



SAFEKEEPING HOURS FOR MINORS (CITY ORDINANCE NO. 18, S. 2017) AND JUVENILE CRIME RATES IN HIGHLY URBANIZED AREA: BASIS FOR POLICY REVISITING

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Abstract

In many highly urbanized areas of the Philippines, the safety and well-being of minors have become an increasing concern as cases of juvenile involvement in risky behaviors continue to rise. To address this, local governments have introduced safekeeping hours (Curfew ordinances) to protect children from potential harm during late hours. These initiatives aim not only to maintain peace and order but also to guide the youth toward responsible behavior and community awareness. Despite these ordinances, challenges remain in implementation, monitoring, and community compliance. It is therefore important to understand how these safekeeping hours are enforced and how they affect minors, families, and the broader community in highly urbanized settings such as General Santos City. This study revisits the implementation and impact of the safekeeping hours policy for minors in General Santos City, a measure designed to ensure the safety and welfare of children by restricting their presence in public spaces during designated hours. The policy, which aligns with curfew regulations under the Juvenile Justice Welfare Act (Republic Act 9344), aims to reduce risks, including exposure to criminal activity, exploitation, and unsafe environments. The research examines the policy's relevance, effectiveness, and alignment with the current socio-economic and cultural landscape of General Santos City. It explores the perspectives of various stakeholders, including government agencies, law enforcement, non-governmental organizations, parents, and minors, to evaluate its implementation. It investigated the policy's impact on reducing juvenile delinquency and enhancing child protection while addressing concerns such as potential human rights violations and the stigmatization of street children. Recommendations include revising the policy to emphasize a more child-centered approach, integrating community-based interventions such as education and psychosocial support, and strengthening partnerships with local stakeholders. This policy review aims to ensure that safekeeping measures are inclusive, equitable, and responsive to the rights and needs of minors, while fostering safer, more supportive environments in General Santos City.

Keywords: *Safekeeping Hours, Curfew Ordinance, Minors, Juvenile Delinquency, Child Protection, Policy Revisiting, Juvenile Justice Welfare Act, Republic Act 9344, Highly Urbanized Area, General Santos City, Policy Implementation, Community Compliance, Child Welfare, Youth Protection, Psychosocial Support, Community-Based Intervention, Human Rights, Street Children, Law Enforcement, Child-Centered Approach.*

1. Introduction

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Globally, the security and well-being of children in public places have increasingly become a concern following the increase in child exploitation, violence, and engagement in illegal activities. Various governments have implemented curfews or safe hours to shield children from danger, but the efficacy of such interventions has been widely contested.

Street children and vulnerable youth in urban areas are at risk and exposed to threats like human trafficking, drug abuse, and gang affiliation late at night. They lack guidance, adequate shelter, and legal protection, exposing them to even greater threats. Government and child protection organizations find it difficult to reconcile the protection of the children with upholding their rights without criminalizing them or overly limiting their liberties.

Safekeeping hours laws are commonly used in the U.S. to address juvenile crime. He also found that cities enforcing safekeeping hour laws observed significant declines in property crimes and loitering offenses committed by minors (Siegel & Welsh, 2017).

Safekeeping hours for minors have recently resurfaced as a popular policy option for policymakers looking to reduce juvenile victimization and delinquency. Safekeeping, which has been in place on and off since the turn of the century, tends to get more attention when there is a perceived need for more stringent social control measures.

Safekeeping hours, traditionally the responsibility of local governments, are common in cities and towns across the United States, according to the United States Conference of Mayors. In a December 1995 survey of 1,000 cities with populations greater than 30,000, the conference discovered that 70% (270) of the 387 cities polled have a curfew ordinance in place. Safekeeping laws vary by location, timeframe, and sanctions. Most limit minors to their homes or property between 11 p.m. and 6 a.m., with some jurisdictions making exceptions for weekend nights or the summer months. However, many safekeeping ordinances exempt youth from being required to attend or leave a school, religious, or civic event. Youth traveling from employment or responding to emergencies are frequently exempt from curfews. Several ordinances grant unrestricted mobility to married youth, provided they are accompanied by an adult or traveling with parental permission (Juvenile Justice Reform Initiative In The States, 1994-1996).

Safekeeping hours have also been enforced by legislative and local ordinances in the Philippines throughout previous administrations to promote anti-violence, anti-crime, and anti-hazard programs. Offering a secure and healthy atmosphere to Filipinos who are unaware of the negative consequences of transitioning from a more progressive generation is, in fact, a great concept. Adults are not the only ones who are prone to crimes—children are as well. Curfews have been implemented around the nation in response to many reports of killings involving youngsters. Another indicator of it is the regular Filipino behaviors that disrupt the neighborhood, including drinking or partying outside and engaging in gang warfare with other fraternities or kids on the streets (Ruffle & Reynolds, 1999).

