

2020

Juvenile Arrest and Recidivism Rate in Fulton County, Georgia

Norell Combs
Walden University

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Walden University

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Norell Combs

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Walden University
2020

Abstract

Juvenile Arrest and Recidivism Rate in Fulton County, Georgia

by

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MA, Walden University, 2016

BS, University of West Georgia, 2013

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Criminal Justice

Walden University

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Abstract

The purpose of a Juvenile Justice Department in the United States justice system is to prevent juvenile offenses and to promote the smooth transition of young offenders when they are leaving rehabilitation centers and reentering society. That purpose essentially dedicates itself to fight against rehabilitation of youth. The Department of Juvenile Justice in Fulton County, Georgia (DJJFC), has created rehabilitation programs to facilitate this transition process for young offenders. Fulton County including its citizens, school system, parents, and juveniles would benefit from this issue being resolved. The purpose of this research was to explore the juvenile arrest and recidivism rates of 394 juveniles and evaluate the effectiveness of the rehabilitation programs practiced by the DJJFC. The research findings initially indicate high recidivism, but the study showed positive recidivism rates when comparing the recidivism percentages of juveniles on probation with juveniles sent through diversion programs. The findings of the study indicate the effectiveness of the available diversion programs and promote the incorporation of family-based and mental illness diversion programs into the rehabilitation efforts. The findings may be used by administrators to alleviate the previous listed adversities leading to better rehabilitation for juveniles, therefore enacting social change within the juveniles, their families, the community, the school system, rehabilitation programs, and the juvenile justice system.

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Dedication

And the award for the best supportive parents goes to Lorenzo and Vetyca Combs. I am beyond thankful for the love and support you both have provided me. Being the only child, I always expressed how I believed I had to be great because you both only gave yourselves one shot to raise a successful individual. I can only hope I have scratched the surface of being just that for you two. Every time I wanted to throw in the towel on my educational journey, my mother was there to cheer and encourage me back into the race. I am where I am in my career because of my father's dedication toward me and him believing in the work ethic he instilled in me. I will pass on all the great attributes you both instilled in me to the third person this dissertation is dedicated to, my daughter Erin. Although I consider completing my doctoral degree my greatest accomplishment to date; Erin you are my life's greatest accomplishment. I have intentionally set the bar high for you. Not only do I expect you to exceed my accomplishments but also my expectations for you. Now as you are only 9 years old, I already know you will! I am truly blessed for the three of you because without you there is no me.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Juvenile crime and recidivism are two of the most significant challenges facing the United States (U.S.). The problem affects millions of families across the country with the dreams of thousands of young individuals cut short due to crime. The justice system has admitted underage individuals for crimes such as aggravated assault, robbery, forcible rape, nonnegligent manslaughter, or murder. However, even with the intervention of juvenile justice systems, the likelihood of individuals committing the same crimes again cannot be assured. Underage Americans who offend at a younger age end up committing the same crimes repeatedly after completing the sentence and as an adult. Such occurrences put doubt on the effectiveness of the juvenile justice system in rehabilitating young individuals. One of the most critical roles of the juvenile justice department in Fulton County, Georgia, is rehabilitation ensuring perpetrators of crime do not relapse. However, the rate of juvenile arrests and recidivism in the county remains above the national average.

The above-average rates put a strain on the cost of running the justice department and includes the psychological cost for victims and families of imprisoned minors. Such costs could be avoided with an effective juvenile justice system that not only punishes wrongdoing according to the U.S. Constitution but also rehabilitates the individuals. As such, I aimed at investigating the arrest and recidivism rates of juveniles. This was to comprehend whether the rehabilitation programs introduced by the department of juvenile justice in Fulton County, Georgia, were effective in reducing crime and

recidivism. Additionally, I intended to investigate whether the rehabilitation programs were effective in preventing delinquency in juveniles. The second goal was identifying other strategies that the minors, together with their families, could employ to improve the rehabilitation process.

Background

Nationally delinquent youth recidivism rates are greater than 50%, with some documented as high as 90% (Altschuler et al., 2016; Models for Change, 2015). Research on juvenile recidivism has increased to understand better how risk factors are associated with juvenile delinquency. Georgia, including other states, were seeing recidivism rates above 50% with the cost of detaining youth in a long-term facility exceeding \$90,000 annually (The Pew Charitable Trust [PEW], 2013). Understanding the value of detention and the high rates of recidivism, it became apparent there was a disconnect within the juvenile justice system. Diversion plans were put into effect to close the gap financially and statistically. From the mid-1970s until now, the evolution from punitive policies to community-based treatment policies has led to a decline in youth placed in custody (Altschuler et al., 2016; Models for Change, 2015; PEW 2013).

The school-to-prison pipeline helped explain the background of why the juvenile justice system may have spiraled to extreme rates. Disciplinary policies and practices within the schools have aided the negative connection and interaction between students and law enforcement. The zero-tolerance policies have made minor and major infractions become suspensions and expulsions (Cole, 2019). Suspension and expulsions lead to juveniles being left alone during those times, opening the door to delinquent behavior and

influences, also known as the concept for socialization. Often, students who express behavioral issues at school are acting out in response to stressful and/or dangerous conditions in their homes and/or neighborhoods. Removing them from school and returning them to an uncertain or unsupervised home environment hurts rather than helps their development (Cole, 2019).

Problem Statement

The main goal of setting up the juvenile justice system was, and remains, the rehabilitation of young people arrested. However, the rising recidivism rates across the country have raised the alarm on whether the system is failing on its goal. In Fulton County, Georgia, the overall juvenile arrest and recidivism rates within Fulton County between years 2013 and 2017, according to the U.S Office of Juvenile Delinquency, was above the national average. According to a study report released in 2017 by Georgia's Office of Juvenile and Delinquency Prevention, juvenile recidivism was at 30% compared with the national average of 24% (Calley, 2014). Faced with high recidivism rates, DJJFC may benefit from implementing rehabilitation methods aimed at helping juvenile offenders from recidivism. They can do so by including family-based diversion programs such as those researched on by Henderson (2019), including family intervention programs developed for various components of the juvenile justice system. Research has shown this to be effective in promoting positive rehabilitation amongst juveniles.

Purpose

The purpose of this research was to explore the juvenile arrest and recidivism rates. The second purpose was to evaluate the effectiveness of the rehabilitation programs practiced by the Department of Juvenile Justice in Fulton County, Georgia (DJJFC). This will help in reducing crime and recidivism, thus deterring juvenile delinquency. To evaluate the effectiveness, this study utilized a quantitative methodology. Additionally, this research aimed to add to the existing literature on avenues that are available to juveniles and their families that could further assist in the rehabilitation process.

Research Questions and Hypothesis

The purpose of this research was to explore the juvenile arrest and recidivism rates. The second purpose was to evaluate the effectiveness of the rehabilitation programs practiced by the Department of Juvenile Justice in Fulton County, Georgia (DJJFC). This will help in reducing crime and recidivism, thus deterring juvenile delinquency. To evaluate the effectiveness, this study utilized a quantitative methodology. Additionally, this research aimed to add to the existing literature on avenues that are available to juveniles and their families that could further assist in the rehabilitation process.

RQ1-Quantitative: What are the frequencies of the juveniles' arrest and rate of juvenile recidivism in Fulton County, Georgia?

RQ2-Quantitative: Is there a significant relationship between the rate of arrests and recidivism among juveniles within Fulton County, Georgia?

H1-Based on objective data, there is a statistically significant difference in the rate of arrest and recidivism rates among juveniles within Fulton County, Georgia.

H0- Based on objective data, there is no statistically significant difference in the rate of arrest and recidivism rate among juveniles within Fulton County, Georgia.

Theoretical Framework

A few theories make up the conceptual framework of this research: social learning theory and differential association theory.

Social learning theory focuses on the influence of society on an individual. The attitudes and behaviors from individuals are only a response to the encouragement of those around us, support being positive or negative. Created by Ronald Akers, researchers in criminology most often use social learning theory to help explain crime and deviance (Crossman, 2019). This theory was so relatable to this topic because juveniles can be impressionable and enticed to delinquent behavior based on the environment and influences around them. The life of crime can appear attractive and give a feeling of thrills and excitement. Combining this with a lack of consequences may do little to deter juveniles from delinquent behaviors.

Differential association theory focuses on individuals choosing a life of crime when the reward of crime seems to outweigh the bonus of being law abiding. This theory focuses more on how individuals decide on a life of crime versus why individuals choose a life of crime (Vinney, 2019). Juveniles may be able to understand and explain how they entered a life of crime based on influences but may not always understand why. Intervention and diversion programs should take place in the early stages when juveniles

begin to show behavioral issues. Interventions and diversions need to be more proactive than reactive.

Nature of Study

Based on the nature of the study, the most appropriate study design is quantitative methodology. The methodology is most appropriate when the data to be collected are numerical values. It emphasizes numerical analysis of data collected, either mathematical or statistical, and objective measurement of the resulting data. This makes it possible to generalize the data across a group of people, thus helping to explain a phenomenon (McEvoy & Richards, 2006). The study design was also essential when the researcher takes an unbiased approach, thus increased the credibility of the results (Tashakkori, Teddlie, & Teddlie, 1998).

In this quantitative study, I used a factorial design (two nonmanipulated independent variables) to identify factors associated with juvenile arrest and recidivism rates. The belief was that the lack of parental involvement leads to juvenile detention, and the lack of successful diversion programs lead to juvenile recidivism. The first nonmanipulated independent variable was the juvenile arrest record; the research begins here to explain the recidivism rate. The recidivism rate was the second nonmanipulated independent variable, recidivism being a juvenile rearrested within a year. Covariates included that were assessed were the types of crimes being committed (i.e., delinquency A and delinquency B, both being felonies).

