SELF-REPORTED DELINQUENT BEHAVIOR AMONG JUVENILE OFFENDERS AND NON-OFFENDERS OF SUKKUR, SINDH, PAKISTAN

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Abstract

This study examined the difference in self-reported delinquent behavior among juvenile offenders and non-offenders in Sukkur, Sindh, Pakistan, using the General Personality and Cognitive Social Learning (GPCSL) perspective as theoretical framework. The full available population of 30 male juvenile offenders from the Sukkur correctional facility was assessed, alongside a matched comparison group of 30 non-offenders drawn from school and madrasa of the same community. Participants completed the Self-Reported Delinquency Scale (SRDSG- Urdu) with documentation of demographic information and types of crime committed. Statistical analysis included reliability and normality assessment of construct used and independent sample t-test to observe group difference. Results revealed significant differences between offenders and non-offenders. Offenders exhibited substantially higher levels of delinquent behavior, supporting the hypothesis that offenders engage in more delinquent acts. Implication of this study extend to theory, practice, and policy: incorporating early identification, culturally tailored interventions, and validation of self-reported delinquency scale in Sindhi speaking population that can support juvenile justice reform in Pakistan. The study also aligns with global development priorities, particularly SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions), and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals), by underscoring the need for collaborative, rehabilitative, and preventive approaches to juvenile delinquency.

Keywords: Juvenile delinquency; General Personality and Cognitive Social Learning (GPCSL); Self-reported delinquency; Sukkur; Pakistan; Rehabilitation; Sustainable Development Goals

INTRODUCTION

The subject of juvenile delinquency continues to be a burning international issue with social, psychological, and legal consequences (Abhishek & Balamurugan, 2024). Juvenile refers to anyone who is under the age of 18 years (UNCRC, 1989). Delinquency, in its turn, is a term describing the perpetration of an unlawful action by a young person who has reached a legal adult age that is approximately 18 (Frazier et al., 2024), ranging from underage smoking, property violence, aggression and violent crimes (Jurczyk & Lalak, 2020). Juvenile delinquency is not only indicative of antisocial trends during early years, but leads to general instability of society due to recidivism, unemployment, mental illness, and exclusion (Drury et al., 2020). It's prevalence is mostly underreported, and the theories just focus on hereditary and psychological tendencies (Kratcoski, 2019). Being among the most burning social problems, juvenile delinquency is predetermined by several social factors, as family background, peer pressure, and neighborhood environment being the most important parts in its development (Abhishek & Balamurugan, 2024). Family conflict, neglect and maltreatment are considered significant predictors of delinquency while strong parental relationships and academic achievement act as protective variables (Aazami et al., 2023). Delinquency in the era of globalization demonstrate that both internal and external influences shape youth offending, producing significant consequences for individuals, families, and society at large (Sarwanto, 2023).

From psychological perspective, juvenile delinquency can be understood as intersection of personality traits, cognitions and environmental influence. The General Personality and Cognitive Social Learning (GPCSL) Theory developed by Andrews and Bonta in1994, further elaborated in later versions (Andrews & Bonta, 2014, 2023), is comprehensive framework to understand why some youth engage in delinquency than others. It emphasizes that delinquency is not fixed but can change because of environmental contingencies and behavioral restructuring through the mind. This is consistent with empirical evidence that low Conscientiousness, low Agreeableness, and High Neuroticism is associated with externalizing and antisocial behaviors and increase offending via emotional reactivity and impulsivity (Walters, 2025).

Previous International literature have emphasized on several personal, family and community risk factors that contribute in juvenile delinquency (Kennedy et al., 2020). A study revealed that delinquent youths were predominantly boys aged between 15 and 16, belonging to economically disadvantaged, disorganized families, with no parental supervision, poor performance at school and psychological deficiencies, which prominently distinguished them among their contemporaries (Delcea, 2019). Another research in Argentina applying the Triple Risk for Delinquency Model showed that the interaction between antisocial motivation and criminal opportunities significantly distinguished adolescents with and without delinquent behavior, highlighting that personal, social, and opportunity risk factors strongly predict both official and self-reported delinquency (Bobbio et al., 2020). In Asia, juvenile delinquency has received increasing attention as societies navigate rapid urbanization, shifting family dynamics, and challenges within juvenile justice systems (Gao et al., 2024; Sahay & Pant, 2025). Studies from South and Southeast Asia have pointed that the interaction between personality vulnerabilities and criminogenic environments such as peer influence, parental disengagement, and lack of structured interventions accelerates pathways into juvenile offending (Chan, 2021; Alias et al., 2024). However, Asian research remains fragmented, with limited integration across dispositional traits, cognitive criminal tendencies, and behavioral manifestations.