The economic upswing in General Santos City has not only attracted migrants from neighboring provinces, contributing to its population growth, but has also brought a rise in social issues and challenges. One of the challenges General Santos City deals with is the prevalence of cases of Children at Risk (CAR) and Children in Conflict with the Law (CICL). General Santos City imposed safekeeping hours to address these cases, which have long been observed in many places. These rules restrict what people can do, and breaking them carries consequences. Safekeeping hours are implemented in towns and municipalities as an easy way

to reduce the likelihood of crime and the number of potential victims. Safekeeping hours are advantageous because they allow authorities to monitor people's behavior, particularly that of minors, which encourages parental supervision (Ruffle & Reynolds, 1999).

Safekeeping hours are an order specifying a time during which positive rules apply. Safekeeping hour laws serve as a general deterrence strategy to reduce crime and victimization among juveniles. A reduced chance of committing crimes ought to translate into committing fewer crimes. In line with the study of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, as cited by Villarica (2011), the foremost immediate concern is physical safety from violence.

Thus, in the year 2017, The 18th Sangguniang Panlungsod of General Santos, authored by Hon. Yumang, enacted Ordinance No. 18 series of 2017, also known as the Safekeeping Hours for minors Ordinance in Gensan with its declaration of policy in protecting the best interest of youth through the implementation of measures which shall ensure the observance of the standards of child protection in all forms of neglect, abuse, cruelty, exploitation and other conditions prejudicial to their development. (Section 2 of Ordinance No. 18 series of 2017). Some challenges need to be addressed by examining the existing policies and practices and conducting interviews and surveys with stakeholders to identify areas for improvement and propose recommendations. This study aims to determine the significant relationship between the management of safekeeping hours for minors and juvenile crime rates in General Santos City.

The study aimed to determine whether setting rules on when kids can be out, known as safekeeping hours, reduces the number of crimes committed by young people in General Santos City. By reviewing existing rules and speaking with those involved, such as parents and authorities, the study aims to determine whether there is a connection between safekeeping hours and the number of crimes committed by young people. The goal is to understand if safekeeping hours make communities safer for kids and help prevent them from getting into trouble.

The study findings are significant, as they can serve as a foundation for advancing policies, which is particularly crucial given the growing population of children in General Santos City. By examining the effectiveness of safekeeping hours regulations in reducing juvenile crime rates, policymakers can gain valuable insights into how such measures help ensure the safety and well-being of the city's youth. These insights can guide the development and refinement of policies that promote child protection and prevent delinquent behavior. With the child population rising, it is increasingly essential to have evidence-based policies that address the unique challenges and vulnerabilities young people face. Therefore, the results of this study can play a vital role in shaping future strategies and initiatives to create a safer and more supportive environment for the children of General Santos City—hours implementation.

A significant gap in ensuring safekeeping hours for minors is the lack of comprehensive, accessible facilities that provide a safe, nurturing environment during critical hours, such as after school and late at night. Many communities lack adequately funded and staffed centers where minors can participate in constructive activities, receive supervision, and remain safe from potentially harmful environments.

Furthermore, poor coordination among local government units, schools, and community organizations frequently leads to inconsistent curfew enforcement, leaving minors vulnerable to exploitation, violence, or involvement in illegal activities. The lack of tailored programs that address minors' unique needs, such as counseling, mentoring, or skill-building activities, exacerbates the problem, making it difficult to provide comprehensive safekeeping support. The study's purpose was to assess the implementation of the safekeeping hours for minors, determine the juvenile crime rate in General Santos City, and revisit and enhance the City Ordinance on safekeeping.

Table 1

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| Population and Sample Size | | | | |
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| List of Responsibility | | | | |
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| Safekeeping Hours in Gen. Santos City | | | | |
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| Juvenile Crime in Terms of Loitering | | | | |
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| Juvenile Crime Rate in Terms of Disorderly Conduct | | | | |
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| Juvenile Crime Rate in Terms of Drug Related Offenses | | | | |
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| Juvenile Crime Rate in Terms of Theft, Assault, and Violence | | | | |
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| Summary on the Status of Juvenile Crime Rate | | | | |
| | | | | |
| Necessity in Revisiting the City Ordinance No. 18, s 2017. | | | | |
| | | | | |
| Table of Correlation between the Level of implementation and Status of Crime Rate | | | | |
| | | | | |
| Top 5 Issues and concerns in the Implementation of Safekeeping Hours | | | | |

2. Section

Juvenile delinquency has become one of the growing concerns in many highly urbanized areas in the Philippines. The increasing involvement of minors in crimes such as theft, physical injury, vandalism, illegal substance use, and other unlawful activities has alarmed both government agencies and local communities.