Definitions of Terms

To clarify the terms that are used in this study, the following descriptions are provided:

Adjudicated: Refers to the final judgement or pronouncement in a case (DJJ, 2017).

Diversion: Programs and services designed to keep at-risk youth from entering the juvenile justice system (DJJ, 2017).

Juvenile delinquent: A youth who has been found responsible for having committed a delinquent act—the equivalent of being found guilty of a criminal offense (DJJ, 2017).

Juvenile recidivism: Measured by criminal acts, such as new law violations, both misdemeanor and felony offenses. These criminal acts could result in rearrest, reconviction, or return to juvenile detention facilities with or without a new sentence during the period when new crimes were committed (DJJ, 2017).

Mentoring: Generally, it involves providing support and guidance to and spending time regularly with a youth. Mentoring activities can include participating in sports, playing games, shopping, taking hikes, helping with homework, and doing chores (DJJ, 2017).

Probation: A mechanism used by juvenile justice agencies, which is a form of sentencing that allows the juvenile to serve his or her sentence in the community under the supervision of the probation officer. When probation is imposed, the court can either withhold adjudication or adjudicate the juvenile as a juvenile delinquent (DJJ, 2017).

Regional Youth Detention Center (RYDC): Georgia detention facilities that house youth adjudicated for short-term secure residential facility placement (DJJ, 2017).

Youth Development Campuses (YDC): Georgia detention facilities that house youth adjudicated for a long-term secure residential facility placement (DJJ, 2017).

Violent crime: Crimes of violence including rape, robbery, assault, or murder (DJJ, 2017).

Assumptions

A few assumptions were reached in this study. The assumption that juveniles with prior records who reoffend as adults are accounted for in data. Second, an assumption was that there were more diversion programs offered by Fulton County DJJ. Last, the assumption was that Fulton DJJ sent a higher percentage of juveniles to detention centers than reported.

Scope and Delimitations

This study focused on Fulton County DJJ arrest record and recidivism rates for years 2013-2017. Researching diversion programs offered with the county to gain understating of the programs that were most successful in reducing the juvenile recidivism rate. Youth who were charged and convicted as adults and teenagers who reoffended in adulthood were excluded from this project.

Limitations

A few limitations affected this study, which influenced how I conducted the research. One of the critical impediments to the study was the unavailability of data from the DJJFC, detailing the diversion programs where parental involvement is mandatory.

According to Akesson (2014), parental participation in rehabilitation has proven to reduce the chance of recidivism by 30%, making it significant to have programs consider parental involvement. The DJJFC is providing the alternatives to arrest offered.

Another major limitation of the study was the scope of the study. As noted earlier, the range of recidivism is extensive. Due to this breadth, it was impossible to have conclusive research in all areas. Thus, this study focused on evaluating the programs that could be used to enhance the effectiveness of the rehabilitation process and alleviate the recidivism rates. This limited the scope of the applicability of the findings of the study.

Time was another major limitation. The study needed to be conducted within a specified period. Thus, limiting the amount of time that data could be collected. It seemed almost impossible to exhaust all the relevant data, affecting the credibility of the study results.

Significance of the Study

Despite the rising rate of juvenile recidivism, there was limited information on the topic. The significance of this quantitative research was to implement further and enhance rehabilitation strategies that could be used by the DJJFC to reduce recidivism. My intent was to identify essential strategies in reducing the trauma related to arrest and recidivism. Benson (2017) explained the belief that juveniles cope with the stressors associated with detention by committing additional delinquent behavior.

Summary and Transition

Juvenile arrest and recidivism are a much-researched subject. Researchers have invested much time in understanding how to keep juvenile recidivism decreased.

Diversion programs have become an alternative to detention but may be more useful before delinquency takes place. Most often signs of misconduct in juveniles occur at an early age. Those signs must not be ignored and should be used to begin diversion programs and family interventions. Benson (2017) proposed an association in the juvenile system comprising official and parental involvement, explaining that parents are more exasperated about their children when the juveniles are engrossed more and more into crime. The parents are less involved in the process of rehabilitating their children as they become increasingly frustrated.

In Chapter 2, I elaborate on the first age of the offense, peer influence, and family dynamics. The result supported the initiative by the DJJFC in propelling change through their juvenile system, which focused on the reduction of teenage exposure to trauma to those who have a low frequency of reoffending (Robst, 2017).

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

There is a significant problem of juvenile delinquency and recidivism in the U.S., affecting the social order and functioning of communities. This problem peaked during the early 1990s with substantial arrests of youth offenders who were tried in courts of law. This rise in juvenile delinquency raised concerns among policy makers and the public, calling for government action to reduce the problem. Today, the rate of juvenile arrests has decreased dramatically, but there is still a problem with high rates of recidivism. Recidivism among juveniles is one of the essential concepts in criminal justice that explains a relapse into criminal behavior. Unlike adult recidivism, the national figures for juvenile recidivism are not readily available, especially for states that rarely post the statistics. Research focusing on predicting young recurrence has been limited, with most studies focusing on adult crimes.

There has been a significant problem with juvenile recidivism in the country despite a decline in arrest based on reports by the Department of Juvenile Justice. To effectively prevent juvenile delinquency, researchers believe in the need to examine the nature of adolescent delinquent behaviors (Agenyi, 2017). Scholars and practitioners have, for a long time, debated on whether a punishment or a treatment approach works best in reducing juvenile crime and recidivism. Several strategies have been proposed in the last few decades to deal with this persistent problem in the U.S.

I provided the research of juvenile arrest, delinquency, and recidivism in the state of Georgia as well as other states in the U.S., including programs that have been put in

place to manage the situation. Many studies on this topic suggest that a juvenile's negative behavior reduces when different types of interventions increase. I began with the historical background and structure of the juvenile justice system before discussing the risk factors to juvenile delinquency and recidivism. Last, I reviewed several diversion programs in Georgia that worked as a treatment model for juvenile delinquents.

Literature Search Strategy

I reviewed the literature on juvenile recidivism in Georgia, the U.S., and contained statistics from both the State of Georgia and the U.S. There were several articles on this issue of interest that provided data on the rates of juvenile delinquency and recidivism, as well as the risk factors. I considered articles that focused on juvenile recidivism and appropriate intervention programs. I conducted the search from the Walden University Library, Sage Journals, and ERIC.

Furthermore, I extracted data for this literature review from reports in the FBI arrests, state-wide published juvenile reports, and summaries from the Office of Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) and the DJJFC. Critical words used in searching for journal articles included *juvenile delinquency*; *juvenile recidivism*; *diversion programs*; *risk factors*; and *school discipline*. I selected materials if they met the search criteria of being published for more than five years and focusing on juvenile programs.

Theoretical Foundation

The theoretical ideology and perspective of Ronald Akers in the social learning theory inspired the foundation of this paper (Akers & Jensen, 2017). This is a criminology theory that describes how the social environment and resources can

influence a person's behavior. The method offers a better understanding of juvenile recidivism by explaining crime and deviance while embracing variables that motivate and control criminal behavior. The social learning theory by Hirschi (2018) provided the theoretical foundation of understanding juvenile recidivism. The theory asserted that children learn to engage in crime through associations and exposure, thus emphasizing the importance of social control. Children will develop morals, attitudes, and behaviors based on the kind of association they have and the social environment they grow up in.

The differential association theory will also be used to describe the problem with juvenile delinquency. This theory states that people learn and develop deviant behavior through their interaction with others (Akers & Jensen, 2017). The society and social setting of a child's environment subjects them to learning abnormal behaviors. Theorists today are examining delinquency by focusing on the internal and external influencing factors, with most theorists agreeing on the importance of using both elements to understand misconduct before determining the best response to intervene.

The social support theory is an essential theoretical foundation when looking to understand juvenile recidivism. *Social support* refers to the emotional resources that a family provides, such as encouragement, comfort, and love that has the potential to reduce criminal behavior. When such support is consistent, the youth may feel accepted in society, thus reducing the chances of reoffending. The support can be achieved by providing tangible resources and high levels of emotional support (Akers & Jensen, 2017). The family is the primary institution that determines whether a child develops delinquency or not. According to these theories, a child who is raised in a negative family

environment may use violence as an escape mechanism. Such individuals who lack family support end up in street gangs and develop criminal practices in adolescent years. This emphasizes the importance of family and social support for juvenile delinquents.

Juveniles and Mental Health Issues

Research on juvenile offenders has constantly shown a relationship between mental health and criminal behavior. Considering the young offender's Axis I and Axis II disorders adds to the theoretical framework of the research. It is important to note that untreated mental health disorders are considered a risk factor for recidivism in juvenile offenders. Mental health disorders in young people are common and recognized as a significant problem. Younger offenders are one of the highest populations known to have a high prevalence of mental health disorders (Mbelwa, 2017). The study highlights that most of the young offenders tend to show a significant rate of both internalized and externalized disorders compared to normative peers (Mbelwa, 2017). Exposure to physical, emotional, and sexual trauma is common in young offenders. Such traumas caused mental disorders such as depression and bipolar disorders, which may force young adults to be involved in crime-related cases. To minimize recidivism, mental health treatment is necessary. Therefore, rehabilitation programs are essential and effective for juvenile offenders.

Personality disorders, substance-related disorders, and disruptive disorders have been discovered to cause a high chance of reoffending (Bessler et al., 2018). Bessler et al. (2018) portrayed that substance-related disorders are the most significant predictors of violence in young offenders after detention. Violence among youth is a significant factor

for the youths to enter the life of crime. Disruptive disorders are one of the highest reported in juvenile institutions. Disruptive disorders, such as antisocial behaviors, angry outbursts, defiance of authority figures, and others, are against the social norms and are also great precursors of crime and violence. Conduct disorders are the most diagnosed in male offenders. Conduct disorders contribute to aggressive behaviors such as cruelty, bullying, and fighting. Antisocial personality disorder has also been recorded diagnosed mainly in young male offenders (Bessler et al., 2018). Compared with young offenders with no personality disorders, researchers recorded that most young offenders with personality disorders have shown distress, delinquency, high levels of anger-irritability, reduced resistance, and aggression (Bessler et al., 2018). Youths who have personality disorders are affected by their surroundings, and they have a high potential of entering the life of crime.