In Pakistan, juvenile delinquency has been studied primarily through legal and sociological perspectives, with fewer contributions from psychology and criminology. The enactment of the (Juvenile Justice System Act (2018)) marked an important legal milestone, guaranteeing juveniles the right to legal counsel and protection from the death penalty, but the practical implementation of these provisions are hindered by systemic challenges such as overcrowded detention facilities, weak probation mechanisms, and limited diversionary measures (Abbas et al., 2022). Prisons are filled on the national scale, at 152.9 percent of their potential capacity. In the tense atmosphere, 1,584 juveniles are now jailed with 85.1% of them being under-trail and mere 0.7 are feminine. The lack of juvenile-specific prisons in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Baluchistan adds to the problem even more, with numerous juvenile criminals held in adult jails. All these conditions leave serious doubts about the relevance of juvenile justice in Pakistan ((**Justice Project Pakistan [JPP], 2024**).
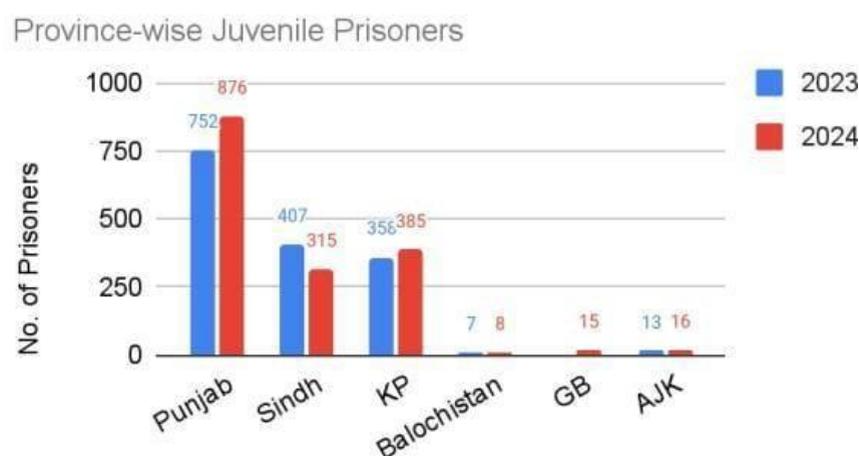

Figure 1: Province Wise Juvenile Prisoners ((Justice Project Pakistan [JPP], 2024)

Pakistani psychological studies have started to investigate personality-delinquency intersection (Khan et al., 2021; Iqbal & Amjad, 2024). Study carried out within Lahore, Rawalpindi, Multan, and Gujranwala, revealed, that association between psychological well-being and delinquency is explained by personality traits, with agreeableness and neuroticism shown to have significant levels of influence in developing maladaptive practices among Pakistani youths (Haq et al., 2024). There has also been advancement in translation and validation of the psychological tools in Urdu (National Language of Pakistan) itself, to capture local context such as Self-Reported Delinquency Scale (SRDS; Urdu version), a scale that describes the nature and occurrence of delinquent behaviors including stealing, aggressive behavior, drug use, and other offenses in Urdu language (Gibson, 1971; Tariq, N, 1999; Ashraf et al., 2014),offer culturally applicable measures in the investigation of youth behavior.

These developments are significant around studies of delinquency on the psychological aspects in Pakistan, but there is a disproportional concentration of research on Punjab and few urban centers of Sindh, leaving the rest of the regions and rural areas relatively understudied by comparison. Within Sindh, three Youthful Offenders Industrial Schools operate in Karachi, Hyderabad, and Sukkur, serving as the province's designated facilities for juvenile offenders. Currently, 385 juveniles are in detention across Sindh, with the majority housed in the Youthful Offenders Industrial School and Correction Facility in Karachi (Tanoli, 2023; Justice Project Pakistan [JPP], 2024). By contrast, Sukkur represents a distinct case. The city

hosts only one juvenile correctional facility, formally known as the Juvenile and Women Prison/Correction Facility. Based on data collected during the present study (September 2025), this facility housed just 30 juveniles, all boys. This small but highly vulnerable population is of particular concern given the facility's limited resources and absence of psychological programming. Notably, no psychological research has been conducted to date on juvenile offenders or in comparison with non-offenders in Sukkur, leaving a significant gap in the literature.

