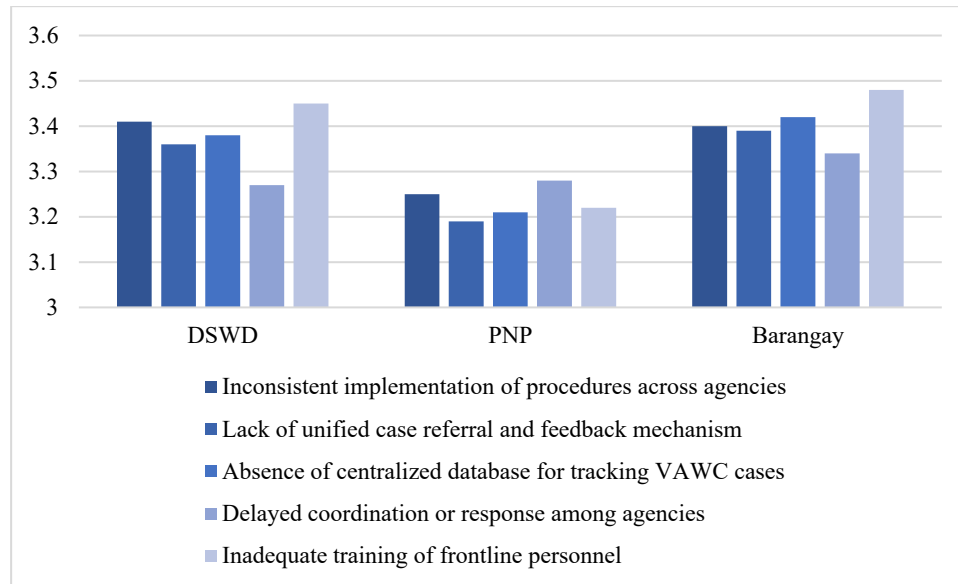
Coordination letters were sent to local agency offices to secure approval and respondent participation. Once consent was obtained, researchers administered the printed questionnaires in person to ensure clarity of instructions and completeness of responses. Data collection was conducted over a period of four weeks, during which the researchers visited the assigned agencies in rotation. Responses were encoded into a central database and subjected to data cleaning procedures, including checking for outliers and incomplete entries. Only fully accomplished surveys were included in the final analysis.

### **Data Analysis**

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Mean and standard deviation were computed to describe the central tendencies of the respondents' assessments. One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to determine whether there were significant differences in the assessment of partnership performance and perceived loopholes among the three agencies. A correlation analysis, specifically Pearson's  $r$ , was conducted to examine the relationship between partnership performance ratings and the frequency or severity of experienced loopholes. All statistical analyses were performed using SPSS version 25, with significance levels set at  $p < 0.05$ .

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Loopholes in the Partnership of PNP, DSWD, and Barangay in Handling VAWC



**Figure 1. Loopholes in Interagency Partnership on VAWC Case Handling**

The mean ratings of the three agencies—DSWD, PNP, and Barangay—on the gaps revealed in the interagency coordination in addressing violence against women and children (VAWC) are presented in Figure 1. The three agencies all rated a series of gaps within the "Agree" scale, indicating their agreement with the existence of systemic barriers in coordination and case management. The lack of adequate training of frontline officers, most especially at the community level, was the most frequently mentioned issue among DSWD ( $M = 3.45$ ) and Barangay personnel ( $M = 3.48$ ). This underscores the imperative for capacity-building interventions, in particular for Barangay VAWC desk officers, who are oftentimes the first point of contact for cases of abuse (Smith et al., 2020; Wahyuli et al., 2024).

The three agencies all identified deficiencies in the case referral and feedback protocols, which were rated between 3.19 and 3.39. This suggests that there is a tendency to produce delays or discontinuities in service delivery, as the flow of communication among counterparties is disrupted. The absence of a centralized tracking database for Violence Against Women and Children (VAWC) was identified as a primary concern in the result of the study, suggesting that there are obstacles to the ongoing monitoring of legal processes and victim assistance services. The combined weighted means—Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) (3.41), Philippine National Police (PNP) (3.25), and Barangay (3.40)—indicate a shared apprehension regarding these deficiencies, irrespective of the agency's involvement in the intervention system.

## Relationship Between Partnership Strength and Loopholes Experienced

**Table 1.** Comparison of Partnership Assessment and Loopholes Experienced among Agencies

Agency	Mean Partnership Rating	Mean Loophole Rating	Observed Relationship
DSWD	3.32	3.41	Inverse: higher partnership, lower loopholes
PNP	3.26	3.25	Matched perception
Barangay	3.48	3.40	High on both (training gap noted)
<b>ANOVA Result</b>	–	<b>F = 2.003; p &gt; 0.05</b>	<b>No significant difference</b>

As shown in Table 1,  $F = 2.003$ ;  $p > 0.05$ , which suggests that there is no statistically significant difference in the manner in which PNP, DSWD, and Barangay respondents evaluated the loopholes they encountered. This discovery suggests that the perceived deficiencies in interagency collaboration are system-wide and not limited to any specific agency. It appears that all actors concerned encounter comparable obstacles in the areas of procedural integration, implementation, and communication (Keeble et al., 2009).

This further corroborates the notion that the absence of synchronized and streamlined processes continues to impede the effective resolution of VAWC cases, despite the fact that each agency fulfills its mandate (Salem et al., 2024). The empirical foundation for pursuing institutional reforms is also provided by the consensus on the existence of loopholes across sectors.