Besides having personality disorders, young offenders have shown considerably high rates of mental illness. Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder is another diagnosis that is frequently related to antisocial behaviors (Osho et al., 2016). A recent meta-analysis gave data showing that, compared with youths in the community, there was an increase in the prevalence of attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorders in young offenders who have been detained (Osho et al., 2016). This was a study of the relationship between antisocial disorders and mood disorders. The results showed depressive symptoms in youths might contribute to antisocial behaviors (Osho et al., 2016).

A large-scale study found a great combination and continuation of mental health disorders in young offenders even after five years of detention, mainly for individuals

with multiple disorders (Osho et al., 2016). In addition, the study has also shown that even though comorbidity rates have reduced in young offenders after an arrest, they are still more significant than those recorded in the general population. It has been recorded that many young offenders do not receive necessary treatment during confinement (Osho et al., 2016). This contributes to many of them reoffending even after being released.

According to researchers, most youth offenders have expressed symptoms of mental disorders and personality disorders (Bessler et al., 2018). Juveniles may not be aware that different disorders may contribute to their involvement in the life of crime. Therefore, proper care and treatment are essential and necessary for juvenile practices to help young offenders recover from their disorders. The intervention of rehabilitation programs and adequate treatment should be implemented in every practice. Proper counseling and therapy may improve the mental health of the juveniles and reduce recidivism rates in society.

Literary Progression

Juvenile Justice of Historical Background

The best way to understand the juvenile justice system is by examining its historical background and structure. In the U.S., the juvenile justice system emerged after a series of concerns regarding the treatment of youth offenders. Reformists looked for ways to separate children from adults when they proposed the formation of a juvenile court system. Initially, the criminal justice system treated children as adults and punished children equally regardless if the child understood the wrongfulness of his or her actions (Sickmund & Puzanchera, 2014). Reformers believed children below the age of 14 were

not capable of determining the illegality of their acts and could not stand trial for a felony. It was critical, therefore, that a separate court was set up in which prosecutions for minors were conducted, bearing in mind the child's ability to process the magnitude of the case at hand. At the same time, these courts focused on warning minor offenders and deterring future crimes rather than punishing children for minor offenses.

A juvenile court system was established in 1899, changing the treatment of juveniles through several propositions. For example, the juvenile system proposed a need to create a facility for dealing with troubled youths rather than sending them to prisons. The reformers advocated for children below 18 years to be treated differently from adults, which led to the creation of a house of refuge. The juvenile justice system was developed to deal with young offenders separately from adult offenders, with the first juvenile court opening in 1899 (Monahan, Steinberg & Piquero, 2015). The legal concept of minor status emerged from a recognition that juveniles had different cognition and moral capacity compared to adults and should be treated from an angle of reform rather than punishment. A minor in the eyes of the law is someone under the legal adult age of 18, though this legal age varies in various states and countries. The juvenile justice system focused on individuals under the legal age of 18 who are found on the wrong side of the law (Agenyi, 2017). Its primary purpose was to provide rehabilitation services by following the best interest of a child.

Since its establishment, the structure of the juvenile justice system has not gone through many reforms, mostly retaining its goals and purposes. There have been some differences in interpreting minor rights that determine how to run the court system. The

system began by operating under the philosophy of *parens patriae*, where the court acts as a parent. Later, the Delinquency Protection Act was enacted to enhance juvenile protections by separating from the adult courts (Agenyi, 2017). Another proposal established to provide a procedural due process that entailed the right to remain silent and representation by a lawyer, as well as the right to cross-examine the witnesses. This due process also allowed juveniles a right to be represented by an attorney, as well as, determining whether the offender will be tried as a minor or as an adult.

The working of a juvenile court starts by the prosecution office in a county sending a petition to the minor probation department for an incident involving youth offenders. Once received, the juvenile probation department processes the appeal based on the laws of the state, before holding a preliminary inquiry into the issue. This is followed by informing the youth offender of the charge, then deciding whether to handle the case formally or informally depending on the intensity of the wrongful act. A formal process in court is done for an offender who contests the charges; while an informal hearing is done for an offender who admits being involved in the act as they enter a plea (Agenyi, 2017).

In establishing the juvenile justice system, authorities determined that a child would become deviant when they lack a stable social environment. In this regard, the history and development of the juvenile court presented a picture of a caring and benevolent system that promotes the best interests of a child. The system allowed children to be separated from adults in the legal process of civil and criminal law. The early juvenile justice system had goals and purposes that were different from those of

punishment and deterrence, as they focused on probation, supervision, and short-term treatments (Monahan, Steinberg, & Piquero, 2015).

Age of the First Offense

Several demographic factors of a person have been consistently found to predict juvenile recidivism. Such factors include the age of first offense, gender, race, as well as socioeconomic status of youths. Age is an essential factor when examining the rates of juvenile recidivism and can be used to understand why some people reoffend with a similar crime. The age of first offense emerged as an essential risk factor to juvenile recidivism. Researchers showed that an individual is most likely to repeat a misdemeanor if they are involved in delinquency at an early age (Myers, Chan, & Mariano, 2016).

Juvenile recidivism impacted by age is highly likely since the offender, in most cases, during the first offense, gets off with a slight warning. On the other hand, a young offender is not mature enough to grasp the magnitude of their actions; therefore, after correction, they still would not have understood the fact that crime is an adverse action. Older offenders may have an advanced understanding and perception sense, and therefore, can quickly be impacted by the correctional experience they are subjected to in juvenile correctional facilities. Having fully experienced the consequences of their actions, older offenders are in a better position to develop a changed mindset and perspective.

Children with an early introduction to the criminal justice system through crime and without proper guidance from society have a stronger tendency to repeat offenses that may lead to a life of crime. Through studies, researchers have shown that a child is

likely to reoffend if they encounter the justice system at an early age compared to those who enter it in the later years of adolescence (Myers, Chan, & Mariano, 2016). For example, delinquents ages 12 and under are more often placed in diversion programs to prevent recidivism than those who are first sentenced when they are older. Through other studies, researchers have shown that children who are arrested at an early age are more likely to be incarcerated by the time they turn 18 (Myers, Chan, & Mariano, 2016).

It is easy to understand recidivism by considering the age of first offense, and the type of crime committed during this first arrest. Such children are likely to grow into adult criminal jurisdiction doing the same evil. Researchers showed that youths who enter delinquency early are most likely to be incarcerated in adult prisons by the time they get to their 22nd birthday (Myers, Chan, & Mariano, 2016). Researchers showed the effect of age on recidivism by comparing age bands and the rate of recurrence in the country. They showed that young sex offenders post a higher risk of recidivism. Research on the effect of age on juvenile recidivism is an excellent area of interest for forensic practitioners. It can be used when designing a treatment plan to reduce the rate of recurrence among juvenile offenders.

Peer Influence

The social environment that a child grows up in plays a vital role in the behavior that he learns and influence into delinquency and criminal behavior. This made peer influence essential aspects of juvenile delinquency and recidivism. Researchers showed that an association with peers of delinquent behavior made a child engage in recidivism and affected recovery (Nisar et al., 2015). A child is at risk of learning negligent acts

when they are in contact with deviant peers. Nisar et al. (2015) stated that children would learn that crime is acceptable from their interaction with peers in the social environment and will learn how to commit the offense based on the social environment. The nature of peer relationships, family environment, and social settings that a child associates defines juvenile deviance.

Various research works indicated the close connection between lack of family guidance and peer pressure in teenagers, and they are prone to committing criminal offenses. Generally, children who are not closely monitored and guided by their family members are left to fend for themselves in the streets; thereby, getting themselves mixed up in street gangs. Peer pressure has an adverse effect on the child or the teenager. It introduces them to not only alcohol and drug consumption but also criminal life. These kids get involved in hood gangs, and if left unattended to, there is a high risk that their involvement in a group and illegal activities will only get extensive.

Researchers have shown a relationship between peer contagion and juvenile recidivism (Nisar et al., 2015). *Peer contagion* is defined as an influence that juveniles in a neighborhood setting have on other children that makes them reoffend. In this regard, researchers claimed that children in a troubled neighborhood have high tendencies of reoffending when they encounter other juveniles. This association has also been shown to determine the type of crime that a person commits or recommits. Individuals are most likely to engage in drug crimes when they associate with other troubled youths participating in drug activity.

Researchers showed how the contextual forces for a person's social network determine the crime specialization, as well as patterns of crime. Teenagers are likely to reoffend when they live in the vicinity of high crime offenses. Those residing in high risk drug areas are likely to engage in drug crimes while those staying in a neighborhood with high incidents of property crime tend to reoffend with property crime. This showed an association between the community and the type of recidivism in crime for juvenile offenders (Nisar et al., 2015). Juveniles released from probation or prison have difficulties avoiding associations with delinquent peers, which increases the recidivism rate. It becomes difficult when growing up in a neighborhood with an environment that encourages delinquency, making it difficult to intervene and correct behaviors.

Research on peer influences focuses on an aspect of gang membership and how it determines recidivism among the youth. Researchers stated that gangs influence deviant customs in juveniles by isolating them from prosocial arenas (Pyrooz, Sweeten, & Piquero, 2013). Teenagers who are found in a delinquent gang mostly dissociate from other social groups and end up reoffending after reentry into the community. Adolescents in a gang tend to show higher levels of delinquency and recidivism. Gangs represent the effect of peer influence on youth delinquency. Gang membership has been developed as an adolescent-oriented phenomenon that influences criminal behavior and high chances of reoffending (Pyrooz, Sweeten, & Piquero, 2013). Once a person reenters the community, there are high chances of reverting to the same gang and reoffending.