In this regard, the current paper will compare self- reported delinquent behaviors between juvenile offenders and non-offenders of Sukkur, and also explore different type of crimes executed by juvenile offenders of Sukkur, Sindh This study will make contributions to psychological knowledge of delinquency, evidence-based rehabilitation and reforms to juvenile justice system of Pakistan.

Hypotheses

H1: There is significant difference in self-reported delinquency score between juvenile offenders and non-offenders.

H2: Among Juvenile offender's certain crime type occur more frequent than others.

METHOD

Research Design

The present study employed a comparative, cross-sectional quantitative design to examine differences in self-reported delinquent behavior among juvenile offenders and non-offenders, specifically appropriate to study group differences and explore relationships between psychological constructs at one time (Setia, 2016). Standardized and validated assessment tools in Urdu language were utilized to ensure cultural and linguistic appropriateness of measurement.

Study Area and Population

The study was conducted in Sukkur, Sindh, Pakistan. The offender group comprised all 30 juveniles currently incarcerated at the Juvenile and Women Prison/Correctional Facility, Sukkur. This institution is the only correctional facility of its kind in the district, making it a comprehensive sample of the available population. For comparison, 30 non-offenders were recruited from a local school and madrasa within same location of Sukkur. Selecting participants from the same socio- cultural environment as the offenders ensured comparability and minimized confounding effects, aligned with existing studies (Fisher et al., 1999; Contreras & Cano, 2014; Llorca-Mestre et al., 2017).

Inclusion Criteria

Participants were juveniles aged 12 to 18 years, residents of Sukkur for at least one year to ensure stable socio-cultural exposure, and able to understand Urdu. Juvenile offenders confirmed by institutional records from the Women and Children Jail, Sukkur. Non-offenders were included if they had no criminal record and were currently enrolled in school or madrasa.

Exclusion Criteria

Juveniles diagnosed with severe intellectual disability, neurodevelopmental disorders, and acute psychiatric distress were excluded. Juveniles with prior or ongoing participation in rehabilitation, counseling, or psychological training programs were also excluded to avoid confounding influences.

Sampling Technique

A purposive sampling technique was employed for both groups. All incarcerated juveniles at the Juvenile and Women Prison, Sukkur, were included due to the limited population size. For the non-offender group, purposive sampling ensured age, gender, and socio-cultural

comparability by recruiting participants from local school and madrasa within the same geographical catchment area.

Assessment Tools

To address the research objectives and test the hypotheses of the study, data were collected using the following standardized measures.

Socio-Demographic Variables Sheet

A structured questionnaire was developed to collect demographic and background variables, including age, gender, family type, education level, parental education, socioeconomic status, residential area, number of siblings, marital status, gang affiliation, history of abuse (physical, emotional, sexual), prior criminal record, substance use history, self-perceived religiosity, legal status, and history of mental disorder.

Self-Reported Delinquency Scale (SRDSG)

Self-Reported Delinquency Scale (SRDSG) first developed by (Gibson, 1971) with as many delinquent acts as possible and translated in Urdu by (Tariq, N, 1999). In this study refined Urdu version was used, with 37 items on a four-point Likert scale starting with Never (1) to Often (4) with high internal consistency 0.93 by (Ashraf et al., 2014). This change will make the responses more variable and contextually relevant to Pakistani adolescents. The SRDSG measures behaviors on the domains of theft, aggression, property damage, and substance use and gives both frequency and intensity insights into delinquent conduct.

Procedure

Data was collected in two phases

Phase 1: Offender Group

For the offender group, assessments were conducted individually in a designated room within the prison premises under the supervision of the researcher, while adhering to institutional security protocols.

Phase 2: Non-offender Group

For the non-offender group, data collection was carried out in classroom settings within community school and madrasa.