Due to the vulnerability of minors during nighttime, many local government units implemented safekeeping hours or curfew ordinances intended to protect children from harmful situations and prevent their exposure to criminal activities.

City Ordinance No. 18, Series of 2017, commonly known as the Safekeeping Hours for Minors Ordinance, was enacted to regulate the movement of minors during late-night hours in public places without the supervision of parents or guardians. The ordinance primarily aims to safeguard minors from dangers such as gang involvement, substance abuse, exploitation, and criminal victimization. Furthermore, it seeks to maintain peace and order within the community while promoting discipline among the youth.

Despite the implementation of the ordinance, records still show incidents involving minors in conflict with the law. This situation raises questions regarding the effectiveness of the ordinance in reducing juvenile crime rates and whether its current provisions remain responsive to the changing conditions of society. There is also a need to examine the experiences of law enforcers, barangay officials, parents, and community members in implementing the policy.

This study aims to assess the relationship between the implementation of Safekeeping Hours for Minors under City Ordinance No. 18, Series of 2017, and juvenile crime rates in a highly urbanized area. The findings of the study may serve as a basis for policy revisiting and enhancement to strengthen child protection mechanisms and improve the implementation of the ordinance.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the Social Control Theory by Travis Hirschi (1969), which explains that strong social bonds with family, school, and community reduce the likelihood of delinquent behavior among minors. According to the theory, when children are properly supervised and guided by parents and authorities, they are less likely to engage in criminal activities.

The study is also supported by Routine Activity Theory by Cohen and Felson (1979), which states that crimes occur when there is a convergence of motivated offenders, suitable targets, and absence of capable guardians. Safekeeping hours ordinances function as preventive mechanisms by limiting the exposure of minors to risky environments during nighttime and increasing community guardianship.

These theories support the idea that curfew or safekeeping ordinances can contribute to the reduction of juvenile crimes through supervision, monitoring, and regulation of minors' activities during vulnerable hours.

Conceptual Framework

The study focuses on the relationship between the implementation of City Ordinance No. 18, Series of 2017, and juvenile crime rates in a highly urbanized area.

Independent Variable

- * Implementation of Safekeeping Hours for Minors Ordinance
 - * Awareness of the ordinance
 - * Enforcement strategies
 - * Community participation
 - * Compliance of minors and parents

Dependent Variable

* Juvenile Crime Rates

- * Theft
- * Physical injuries
- * Vandalism
- * Drug-related offenses
- * Other crimes involving minors

Output

- * Basis for Policy Revisiting

Statement of the Problem

This study aims to determine the effectiveness of Safekeeping Hours for Minors under City Ordinance No. 18, Series of 2017, in relation to juvenile crime rates in a highly urbanized area.

Specifically, it seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What is the profile of the respondents in terms of:

- * age;
- * sex;
- * occupation; and
- * role in the community?

2. What is the level of implementation of the Safekeeping Hours for Minors Ordinance in terms of:

- * public awareness;
- * enforcement;
- * parental involvement; and
- * community cooperation?

3. What is the extent of juvenile crime rates in the highly urbanized area before and after the implementation of the ordinance?

4. Is there a significant relationship between the implementation of the ordinance and juvenile crime rates?

5. What policy recommendations may be proposed for revisiting the ordinance?

Hypothesis

There is no significant relationship between the implementation of Safekeeping Hours for Minors under City Ordinance No. 18, Series of 2017, and juvenile crime rates in a highly urbanized area.

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study will benefit the following:

Local Government Units (LGUs)

The study may help local officials assess the effectiveness of the ordinance and formulate improved policies for child protection and public safety.

Law Enforcement Agencies

The results may provide insights into enforcement challenges and help strengthen strategies in implementing the ordinance.

Parents and Guardians

The study may increase awareness regarding parental responsibility and supervision of minors during nighttime hours.

Community Members

The findings may encourage community participation in maintaining peace and order and protecting minors from harmful activities.

Future Researchers

This study may serve as a reference for future studies related to juvenile delinquency, curfew ordinances, and child protection policies.

Scope and Delimitation

This study focuses on the implementation of Safekeeping Hours for Minors under City Ordinance No. 18, Series of 2017, and its relationship to juvenile crime rates in a highly urbanized area. The respondents may include law enforcement officers, barangay officials, parents, and selected community members.

The study is limited only to the assessment of ordinance implementation, crime records involving minors, and policy recommendations. It does not cover other factors influencing juvenile delinquency such as economic conditions, educational background, or family problems beyond the scope of the study.