Family Dynamics

Children born in a troubled society are more likely to develop into delinquency due to their association with crime, and the fact that they lack societal guidance. Children growing up in a family setting where adults have poor moral behavior is a factor in juvenile delinquency and recidivism since they lack moral guidance from their elders. Children who lack a good personal relationship with their parents or guardians are at risk of learning delinquency because they may act out thinking it is a way of gaining the attention of their elders and peers (Meldrum, Encalada, & Connolly, 2017). On the other hand, such children without a significant relationship with a parent are more susceptible to a criminogenic nature influenced by the society they live in (Meldrum, Encalada, & Connolly, 2017). A lack of family cohesion deprives children of social attachment and support that is needed to nurture a morally upright child, as well as the lack of moral guidance. Children are left to discover for themselves the right ethical decisions from the wrong ones. Family dynamics are more diverse when it comes to the black community.

Black families have reported less family cohesion and guidance than the white race because black families are more focused on stabilizing financially to the extent that the upholding of principles is placed on the backstage. In the same manner, children from the nonwhite communities, because they face a lot of social prejudice, have developed into crime and violence. What this implies is that because the black community is predominantly associated with the use of violence as a means of self-defense against racism, children growing up in these families learn no better means of communication apart from violence. More black families engage in theft and the trade of illegal drugs as

the only means of trade they can afford. From a young age, children are influenced by these prevailing family situations in crimes that they grow up not knowing any better means of sustenance.

According to Meldrum, Encalada, and Connolly (2017), the rate of crimes in black families, mainly through the running of cartels, is higher than in any other racial family setting. It can be argued that racial disparities introduce families of color into the illegal side of life in which children are expected to take over the cartels, hence are groomed, almost by default nature, from a young age. This would explain why statistics point out that children from troubled families are more prone to be rowdy and disorderly in the school setting. Troubled families in this case refers to a family's history in crime and illegal activities, in which black families are more prominent.

Troubled families include the spectrum in which the children are brought up in violent homes. According to psychologists, children who experience a lot of violence growing up are more likely to be violent when they grow up. This is because they nurture the notion that violence is the only way to assert one's presence in society. Children who are raised by parents and guardians who abuse alcohol and drugs are likely to consume drugs and alcohol when they grow up. In the same manner, children who are raised in violent homes, or with guardians who are into theft, are likely to become violent and thieves as they grow. Therefore, it is essential that from a young age, children are brought up in stable environments where they are taught the value of personal principles and virtues.

Crime is sometimes blamed on family dynamics, including poor parenting and abuse. For example, cases of child maltreatment, such as neglect and abuse, can create an environment for delinquency and recidivism. Children develop aggressive and violent behavior based on how they were raised in their families. The family strain during childhood years is another factor in juvenile recidivism. Children who are not raised with structure and positive guidance could begin turning to the streets, in the process compromising the behavior of a child.

In discussing family dynamics, an aspect of family support emerges as crucial in understanding juvenile delinquency and recidivism. Family support entails the emotional attachment that family members provide to the child in the form of encouragement, affection, and necessary resources. The family can influence the behavior of a child since children reside with their parents, which means support or lack of family support determines the direction that a child takes. Parents can take the initiative to help their children through proper parenting and teaching appropriate moral values. A discussion on the emotional theory also takes center stage when discussing family dynamism, since children who receive emotional support from their parents can form secure attachments that deter them from delinquency (Taylor, 2016). Studies have shown the relationship between emotional attachment and juvenile delinquency; whereby, a strained emotional attachment breeds misconduct and criminal behavior.

Family support in affirming the child is critical in encouraging the child to trust in themselves and to spread the love they are shown in the family to those around them. According to statistics, children who are taught a lot of love from home are more

accommodative of other people in their surrounding environment, whether these individuals share the same school of thought with them or not. Simply put, children who are shown affection and are affirmed do not get easily irritated when other people disagree with them, but instead spread the same devotion and understanding they are taught at home. In the same aspect, children who do not receive love and support from their homes are generally bitter and upset and are emotionally detached from their environment. Being detached implies showing no affection or understanding, especially to those individuals who do not share the same school of thought. Therefore, they resort to violence as the only means to make a statement and consequently, are more prone to juvenile offenses than the rest.

Emotional attachment and support are a crucial component when trying to understand juvenile recidivism in the U.S. According to the attachment theory, there is a bond that children establish with their parents which helps in emotional development. This bond is necessary for maintaining a child to grow into a responsible adult. Researchers observed how appropriate emotional support helps to deter crime and delinquency in the community (Taylor, 2016). In this regard, the emotional attachment and support can be developed when looking to reduce the rates of recidivism. It is essential to examine the implications that family dynamics have on juvenile delinquency and use the findings to produce the best intervention for juvenile delinquency.

School Experiences and the School to Prison Pipeline

Another important factor when discussing youth and delinquency is school experiences and their effect on a child. Schools form an essential part of child

socialization, providing an environment for learning social norms while interacting with other children to develop into responsible adults. Teachers also provide guidance to students, making school an essential part of juvenile delinquency based on the experiences that a child has at school. Researchers described the impacts of disciplining children by expelling them from school as it drives a person into crime (Mallett, 2016). Removing children from school deprives them of an outstanding learning environment while possibly disposing of them in an atmosphere of crime. Removing students from the school environment puts them into the unsupervised or problematic home environment that would affect their social development.

Racial discrimination practiced in school also impacts the learner's likelihood to engage in juvenile delinquency. Black learners in the school setting mostly get picked on by their white colleagues. This not only creates an intense atmosphere in which the learners are not able to learn alongside each other, but it also breeds juvenile delinquency. Learners who are discriminated against in these circumstances would mostly reiterate by harming the students who bully them. Such actions include picking fights with each other in the school setting. The degree of such acts depends on the degree of bullying the black student's experience.

A suspension or expulsion that removes a child from the school environment can subject them to a social environment where they interact with other troubled youths. This means the child may end up spending time with other juvenile delinquents in the streets that can encourage engaging in criminal activities. As a result, theorists have been discussing the school to prison pipeline, which describes how schools have become a

conduit to the juvenile justice systems (Mallett, 2016). This school to prison pipeline explains how school experiences can create a ground for juvenile delinquency by pushing children out of schools and into the criminal justice system. The process has been blamed for criminalizing children by putting them in early contact with the law enforcement officers through the zero tolerance policies. This system was developed by the zero tolerance liberal policies in schools mandating harsh punishments for all infractions. This policy means the school does not tolerate any violation of school rules regardless of its intensity. As a result, there has been an increase in suspensions and expulsions, with suspensions increasing by 51 percent while expulsions are jumping by 32 percent (Paretta, 2018).

Studies have also shown that students are twice as likely to be arrested when they are suspended or expelled from schools. Such students are also expected to get into contact with the juvenile justice system before the age of 15 making it difficult to walk away from crime (Monahan, Steinberg, & Piquero, 2015). Children who fail to complete high school due to suspension or expulsion are likely to be incarcerated in less than two years after they are removed from school. Once a child encounters the police through disciplinary cases, chances are they will drop out of high school before graduation.

According to journal articles, students are often pushed into the criminal justice system when they are put into contact with the police for disciplinary purposes. This includes having daily police presence to protect students and ensure safety, as there are many incidences where the police are involved in handling disciplinary issues (Paretta, 2018). This can play a role in juvenile delinquency as the criminal occurrences can

negatively impact students. The presence of law enforcement agencies in schools increases the likelihood of arresting children under 15 years. Mallett (2016) showed that the school to prison pipeline is a severe issue in the U.S. that causes significant harm to juveniles.

This process of the school to prison system is often fueled by racial bias, often placing minorities in prison systems while resulting in the burgeoning of the prisons. Black Americans are the majority in prisons compared to other races. Research from school to prison has shown that racial disparity in incarceration begins with this pipeline (Monahan, Steinberg, & Piquero, 2015). The minority groups tend to face more significant suspension and expulsion rates and, therefore, high chances of getting into the criminal justice system. Studies have shown that the school to prison system has shown that minority groups are punished more frequently and harshly than other racial groups (OJJDP, 2015). The suspensions and expulsions for minority students are more than double than any other ethnic group. The disparity is especially more significant among nonserious offenses such as violation of dress code but punished harshly, most students who are arrested while in school rarely complete high school.

While discussing the effect of school experiences, researchers mentioned the influence of the labeling theory to understand why children end up in the criminal world. The labeling theory plays a crucial role in this school to pipeline system and juvenile recidivism since children are likely to identify and behave in ways that reflect how others label them. In this regard, labeling kids as "bad or troubled" by the school authority leads them to internalize the label. This is because most students who get in the criminal justice

system while in school are mostly labeled as juvenile delinquents, which affects their education completion (Sharlein, 2018). There is also an aspect of the stigma associated with labeling children as criminals. This stigma can rub badly on the youth by creating experiences of depression, anger, and confusion of being mistreated. As a result, this experience can drive a person into delinquency. The encounters often affect the child from succeeding academically or even completing school.

The school policies and practices of criminalization and exclusion associated with the school to prison pipeline are linked to the juvenile and criminal justice system. Punishing children for minor classroom misbehaviors plays a role in pushing students to the street and into the criminal justice system (Mallett, 2016). Researchers have proposed putting an end to these policies that prioritize punishing over correcting through harsh tactics such as zero tolerance. There should be an emphasis to end the school to prison pipeline and support more effective discipline for behavior modification. Children belong in school and should remain within this school environment. Keeping the at-risk kids in the class can be a better way of diverting them from engaging in criminal activities.

Research on zero tolerance policies in schools has shown it contributes to pushing students out of schools into the dangerous world of crime. The punitive measures tend to criminalize students and create an environment for juveniles. At the same time, results have shown that increased surveillance and attempts to control the at-risk deviant youth in society often foster the criminal behavior intended to prevent (Monahan, Steinberg, & Piquero, 2015).