For both groups; Each session began with the completion of a socio-demographic information sheet, followed by the administration of SRDSG in Urdu. The researcher provided standardized instructions, clarified queries, and monitored the process to ensure confidentiality, honesty, and independence of responses

Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to internationally recognized ethical principles for research involving human participants, with particular sensitivity to the inclusion of juveniles and incarcerated populations, who are considered vulnerable groups. Formal approval for conducting the research was obtained from the relevant institutional review board, as well as administrative permissions from the Juvenile and Women Prison, Sukkur, and the heads of local school and madrasa. Data were handled securely in a limited access setup through the assigning of unique identification code over names, confidentiality and anonymity was ensured.

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics was performed on 60 participants, 30 from juvenile offender group, and 30 from juvenile non-offenders group. Measures of descriptive statistics performed were frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation, to understand the socio-demographic characteristics of sample.

Table 1:   *Frequencies and Percentages for Socio-demographic Characteristics of (N = 60)*

Demographics		Offenders		Non-offenders	
		f	%	f	%
Gender					
Male		30	(100)	30	(100)
	Female	-		-	
Education					
No formal Education		3	(10)	0	(0)
	Primary	16	(53.3)	17	(56.7)
	Middle	9	(30.0)	11	(36.7)
	Secondary	2	(6.7)	2	(6.7)
	Higher secondary	-		-	
SES					
Low		17	(56.7)	13	(43.3)
	Middle	13	(43.3)	17	(56.7)
High		-		-	
Father's education					
No formal Education		10	(33.3)	7	(23.3)
	Primary	6	(20.0)	6	(20.0)
	Middle	6	(20.0)	7	(23.3)
	Secondary	5	(16.7)	6	(20.0)
	Higher secondary	3	(10.0)	4	(13.3)
Mother's education					
No formal Education		11	(36.7)	7	(23.3)
	Primary	9	(30.0)	8	(26.7)
	Middle	5	(16.7)	7	(23.3)
	Secondary	4	(13.3)	7	(23.3)
	Higher secondary	1	(3.3)	1	(3.3)
Family system					
	Joint	23	(76.7)	23	(76.7)
	Nuclear	7	(23.3)	7	(23.3)
Residential area					
	Urban	18	(60.0)	16	(53.3)
	Rural	12	(40.0)	14	(46.7)
Marital status					
	Single	30	(100)	30	(100)
	Married	-		-	
	Divorced	-		-	
Legal Status					

		f	(%)	f	(%)
	No legal issue	-		30	(100)
	Case under trial	27	(90.0)	-	
	Convicted	3	(10.0)	-	
Gang Affiliation					
	Yes	10	(33.3)	-	
	No	20	(66.7)	30	(100)
Physical Abuse					
	Yes	18	(60.0)	5	(16.7)
	No	12	(40.0)	25	(83.3)
Emotional Abuse					
	Yes	24	(80.0)	7	(23.3)
	No	6	(20.0)	23	(76.7)
Sexual Abuse					
	Yes	5	(16.7)	0	(0)
	No	25	(83.3)	30	(100)
Substance Use					
	Yes	17	(56.7%)	4	(13.3%)
	No	13	(43.3%)	26	(86.7%)
Self-Perceived Religiosity					
	Yes	24	(80.0%)	28	(93.3%)
	No	6	(20.0%)	2	(6.7%)
Prior Criminal Record					
	Yes	3	(10.0)	0	(0)
	No	27	(90.0)	30	(100)
History of Mental Disorder					
	Yes	-		-	
	No	30	(100)	30	(100)

Note. f: frequency, %: percentage

Table 1 shows the socio-demographic characteristics of 60 participants of main study. 30 from offender and 30 from non- offender group. All participants from both groups were male and single. In sample 10% of offenders had no formal education, 53.3% had primary education, 30% had mid-level education, and 6.7% had secondary education. 56.7% of the offenders were from low SES and 43.3% were from middle SES. 33.3% of the offender's father had no formal education, 20% had primary and mid-level education, 16.7% had secondary education, and

10% had higher secondary education followed by 36.7% of offender's mothers who had no formal education, 30% had primary education, 16.7% had mid-level education, 13.3 had secondary education and 3.3% had higher secondary education. 76.7% of the offenders lived in joint families with 60% from urban and 40% from rural settings. 13.3% offenders were convicted of theft, 20% in sexual offense, 26.7% in substance abuse and 40% in murder. 60% offenders reported physical abuse, 80% emotional abuse and 16.7% sexual abuse with 33.3% offenders reported gang affiliation and 56.7% offenders reported substance use. 80% of the participants considered themselves religious. Majority (90%) cases were under trail and only 10% were convicted, 10% had prior criminal record with no documented mental disorder.