## Proposed Interagency Plan Based on Findings

The findings revealed that all three agencies—PNP, DSWD, and Barangay—identified common loopholes, such as the lack of unified procedures and poor follow-through on referrals. These systemic weaknesses were consistently observed regardless of agency, suggesting the urgent need for a structured, institutional response. Therefore, a unified interagency plan is proposed to address these gaps and to improve the coordination and effectiveness of VAWC case handling across sectors.

## CONCLUSION

This research identifies the ongoing systemic shortcomings in interagency coordination among the Philippine National Police (PNP), the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), and barangay units in addressing cases of Violence Against Women and Children (VAWC). The research shows that, although there are clearly defined procedures, there are significant gaps—such as insufficient training, inefficient referrals, and poor communication—among agencies. The problems are not agency-specific but systemic in nature, as they reflect a shared organizational issue in operational integration and uniformity. On the other hand, partnership strength is inversely correlated with gap severity, which implies that more robust collaborative systems are able to effectively counter these procedural shortcomings. To counter these

weaknesses, it is necessary to transition from fragmented interventions to an integrated, institutionalized system that develops frontline personnel and prioritizes outcomes for victims.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the results, it is recommended that a standardized and legally enforceable interagency protocol be established and implemented to optimize VAWC case management across the PNP, DSWD, and barangay units. This encompasses the implementation of real-time referral and feedback systems, joint capacity-building programs, and a centralized case-tracking database. Furthermore, to ensure accountability and consistency, cross-agency coordination mechanisms, such as interagency case conferences or joint task forces, should be mandated and overseen. The institutionalization of participatory evaluations and regular performance audits that involve frontline implementers should also be included in policy reforms. The objective of these recommendations is to improve the systemic responsiveness of VAWC interventions and promote a more survivor-centered, timely, and cohesive approach.

## REFERENCES

- Hale, H., Bracewell, K., Bellussi, L., Jenkins, R., Alexander, J., Devaney, J., & Callaghan, J. E. M. (2024). The Child Protection Response to Domestic Violence and Abuse: a Scoping Review of Interagency Interventions, Models and Collaboration. *Journal of Family Violence*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10896-024-00681-4>
- Keeble, L., Loader, B. D., & Hardey, M. (2009). Partnership in assessment? A case study of integrated information sharing. 42–60. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203886533-10>
- Philippine National Police (2008). National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women United Nations Population Fund. Investigation and Police Services. pdf.
- Puno-Balagosa, A., Bhatia, A., Jeong, J., & Kim, R. (2025). Co-occurrence of maternal intimate partner violence and violent discipline and its associations with child morbidity in the Philippines. *Child abuse & neglect*, 163, 107363. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2025.107363>
- Respicio, H. (2024, December 22). LEGAL REMEDIES FOR PROTECTING a CHILD IN CASES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: a COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE FOR THE FILIPINO FAMILY. RESPICIO & CO. <https://www.respicio.ph/dear-attorney/legal-remedies-for-protecting-a-child-in-cases-of-domestic-violence-a-comprehensive-guide-for-the-filipino-family>
- Salem, C., Sabijon, D. F., Sayson, Y. C., Fernández Canedo, M. I., Oville, J. M., & Sagayno, R. C. (2024). Violence Against Women and their Children (VAWC) Cases During Pandemic: Experiences of Women and Children Protection Desk (WCPD) Officers in Cebu City. *International Journal of Law and Politics Studies*, 6(3), 66–77. <https://doi.org/10.32996/ijlps.2024.6.3.6>
- Setyasih, E. T. (2023). Creating an Effective Bureaucracy by Reducing Bureaucratic Pathology in Local Governments. *Influence*, 5(1), 137–143. <https://doi.org/10.54783/influencejournal.v5i1.112>



- Smith, S. A., Wickliffe, J., Rivera-Newberry, I., Redmond, M. L., Kelly, P. J., & Ramaswamy, M. (2020). A Systematic Evaluation of Barriers and Facilitators to the Provision of Services for Justice-Involved Women. *Journal of Community Health*, 45(6), 1252–1258. <https://doi.org/10.1007/S10900-020-00894-W>
- Sumiati, E., Manurung, E. M., & Indraswari, I. G. A. D. (2023). Women and Children's Victims of Violence Case Management During COVID-19 Pandemic. The Qualitative Report. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2023.5902>
- Sutarsa, I. N., Campbell, L., Ariawan, I. M. D., Kasim, R., Marten, R., Rajan, D., & Hall Dykgraaf, S. (2024). Multisectoral interventions and health system performance: a systematic review. *Bulletin of the World Health Organization*, 102(7), 521–532F. <https://doi.org/10.2471/BLT.23.291246>
- Turno, C. S., Bildo, J. M., Lahiban, J. J. P., Perino, L. I., & Romero, P. R. T. (2023). Performance of Barangay Police security officers: Developing interventions. *Proceedings University of Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta Undergraduate Conference*, 3(1), 601–608. <https://doi.org/10.18196/umygrace.v3i1.622>
- Wahyuli, R. A., Haning, M. T., & Lambali, S. (2024). Capacity Building Challenges in Human Resource Development in Village Community Empowerment Organizations. *International Journal of Religion*. <https://doi.org/10.61707/eyn9c979>
- Webadmin. (2010, November 11). Essential elements of integrated responses. ALRC. <https://www.alrc.gov.au/publication/family-violence-a-national-legal-response-alrc-report-114/29-integrated-responses-3/essential-elements-of-integrated-responses/>
- Williams C.M. (2013). Revisiting Persistent Engagement and Interagency Collaboration. *Military Review*. pdf.