Juvenile Arrest Statistics

The National Center for Juvenile Justice has been involved in keeping records of juvenile arrests in the U.S. based on data published in the FBI's own crime database. This literature review considered the rate of juvenile arrests in the State of Georgia and the U.S. The statistics include the total juvenile arrests, the number of violent crime and property crimes, as well as the number of detained juveniles from violent and property crimes. Findings from these statistics have indicated that there is a decline in the rate of juvenile arrests across the country in all demographic aspects (OJJDP, 2015). This is partly due to policies enacted to reduce minor crimes that have led to a reduction in the number of youth offenders across the country. These policies emphasized correction rather than punishment leading to a reduction in the number of juvenile arrests.

Research on juvenile arrests in Georgia and across the U.S. shows a decline in the number of juvenile arrests in the last decade. The study has shown a decrease in the number of juvenile arrests by over 70 percent since 1997 (The National Reentry Resource Center, 2014). The research examined national trends in serious violence to determine why juvenile crime has been dropping dramatically in recent decades (Monahan, Steinberg, & Piquero, 2015). The number of juvenile arrests includes various types of delinquency such as drug violations; property crimes; crimes against a person; and public order offenses. Teenage arrest rates for drug violations were at its lowest level in 2016, as well as arrests for property crimes such as burglary, arson, and theft that were at their lowest in 2016 since 1980. The patterns of offending by juveniles have also been changing since 1980 with an emphasis on treatment rather than punishment. In 2017, the

number of juvenile arrests in Fulton County, Georgia, was 886, a drop from 892 in the previous year. 2015 recorded 1,059 cases of juvenile arrests.

Juvenile arrest rates for crimes of murder have reduced in the last five years in Georgia and other states within the U.S., as with other forms of violent crimes such as assault and homicide. The arrest rates for violent crimes have substantially declined for every younger group, with juveniles showing the most significant decline by falling more than 65 percent (The National Reentry Resource Center, 2014). There was a reduction in the number of arrests for violent crimes such as aggravated assault and robbery, registering a more than 50 percent decline in Georgia. The juvenile murder arrest fell by 44 percent between 2013 and 2018 when it reached its lowest level (The National Reentry Resource Center, 2014).

Recent data has shown that male offender's number more than female offenders among the juveniles arrested in Georgia and around the U. S. (Thompson & Morris, 2013). Boys are three times more likely to engage in crime compared to girls, and they are also more likely to be adjudicated. There is a higher drop in male juvenile offenders compared to females because males commit most violent crimes. The number of juvenile arrests has reduced for all races in recent years, according to data from the OJJDP. Violent crime arrest rates for black youth remains more significant than that of white children. Juvenile arrest rates decreased for all genders and racial groups since 2007 compared to the previous decade.

However, it was interesting to observe that while statistics show a declining level in male offenders, the rate for female offenders has been on a steady rise over the years

(Roth, 2016). This can be attributed to the fact that the traditional paradigms of crime, such as upbringing, have been shifting in recent years. Traditionally, the difference between the rates of juvenile offenses committed by males and females showed influence in how members of the different sexes are raised. Some of the characteristics that determine juvenile delinquency include less education, aggression, more mental health problems, and higher rates of abuse and poverty (Roth, 2016). Understanding these factors is essential to determining the statistics of male and female offenders. In the past, females committed fewer offenses than their male counterparts.

Females who were exposed to less informal education, like most males, were highly likely to commit offenses than the females who were exposed to informal learning. Informal education focuses more on training children on skills and principles, which are essential in deterring crime because it raises self-awareness on the part of the child, as well as, the ability to choose between rights and wrongs (Abajobir et al., 2017). However, with the advancement of formal education, children are less likely to benefit from informal learning, thus have decreased moral consciousness. This explains why females nowadays have almost the same crime rates as males.

Mental health problems as a factor affect both males and females; thereby, exposing them to the same levels of committing juvenile offenses. Mental instability is becoming more rampant in contemporary society where juveniles of both sexes are affected by various risk factors, such as the need to conform (Baysan, Arabaci, & Taş, 2017). This further leads to the risk of exposing them to drugs and alcohol abuse, which not only impairs their judgment, but has the long-term effect of impacting their mental

health. Mental health is essential when it comes to making sound life decisions. In correction facilities in Georgia, and across the U.S. today, teenagers are committed for offenses such as burglary and violence, which do not necessarily qualify for criminal activities, but rather the disturbance of social peace and disorder (Underwood & Washington, 2016). This implies the fact that mental health instability is on the rise for teenagers impacting their judgment to the point that they are not able to think rationally, but instead resort to violence since they are highly irritable.

Higher rates of abuse and poverty in Georgia and the rest of the U.S. have been vital in leveling the difference in rates between male and female juvenile offenders. Higher rates of poverty, for instance, are becoming more prevalent in households with low income across the state; thereby, exposing both genders to the same risk factor: crime (Garbarino & Plantz, 2017). These children resort to crime to raise finances to support both themselves and their families at large. It is interesting to observe how the campaigns for gender equality in the past decade have led to social awareness on the fact that the girl child equally has the right to fight for the sustenance of the family. Interpretation of this awareness indicated in various spectrums, including crime, both genders believe they have equal rights to fight for the sustenance of their families regardless of the activity involved therein. In downtown areas of cities in Georgia, for instance, more females are joining hood gangs and other criminal cohorts where they fight to make their voices heard.

Higher rates of gender abuse and violence have also led to the "female awareness" in which females fight for equality on whatever level they can. In so doing, the state

continues to experience an uproar of female violence as a means of retaliation for the gender violence to which they are subjected. In this aspect, violence can be perceived as the only means of defense the females can mount against male chauvinism.

Another factor that determines the rate of juvenile delinquency is their race. According to researchers, blacks make for the most significant number of teenage delinquency rates in Georgia. In a race ratio released in 2017, the proportion of blacks to Hispanic or Latino juvenile offenders, who make up for the second largest category, was 3.1:0.1 for arrests, 5.7:1.4 for detention, and 5.2:1.3 for imprisonment in Georgia (Underwood & Washington, 2016). These statistics point out that the black race makes up for the most significant percentage of juvenile delinquency in the state. To understand these statistics, it is crucial to determine the factors that contribute to the highest teenage crime rates in the black community. One of these factors is the lack of employment within the black community. Georgia, like most of the states in the U.S., still experiences racial discrimination. Due to bias, the black community finds it difficult to land themselves stable and well-paying jobs in the states. The lack of employment leads to increased crime rates as individuals strive to sustain their livelihoods and pay their bills in any way they can. However, the high juvenile offense rates, contributed by racial disparity occurs in learning institutions. Schools in Georgia are highly characterized by racial discrimination in which students of color are discriminated against and bullied by their peers. This creates a sense of insecurity on the part of the students with color who feel out of place. To get back at the students who bully them, most of the black students resort to violence as a means of self-defense.

According to Underwood and Washington, 2016, racial disparity in schools across Georgia was on the rise in recent years. This implies that not only do students have to worry about the bullying they are subjected to by their fellow students, but also by the systems of punishment the schools have put in place in which black students face more severe disciplinary measures than the rest of the student body. In 2016, for instance, a group of black students came together to fight against the racial disparity in public schools' suspension and expulsion. These students, pushing for reforms from both the state and federal education departments, hinted towards the fact that racial disparity makes it easy for them to not only get along with the other student body but creates a sense of insecurity regarding school officials. Understanding this aspect is instrumental in understanding the factors that push black students into considering violence as the only way to assert their capability in the school. Had the learning institutions been more considerate of the black kids when it comes to school policies, then most of these kids would have resorted to making their presence felt through their academic performance.

It is argued; therefore, that juvenile delinquency is not only a means of mischief but also a means of getting back at the manipulative and oppressive systems of governance at whatever level. In other words, juvenile delinquency is a way in which children defend themselves and stand for what is right, equality. Understanding delinquency from this perspective is essential in putting in place mechanisms not only to punish juvenile violence but also to put in place mechanisms for inclusivity and diversity at the school. Like the 2016 students pushing for educational reforms pointed out, it is difficult to learn in an environment where one feels unwelcomed unless they have a

means of getting back at their oppressors by making them pay. This indicates that unless educational reforms are considered on the same level as juvenile delinquency reforms, then it does not matter what correctional changes are put in place, violence in learning institutions will still be witnessed.

Reports have also shown that there are fewer juveniles getting prison sentences for crimes, and more people are adopted into rehabilitation and diversion centers. Regardless of gender, juvenile arrest rates for most offenders have declined in the last decade. The relative decline was more significant for males than females for all types of crimes. For example, the aggravated assault rate or simple assault rate for males had a more substantial decline compared to female crimes (Thompson & Morris, 2013).

Statistics on juvenile arrests in Georgia and the U.S. indicated a decline in the rates of arrests and sentencing (The National Reentry Resource Center, 2014). Despite the reduction in the number of juvenile arrests, recidivism rates among juvenile offenders remained high. The recidivism rate for juveniles in Georgia was 48 percent in 2017 despite a decline in the number of arrests. The rate of juvenile recidivism in the U.S. is estimated to be about two-thirds of all releases into the community (Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice, 2017).

Risk Factors of Juvenile Recidivism

Recidivism refers to the tendency of a convicted criminal to reoffend after they have been released from prison. Juvenile recidivism is the tendency of a juvenile to reoffend after they have been discharged or released from their crimes. Recurrence can be described as the act of an offender to commit another offense once they have been

released from correctional facilities, or after they have been reprimanded. The crime committed the second time can be of the same nature as the former or of a different nature. The degree of the latter offense also varies in that it can be of a lesser or a higher degree, although the second scenario is mostly the case. The rates of recidivism have remained consistently high in the country, leading to researchers in this field to determine the factors associated with reoffending. This literature review on the risk factors of juvenile recidivism has shown that several factors can influence a youth offender to engage in repeat crimes (Akesson et al. 2014).