Among non-offender's sample 56.7% had primary education, 36.7% had middle, and 6.7% had secondary education. 56.7% of the non-offenders were from middle SES and 43.3% were from low SES. 23.3% of the non-offender's father had no formal education, 20% had primary education, 23.3% had mid- level, 20% had secondary education, and 13.3% had higher secondary education followed by 23.3% of non-offender's mothers had no formal education, 26.7% had primary, and 23.3% had middle and secondary level education, and 3.3% had higher education. 76.7% of the non-offenders lived in joint families with 53.3% from urban and 46.7% from rural settings. 16.7% of the non-offenders reported physical abuse, 23.3% reported emotional abuse with no sexual abuse reported. 13.3% non-offenders also reported substance abuse. Additionally, 93.3% non- offender participants considered themselves religious and does not report any crime, gang affiliation, legal status or mental disorder. Results showed that both groups are comparable across personal education, parental education and SES.

Table 2: *Mean and Standard Deviation for Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Participants (N=60)*

Characteristics	Offender (M) (SD)		Non- Offender (M) (SD)	
Age (Years)	15.23,	1.61	15.40,	1.16
Jail Duration (Months)	8.83,	5.49	0.00,	0.00
Number of Siblings	7.23,	2.69	6.37,	1.43

Note: M: Mean; SD: Standard Deviation

In terms of age, both groups are comparable as participants from offender group ranged from 12 to 19 years (M= 15.23, SD= 1.61). Jail duration was 8.83 (SD= 5.49), and 7.23 siblings (SD=2.69) on average, whereas participants from non-offender group's age ranged from 13 to 18 years (M= 15.40, SD= 1.16), an average of 6.37 siblings (SD= 1.43) with no jail duration.

Reliability and Normality Analysis

For each scale, descriptive statistics was performed to get general picture of distribution of responses such as mean and standard deviation. For reliability analysis Cronbach alpha coefficient was used to check internal consistencies of scales. For normality analysis Shapiro-Wilk test (W) was used to check normal distribution of data prior to perform parametric tests.

Table 3: *Descriptive Statistics, Reliability and Normality for Self-Reported Delinquency Scale (N=60)*

Group	α (k)	(M)	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	W (p)
Offenders	0.934 (37)	115.2	6.80	-0.62	1.17	0.340
Non-offenders		71.8	7.43	-0.78	1.09	0.112

Note: M=Mean; SD=Standard Deviation; Cronbach's α: indicate internal consistency; K= Number of item; W-p= Shapiro–Wilk significance value

Table 3 shows the descriptive statistics, reliability and normality test result of SRDSG. Offenders have higher SRDSG scores (M= 71.80, SD= 7.43) scores. Reliability analysis is calculated by Cronbach's alpha. For SRDSG α= 0.934, indicating excellent internal consistency and reliability of scales. Skewness and kurtosis are within acceptable range (±2) and the Shapiro- Wilk results are greater than 0.05, indicating no significant deviance in both groups, confirming that data is normally distributed across scale.

Table 5: *Independent Samples t-test Results for Self-Reported Delinquency (N = 60)*

Variables	Offender		Non-offender		t	p	Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			
Self-reported delinquency	115.23	6.80	71.87	7.43	23.59	< .001	6.09

Note. *M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; t = t-value; p = Significance Level; CI*

Results from independent sample t-test showed significant group differences among both groups. Offenders scored significantly higher on Self-reported delinquency (115.23, SD= 6.80) than non-offender (M=71.87, SD=7.43), with an extremely large effect size (d= 6.09) suggesting high difference in behavior involvement.