Definition of Terms

Safekeeping Hours

Refers to the designated hours during which minors are prohibited from staying in public places without parental supervision as mandated by City Ordinance No. 18, Series of 2017.

Minor

Refers to any individual below eighteen (18) years old.

Juvenile Crime Rate

Refers to the frequency or number of crimes committed by minors within a specified area and period.

Highly Urbanized Area

Refers to a city or locality characterized by high population density, commercial activity, and urban development.

Policy Revisiting

Refers to the process of reviewing, evaluating, and improving existing policies or ordinances for better implementation and effectiveness.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND STUDIES

Related Literature

Various studies emphasized that juvenile delinquency is often associated with lack of parental supervision, peer influence, poverty, and exposure to unsafe environments. Curfew ordinances were introduced in many communities as preventive measures to minimize youth involvement in crimes and victimization during nighttime hours.

According to child protection advocates, minors are more vulnerable to exploitation, gang recruitment, substance abuse, and violence during late-night hours when supervision is limited. Curfew ordinances aim to reduce these risks by regulating the movement of minors and encouraging parental responsibility.

Several local government units in the Philippines have implemented safekeeping hours ordinances as part of their peace and order programs. These ordinances commonly prohibit minors from loitering in streets, computer shops, parks, and other public areas during specified nighttime hours unless accompanied by parents or guardians.

Studies also suggest that effective implementation of curfew ordinances depends on strong coordination among law enforcement agencies, barangay officials, schools, parents, and community organizations.

Related Studies

Foreign studies revealed that juvenile curfew ordinances may contribute to reductions in youth victimization and certain crimes when properly implemented. However, some studies argued that curfew laws alone are insufficient without addressing root causes such as poverty, family dysfunction, and lack of educational opportunities.

Local studies in the Philippines showed varying results regarding the effectiveness of curfew ordinances. Some local government units reported reductions in juvenile-related incidents, while others experienced implementation challenges such as lack of public awareness, inconsistent enforcement, and resistance from community members.

Research also highlighted that successful implementation requires community participation, information dissemination, and rehabilitation programs for minors who violate the ordinance.

Synthesis

The reviewed literature and studies indicate that safekeeping hours ordinances are intended to protect minors and reduce juvenile crimes through supervision and regulation. While some studies support their effectiveness, others emphasize the need for stronger implementation and policy enhancement.

The present study differs from previous studies because it specifically focuses on City Ordinance No. 18, Series of 2017, in a highly urbanized area and examines its relationship with juvenile crime rates as basis for policy revisiting.

Chapter 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study will utilize a descriptive-correlational research design to determine the relationship between the implementation of the Safekeeping Hours Ordinance and juvenile crime rates.

Research Locale

The study will be conducted in a highly urbanized area where City Ordinance No. 18, Series of 2017, is implemented.

Respondents of the Study

The respondents may include:

- * Law enforcement officers
- * Barangay officials
- * Parents
- * Community members

Sampling Technique

The study may utilize purposive sampling to select respondents who are directly involved in the implementation and monitoring of the ordinance.

Research Instrument

The researcher will use a structured questionnaire consisting of:

- * Profile of respondents
- * Assessment of ordinance implementation
- * Perceptions regarding juvenile crime rates
- * Suggested policy improvements

Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher will secure permission from concerned offices before conducting the study. After approval, questionnaires will be distributed to the respondents. Collected data will be tabulated, analyzed, and interpreted accordingly.

Statistical Treatment of Data

The following statistical tools may be used:

- * Frequency and Percentage
- * Mean
- * Weighted Mean
- * Pearson r Correlation
- * Chi-square Test

Chapter 4

PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

This chapter presents the gathered data regarding the implementation of Safekeeping Hours for Minors under City Ordinance No. 18, Series of 2017, and juvenile crime rates in a highly urbanized area. The data will be analyzed and interpreted based on the objectives of the study.

Chapter 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The study assessed the implementation of Safekeeping Hours for Minors under City Ordinance No. 18, Series of 2017, and examined its relationship with juvenile crime rates in a highly urbanized area.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, the implementation of the ordinance plays an important role in promoting child protection and maintaining peace and order. However, challenges in enforcement, parental supervision, and community participation affect its effectiveness.

Recommendations

1. Strengthen information dissemination regarding the ordinance.
2. Enhance coordination among LGUs, law enforcement agencies, schools, and communities.
3. Conduct regular monitoring and evaluation of ordinance implementation.
4. Provide intervention and rehabilitation programs for minors.
5. Revisit and improve policy provisions to address current community needs and implementation challenges.

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