The rate of recidivism is an indication of the degree to which released inmates are rehabilitated and the quality of correctional programs offered to inmates. In many states around the country, over 80 percent of the youth who are incarcerated end up being rearrested due to reoffending with similar crimes within three years (Alper & Durose, 2018). In Fulton County, recidivism rates were at 21.3% in 2017, a 0.1% drop from 2016's 21.4%. The outcomes for youths on community supervision is not much better on the behavior of youth offenders. Among the youth who were arrested during the one-year follow-up, studies have shown that half of those were re-arrested within the first three months. This shows the extent of recidivism in the country, especially among the juvenile delinquency.

Several factors contribute to this high rate of recidivism in Georgia, as well as the entire country. These factors can be categorized into several categories, including mental, physical, environmental, as well as social factors (Hirschfield, 2018). These risk factors are also related to the individual, family, school, as well as the neighborhood and social

environment. Understanding the risk factors of juvenile recidivism is crucial in developing the appropriate intervention model. Physical elements can comprise elements that can then drive a person into crime. They include factors such as unemployment, inadequate housing, or lack of social services. There is also research linking delinquency with victimization, where a person who is victimized has diverse behavioral consequences that expose them to misconduct (Sickmund & Puzanchera, 2014).

When it comes to understanding unemployment as a risk factor associated with juvenile recidivism, it is critical to point out that an individual likely commits a crime due to unemployment (i.e., to get financial aid for themselves and their family). After such a person has been charged with the offense and served their punishment, there is a high likelihood that they will still commit a crime since the factor that pushed them to commit suicide in the first place (unemployment) remains unchanged (Wolff, Intravia, Baglivio & Piquero, 2018). Understanding recidivism from this aspect is essential in putting in place mechanisms that will ensure that the offender is exposed to economic opportunities once they are released back into society. One of the interventions that can be adopted is the placement of the offender in rehabilitation centers that offer vocational training. This ensures that the offender is equipped with the technical know-how for a given activity that they could engage in once they have been released. Vocational training ensures that the offender is prepared for a business that will act as a source of income, thereby, solving their unemployment issue.

The social support relations are a risk factor to juvenile recidivism that comprises of home conditions. According to research, social support is an important aspect when

looking to reduce reoffending, as the social bonds existing in society decreases the likelihood of recidivism by providing an outlet to discuss personal issues and get accepted (Akesson et al. 2014). Family relationships also play a role in determining whether a person will engage in the same behavior again. A lack of social support between a child and his parents can increase the risk of juvenile delinquency or recidivism.

Social support implies that it is critical for an offender to be incorporated back into society once they have been cleared of their charges and undergone rehabilitation. This ensures that they are guided on the way they should go to get their footing into society and establish peaceful coexisting (Leverso, Bielby, & Hoetler, 2015). The lack of social support is mostly manifested in the discrimination ex-convicts face when they reenter society. Due to the mentality that they are a threat to social peace, most community members do not want to associate with ex-convicts. One may find themselves isolated and unable to socialize with the people they once called friends and family.

To solve the issue of the lack of social support, it is essential that the community members are guided in their role in helping the ex-convicts get back to the way of life in the community and contribute to the welfare by sharing what they learned in the correctional facility. The lack of social support is critical in promoting recidivism in that it advocates for discrimination and the desire for the ex-convict to get back at the people discriminating against them. This explains why such a convict would be highly likely to commit an offense that is of a greater magnitude than their first offense.

Youths living in disadvantaged neighborhoods are also likely to recidivate, mainly the black community. Studies on the risk factors have indicated how poverty can be linked to juvenile delinquency, where children staying in poor conditions are pushed into a life of crime. Most juveniles who witness crime within their neighborhood are at risk of committing a crime in the first arrest or reoffending once they reenter the community (Alper & Durose, 2018). Children living in impoverished neighborhoods or those in deprived areas are highly likely to engage in violence or crime.

Poverty as a factor for juvenile recidivism possesses a social risk for a juvenile offender who may express their interest at looking for resources to answer to their various needs, regardless of the means used (Vidal, 2017). It is critical to understand this aspect to ensure that the risk of recidivism is addressed from its root cause. In solving poverty, just like in solving employment, it is critical that the offender is introduced to vocational training in which they are taught how to be economically productive without necessarily having to rely on a third party for employment. This is particularly critical because with the rising number of university graduates in various fields, the chances of jobs in the state, as well as, the rest of the U.S., are becoming slimmer by the day. To address this, it is essential that people, especially offenders, are taught how to be self-reliant economically by being creative and innovative in the sense that they can operate their own economic endeavors.

The criminal history of a person is another risk factor when considering recidivism in the U.S. This entails the history of arrests, prosecutions, or the history of antisocial behavior in a child. For example, the history of anti-social behavior in a child,

including prior felony arrests, detention, or residential placements, increases the likelihood of reoffending. Personal characteristics, such as the personality of a person, play a role in juvenile recidivism. Research has shown that the temperament of a person, such as aggression and impulsivity, plays a role in recurrence. Youths exhibiting an indication of problematic personality with low levels of self-control are likely to recidivate (Alper & Durose, 2018).

Criminal history is influenced by several factors, such as common anti-social factors, as well as the offender's mental health condition. It is critical; therefore, that the correctional facility an offender is taken to offers them holistic correctional mechanisms, including therapy (Palmer, 2018). Unless an offender is guided on the way they should go, both morally and mentally, there is a high chance that they will commit the same offense once they have been released back into society. This is because they shall not have been offered the intervention to enable them to decide between what is right and wrong morally. Self-control is another critical area of personal history that is better addressed by therapeutic interventions. Individuals who are prone to anger are highly likely to disrupt the social peace once they are released into society since they are unable to think calmly and rationally before reacting to a situation. In this case, their recidivism level is high, unless they are guided on anger management techniques.

Studies have shown an association between peer influence and juvenile delinquency, especially dealing with gangs. Research from the journal articles indicated how gang affiliations could increasingly drive recidivism among youth after release (Pyrooz, Sweeten, & Piquero, 2013). The gangs influence a person in criminal behavior

and delinquency and make it difficult for a person to quit crime. There is an aspect of substance abuse associated with peer pressure, which is another risk factor to recidivism among youth offenders.

In this aspect, it is critical that the delinquent is taught on personal principles and guided on self-awareness, in which case they can stand up for themselves and not sink into peer influence. Peer influence mostly results from the lack of personal esteem in which an individual feels the need to conform with a given group of people so that they can discover their value and worth (Barrus, 2019). In other words, juvenile delinquent correctional facilities should be an avenue for teenagers to be asserted on their personal strengths and the need to act on their own accord rather than be misguided by groups of individuals whose perception in life is not aligned with the individual's. This will equally go a long way in rehabilitating the delinquent from substance abuse, which otherwise impairs their judgment, and makes it difficult for them to make sound decisions on their own regarding the direction they would like to take as individuals.

Another factor for juvenile delinquency related to race is racial disparity the delinquent is subjected to. Most high school violence occurs as a means of self-defense in which the students of color try to get back at their fellow students who discriminate against them for their racial origin. If such environments are not corrected from the point in which the students of color are taught to embrace each other, regardless of their skin color, then the juvenile correction will do very little to correct the situation (Calleja, Dadah, Fisher, & Fernandez, 2016). This is because once released back into society, the students who have been committed will go back to the same predisposing environmental

factors of racial discrimination in which they will continue to be teased by their peers. These students, in most cases, will still react the same they did before, with violence. This creates a vicious cycle of discrimination and violence. It is crucial; therefore, that those long-lasting solutions are implemented on both ends in which the offender is taught on other avenues to asserter their self-worth apart from violence. In the same aspect, it is critical that students of color are taught the importance of inclusivity and embracing diversity, thus promoting peaceful coexistence in the school environment.

Although various factors contribute to juvenile recidivism, the most influential factors are family attachment and their support capacities. Since most children spend their childhood residing with the family, the research emphasized the need to develop a secure emotional attachment between parents and children as a way of reducing delinquency (Taylor, 2016). These risk factors influence delinquency among youth offenders and can be used in designing treatment programs. The focus was to address these risk factors with the aim of reducing the likelihood of future criminal behavior among the youth.

Juvenile Diversion Programs

To reduce recidivism in the juvenile justice system, diversion programs have become more prevalent around the country. Diversion programs developed with the purpose of lowering early contact between the youth and the criminal justice system. The main intention of juvenile diversion programs was to handle the immature acts in an informal order instead of bringing them to courts since this can stigmatize the youth. Diversion programs focus on first offenders who have little contact with prisons and

needed supervision and guidance to help them reform evil ways. Diversion programs also focused on individuals who do not have any criminal record (May, Barranco, & Stokes, (2015).

Juvenile diversion is an intervention strategy in the juvenile justice system that entails redirecting youth offenders away from formal processing into rehabilitation, while still making them accountable for their evil deeds. In most cases, these diversion programs are made with the purpose of helping low-risk youth offenders, such as first-time offenders who can be mentored without having to imprison them. The advantage of diversion programs is their little cost in comparison to the cost of imprisonment or formal court proceedings. Cost is a crucial aspect to maintain control of with the ever-expanding criminal justice system. The main goal of diversion programs is to reduce the rates of recidivism among juvenile offenders (Kretschmar, Flannery & Singer, 2016).

Juvenile diversion programs are grounded on the labeling theory, which speaks on the effect of labeling a person as good or evil. Diversion based on reducing the aspect of criminalizing children by putting them in contact with the criminal justice system early. Diversion programs sought to minimize the effects of those associations and labeling by reducing contact. Researchers showed that recidivism occurs when youths are further processed into the juvenile justice system, as they are put in touch with other juveniles who may influence their behaviors to worsen (Kretschmar, Flannery, & Singer, 2016). The effect is mostly felt among first offenders, emphasizing the need for diversion programs.