Figure 2: Crime Types in Juvenile Offenders and Non-offenders (N = 60)
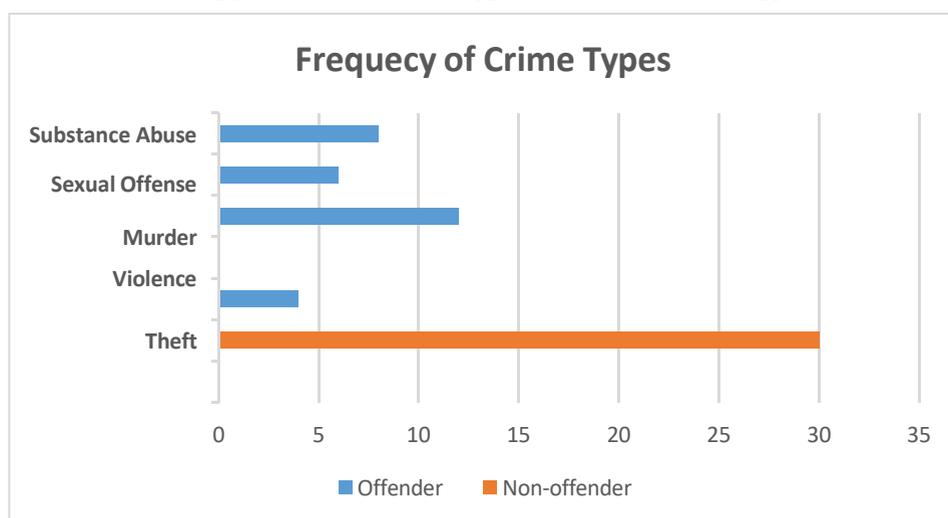
Above chart shows the frequency distribution of different crime types exhibited by offenders. Non-offenders were not involved in any criminal activity whereas in offenders, most frequent reported crime was murder (12 cases), substance abuse (8 cases), sexual offense (6 cases), and theft (4 cases), highlighting the heterogeneity of crime.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The results of this research offers strong psychometric properties of Urdu Self-reported Delinquency scale with high reliability and normality scores and highlighted meaningful difference between juvenile offenders and non-offenders on sociodemographic, familial and behavioral outcomes. Offenders have significantly higher self-reported delinquency score as compare to non-offenders with large effect size. This observed differences between offenders and non-offenders in their delinquency score suggest that offenders are more likely to involve in criminal behavior such as smoking, rule breaking, pornography, property violence, aggression and violent crimes (Jurczyk & Lalak, 2020).

Findings from demographics, found to be consistent with General Personality and Cognitive

Social Learning (GPCSL) theory as offenders reported greater exposure to vulnerable factors such as low socio-economic status, lower parental education, larger family structure, gang affiliation and substance use. These factors reflect social-learning processes in which youth in high risk environment develop maladaptive coping due to modeling behavior (Andrews & Bonta, 2014, 2023). Offenders showed higher prevalence of physical, emotional and sexual abuse consistent with research that childhood mistreatment disrupts emotional regulation, increase trait impulsivity and enhance chances to engage in delinquent acts (Liu, 2019). Crime type frequencies such as high involvement in murder and substance- related offenses among offenders further supported the interpretations.

The cultural context of Sukkur, Sindh, adds further depth to these findings due to unique socio- demographic profile and experiences of juveniles. By demonstrating the global theory such as GPCSL retain their relevance in this setting, the study extends their applicability beyond Western contexts and contributes to the scarce body of research on juvenile delinquency in South Asia particularly Pakistan.

LIMITATION OF STUDY

While this study provides important insights into delinquent behaviors of juveniles in Sukkur, it has several limitations such as small and all male sample which limits generalizability, cross sectional design restricts causal inference and self-reported measure may give biased data.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Building on the limitations of the present study, future research should employ larger and more diverse samples would allow for comparative analyses across regions, socioeconomic groups, and institutional contexts. Future research should adopt longitudinal designs to track juveniles over time. Given the reliance on self-report measures in the current study, future investigations could incorporate multiple data sources such as behavioral observations, reports from correctional staff, or official records. Triangulating these sources would strengthen the validity of findings and minimize biases linked to self-reporting.

IMPLICATIONS

The finding of this study highlights the need for targeted interventions that address both delinquent tendencies and underlying trauma. Rehabilitation programs must integrate cognitive-behavioral skill training, family support, healthy coping strategies and substance use reduction to empower offenders and at-risk youth

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