Several diversion programs implemented in Georgia that entailed providing appropriate sanctions to juvenile offenders that are different from adult offenders. There is a juvenile arbitration program, as well as an educational forum that seeks to help youths stay away from crime (Sharlein, 2018). Diversion programs look toward assisting the child to become productive citizens, especially toward individuals who have a higher risk of recidivism. They consist of prevention and intervention programs. Some of the programs offered in Fulton County, Georgia, include the Community Restorative Boards; Family Dependency Treatment Court; Juvenile Drug Court; The Mediation Program; Learning Club; as well as, Citizen Review Panel (Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice, 2017).

Most diversion programs are done before charging the youth or before initiating them in any formal court procedures. Precharge diversion occurs with lower-risk youth; whereby, the court diverts children from other offenders before they are prosecuted in the court of law. A post charge diversion program occurs after a youth offender has been charged or prosecuted. The offenders must agree to be part of the diversion program before finalizing the plans, which means there is no further judicial processing (Kretschmar, Flannery, & Singer, 2016).

Effectiveness of diversion programs.

Many states and localities have explored diversion programs as a way of keeping youth out of the juvenile justice system. Research on the efficiency of diversion programs has shown that the programs have been successful in curbing re-offending tendencies among juveniles (Schlesinger, 2018). Individuals who go through this program and

complete all requirements are less likely to reoffend or continue with criminal activity as adults. Diversion programs come in many forms, though the basic principle is to allow youth offenders the opportunity to change.

Montgomery County, Texas, has a diversion program effective in reducing recidivism among juveniles. The school-based diversion model is designed to stem the flow of troubled teens by diverting them towards the needed behavioral health services. The program facilitates education that is aimed at preventing future offenses by the offender. The programs connect youth offenders with the required services, which reduces needless arrests and referrals to the juvenile system. They turn schools to treatment, rather than punishment for children with mental health needs.

The probation to intake diversion model program adopted by the state of Texas, known as the Front-End Diversion Initiative (FEDI), is a preadjudication diversion program in Texas that focused on diverting youths with mental health needs (Schlesinger, 2018). This program aimed to divert the young offenders from adjudication by putting them in with specialized care to receive training and mentorship. Researchers showed that states with this diversion program model were successful in reducing the number of youth arrests and reoffending. Youths who participated in FEDI were significantly less likely to be mediated than those participating in traditional supervision.

In Ohio, diversion programs are not mandatory but are recommended by the courts to help curb the child's delinquent behavior. The court requires parental/guardian involvement in the program and have consequences for the child if the program is not completed. According to OJDA.gov, program sanctions may include but are not limited

to the following: community service hours, restitution, letters of apology, written assignments, curfews, and restriction of privileges. In addition to sanctions, services such as drug or alcohol assessment, testing and treatment, academic testing and tutoring, mental health assessment, and therapy and counseling may be a part of the agreement.

The state of Florida's Juvenile Justice Mission statement is "...It is our mission to increase public safety by reducing juvenile delinquency through effective prevention, intervention, and treatment services that strengthen families and turn around the lives of troubled youth." Florida and other states have diversion programs that juveniles may participate in before a delinquent act takes place (FDJJ, 2019).

There are also community restorative boards that have been implemented as a diversion program in Georgia. This program emphasized the need to divert first-time offenders who are arrested for minor crimes by removing them from the court system. This diversion program involved citizenry conducting consultations between the child and their family members to discuss the offense and its negative consequences (Kretschmar, Flannery & Singer, 2016). In this program, probation officers worked with the youth offenders to ensure they comply with the sanctions such as community service, counseling, or restitution issued by the Community Restorative Boards. Researchers showed that children who complete these sanctions, rarely reoffend, and they are accepted into the community, which seals the youth's record.

There is a diversion program known as the learning club in Fulton County, Georgia, targeting children between 11 and 17 years convicted of misdemeanor crimes. This is an educational program that sought to provide an alternative means of punishing

crime rather than imprisonment (Mears et al., 2016). The court mandated students to attend sessions that comprise of assessment and mentorship as well as discussing career opportunities. Researchers showed that the learning club acts as a protective factor to reduce the risk factors of juvenile delinquency and recidivism. It ensured that children go through education to minimize the chances of becoming repeat offenders, while also going through service learning and cultural engagement. Children go through encouragement, mentorship, and guidance that helped reduce chronic delinquency through early intervention.

The citizen review panel, another diversion program that has been implemented in Georgia to reduce the rate of recidivism, works by using individuals who volunteer to review plans for children placed in the juvenile court, including their status and welfare (Mears et al., 2016). The volunteers made up the staff that holds monthly meetings to review cases and ensured all plans are appropriate to the needs of the family. The focus was to ensure the programs make reasonable efforts that can reunify the family or provide permanency for the child.

The Juvenile drug court diversion program in Georgia targets youth offenders who are involved in the use of alcohol and other drugs. It targets youth offenders between 14 and 17 years who are on probation or supervision due to drug related offenses. The juvenile drug court refers to an intervention program that is highly structured to provide therapeutic intervention to rehabilitate the youth and protect the community. The focus is to reduce recidivism in youth offenders as well as drug addiction as a risk factor through treatment. This includes offering incentives for participants who comply with the

program while giving graduated sanctions to those engaging in negative behaviors. The program also focuses on empowering participants to make better choices. Participants who complete the program will have their juvenile court records sealed. Researchers showed that this program has been effective in reducing the number of youths in detention facilities by offering educational support, mentoring, and individual or group counseling.

A diversion program, known as the mediation program, has been effectively used in several states to reduce juvenile delinquency and recidivism. Mediation is used to divert cases from the court by fostering an environment where a child is responsible and accounts for all his actions. The program also looked to address the needs of a youth offender by modeling conflict resolution techniques (Kretschmar, Flannery & Singer, 2016). The effectiveness of mediation is based on the belief that children can work out a solution to their problems by meeting in private settings with a neutral person. Once they reach an agreement, it will be signed by a juvenile court judge, making it an order of the court.

Some benefits of diversion programs included leading to decreased rates of recidivism in the state while leading to less crowded detention facilities. Other benefits included increased family participation with more appropriate treatments at the community level. Another purpose of the diversion programs was to effect rehabilitation without creating the stigma of guilt (Kretschmar, Flannery, & Singer, 2016). They were useful in avoiding the labeling effects, which involved youths obtaining a social label as delinquents that contributed to further recidivism.

Summary and Transition

Based on the research of several literary works regarding recidivism rates in the U.S., showing the social variables examined within each article on juvenile recidivism. I considered several risk factors leading to recurrence and the interventions that can help deal with repetition. The rate of juvenile arrests reduced over the last two decades, though recidivism is still on the rise. There was a 54 percent drop in youth arrest within the previous two decades, though concern remains on the high rates of recidivism among juvenile offenders. The recidivism rate for juveniles in Georgia was 48 percent in 2017 (Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice, 2017).

I discussed several risk factors leading to juvenile recidivism. Studies used by researchers showed that most youth offenders who are released from prison, rarely find jobs or enroll back in school. This made recurrence significantly more likely to happen. The transition phase of community reentry for juveniles takes time after release, which is a critical time for youths who need emotional and social support to function as right-minded citizens (Agenyi, 2017). Studies have shown that the rates of recidivism are high immediately after release, but it tends to reduce once a person is accepted into the community.

The main goal of the juvenile justice system in the U.S. is to reduce the rate of recidivism. This is possible once there is a proper understanding of risk factors, which help in coming up with effective interventions. Based on this research, prevention strategies towards reducing recidivism should focus on the internal and external factors influencing a person's behavior. Juvenile correction agencies have the responsibility of

developing risk-reducing interventions with high-risk young offenders (Agenyi, 2017).

Juvenile offenders need a more stable, directed, and protected environment to make the process of reducing the rate of recidivism successful. The idea of wrap-around has been successful in reducing the recurrence of adults and can be applied to the youth. The social interaction theory used where social norms are woven to help prevent recidivism behaviors.

In chapter 3, the research design and methodology of the study is discussed.

Included in this chapter will be the role of the researcher, data collection, and analysis procedures.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

Research methodology provides the researcher with the necessary guidelines with which to approach and perform the activities involved in the accomplishment of the study. Also, in this section, I provide principles for organizing, planning, designing, and conducting successful research. The methodology is the science and philosophy that supports all research (Mohajan, 2017). The United Kingdom Concordat outlines the following as the responsibilities of a researcher:

- Researchers have a responsibility to develop the capacity for independent, honest, and critical thought throughout the study.
- Researchers have a responsibility to express their research and share knowledge for the benefit of society.
- Researchers have a responsibility to conduct themselves honestly and ethically throughout the study.
- Researchers are ultimately responsible for personal and professional development in the field of study.

The Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers, commonly referred to as the Researcher Development Concordat, is an agreement between interested parties to improve the employment and support for researchers in higher education in the United Kingdom (U.K. Research Integrity Office, 2019). The research onion is significant in portraying the procedures that will be employed during the research process. The research onion refers to the combined stages that are essential in conducting

any study in a reasonable sequence (Saunders, 2011). The research onion entails six stages that are considered significant in undertaking any research effectively. The six phases of the research onion include philosophies, approaches, strategies, choices, time horizons, choices, and techniques.

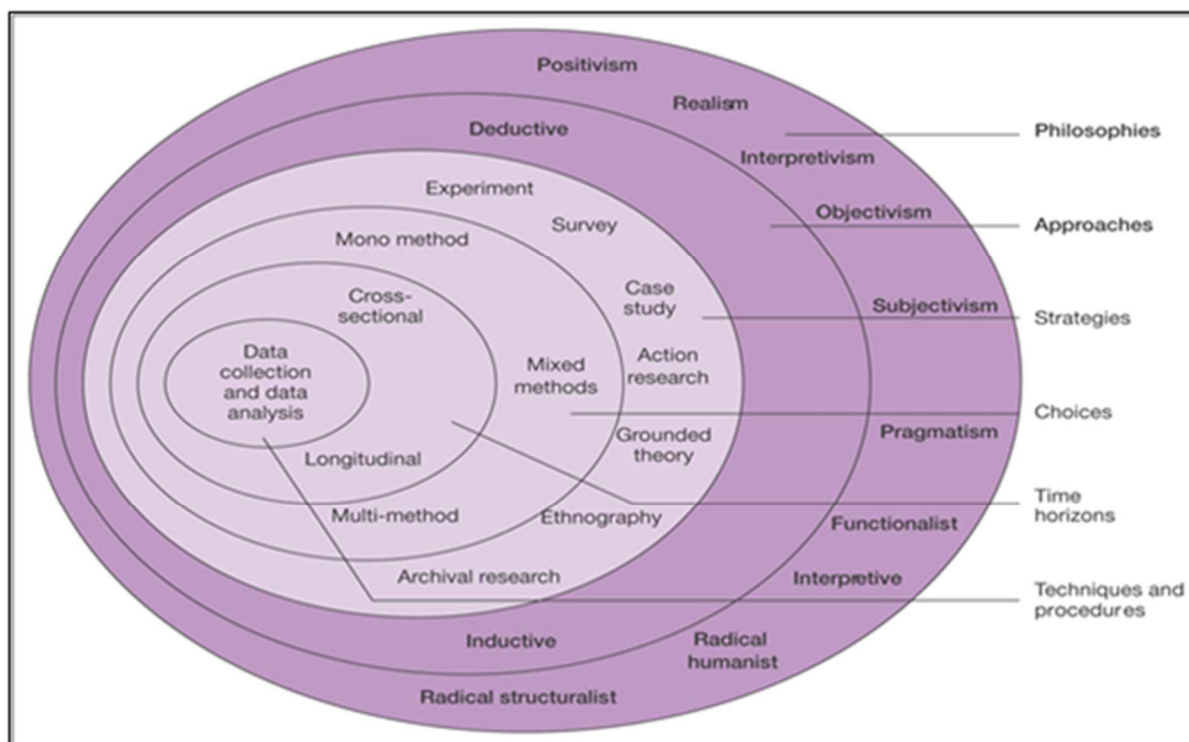


Figure 1. Research onion (Saunders, 2011).

Looking at each of the six sections, individually, will provide useful insight in developing this study. A research philosophy elaborates on the set of beliefs that surround the phenomena under observation. There exist three main philosophies, i.e., ontology, which is the study of reality, epistemology, which tries to find an acceptable universal truth, and lastly, axiology, which entails the effect of values and opinions on the collection and analysis of the research. The approach in research exists in two forms: deductive and inductive approach. A deductive approach develops the hypotheses based

on an already existing theory, whereas an inductive approach relies on the formulation of a new theory rather than relying on a pre-existing one. Strategies describe the way the researcher plans to carry out the study. This is followed by choice, where the researcher must choose the methodology, be it quantitative, qualitative, or both. Time Horizon describes the time necessary to complete the study. This was the stage where the study decides whether to implement a cross-sectional or longitudinal approach. Finally, there are have techniques. This combines all the processes that were used to collect and analyze the data.

From the research onion, each outer layer affects the subsequent inner layer. This ensures that once a researcher adopts the research onion, the study will be undertaken chronologically, paying attention to the objectives and nature of the study. In this chapter, I build on and discuss the research onion and discuss more on the research strategies, time horizons, and a bit of the technique.

Research Design and Rationale

As stated in the introduction, in research, two primary schools of thought exist based on the type and nature of data a researcher aims to fulfill. These are qualitative and quantitative research. When it comes to qualitative research, it is primarily used to gather information on opinions and motivations. It can also be used to dive deeper into a problem. Data used in this type of research was collected using unstructured or semi structured techniques so as not to lead the respondent. Quantitative research is all about numbers (i.e., it is used to quantify a problem). In contrast to qualitative research, quantitative studies use measurable data to uncover patterns. A researcher is tasked with

choosing the right study design that ensured he or she met the objectives of the study in an efficient manner.

Cokley and Awad (2013) noted that quantitative research was initially used by some scholars to taint scientific progress in the field of psychology, which has resulted in the view that quantitative methods are limited when it comes to promoting justice for marginalized groups. The authors use clear historical examples; for instance, the Tuskegee Syphilis Study that led to several African Americans not being treated for the disease, which has led to this belief. Cokley and Awad were geared toward proving that quantitative research can be used in the field of social justice. In their conclusion, they noted that quantitative research promotes social justice only when used correctly. This involves the detachment of the researcher to the subject matter and being objective.

Fassinger and Morrow (2013) compounded this conclusion by suggesting that quantitative approaches in social justice can help a researcher provide large representative samples of cultural communities, reliably assert cause and effect relationships, and confirm a theoretical hypothesis and summarize numerical data to persuade leaders and policymakers to act on a given problem. Fassinger and Morrow (2013) introduce a new concept of mixed method approaches that combine the benefits of both qualitative and quantitative approaches. They, however, note that this latter method is unfamiliar to most researchers despite its potential to offer flexibility and compensate for nonparadigmatic limitations.

From the previous discussions, the research design assumed a quantitative approach due to the nature of the data of interest. Also, a significant proportion of studies

published on juvenile recidivism have been noted to adopt a quantitative approach (Cottle, Lee, & Heilbrun, 2001; Letourneau & Armstrong, 2008). Quantitative research entails a variety of methods, all geared toward the systematic assessment of social phenomena, using numerical data (Watson, 2015). Juvenile arrest and recidivism rate falls under the blanket of social phenomena. Watson (2015) further suggested that quantitative research is primarily used to analyze data for trends and relationships. In this study, the two hypotheses under review aimed to assess the relationship between the rate of arrest and recidivism rates among juveniles in Fulton County, Georgia. Therefore, a quantitative study was useful in meeting the objectives of the study.

A one-time cross-sectional survey involving convicted juveniles in Fulton County, Georgia, used to meet the quantitative aspect of the study. Cross-sectional studies are relatively easy to carry out because they are only done once. The situation is different when it comes to longitudinal studies that are more complex and require to be conducted for several years. Aldridge and Levine (2001) noted that in longitudinal studies, the main limitation is attrition, which is not present in a cross-sectional design; thus, data collected using the latter design can be generalized across a population. The study also assumed a comparative approach with determine any statistically significant difference in the rate of arrest and recidivism rates among juveniles within Fulton County, Georgia.

Population and Sample Size

Turner (2016) identified the causes of juvenile recidivism as inefficiencies in the program, which are often associated with program implementation, inattention of the programs towards the risk factors of recidivism, and the actual type of the program implemented. All these factors played an essential role in this study's findings. The study population consisted of juveniles with a conviction record irrespective of their sex, who were admitted into a juvenile program in Fulton County. Carter (2019) stated that about 60% of all juvenile convicts are aged between 14 and 17 years old. In Fulton County, Georgia, 16-year-old juveniles accounted for about 30% of total convictions. This was then followed by juveniles aged 15 years, accounting for an additional 16%. With all this data, the study population narrowed down to convicted juveniles aged between 14 years and 17 years.

The Fulton County Juvenile Court enlisted numbers for all juvenile cases that were either put on probation or diverted between 2013 and 2017. The total juveniles put on probation were 5,846, with 1,162 being adjudicated, while those diverted were 6,298, with 525 being adjudicated. Both numbers accounted for the total juvenile recidivism rates in Fulton County, Georgia. Based on Carter, the target population size for the study was about 1,012 juveniles, which accounted for about 60% of all cases. This number fell in line with the intended population size of juveniles aged between 14 and 17 years (Carter, 2019).

The sampling procedure used a stratified probability sampling method, whereby, the population was first segregated based on sex, i.e., male or female. From the two

groups, samples were obtained at a ratio of 3:2, with the male population being higher since males are more likely to be adjudicated (Carter, 2019). Purposive sampling was then used to identify the sample from the population that met the study requirements for example, aged between 14 and 17 years, convicted of a crime but enrolled in a juvenile program, such as, probation. Data was gathered at the Fulton County Juvenile Court with the help of the Court clerk after obtaining permission from the Georgia District Attorney's Office.

Accurate sample size calculation was an important part of any research as it affected the results of the study significantly. Charan and Biswas (2013) noted that the calculation of sample size varied depending on the study design, and no single formula used for all research designs. The authors segregate the formulas based on the nature of the research adopted. The authors noted that in cross-sectional studies or surveys, sample size calculations for qualitative and quantitative variables were different. The authors further noted the importance of standard deviations in the calculations of sample sizes in clinical trials. Based on the nature and objectives of this study, the sample size was calculated using the Fischer's formula recommended by Charan and Biswas (2013) below.

$$n = \frac{Z^2 pq}{d^2}$$

Where:

n = the desired sample size

Z = the standard normal deviate at the required confidence level

p = the proportion in the target population estimated to have characteristic being measured

$$q = 1-p$$

d = the level of statistical significance set

The proportion in the target population estimated to have the characteristic being measured could not be identified. Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) recommended the adoption of a 50% estimate in such a scenario where the characteristic prevalence is unknown.

Therefore, $n = (1.96)^2 \times (0.5) \times (0.5) / (0.05)^2$

$$n = 384 \text{ convicted juveniles}$$

Of the 384 juveniles of interest, about 230 represented the male population, and 154 represented the female population, as based on gender as a factor affecting the occurrence of a crime.

Statistical Test

In any study, this was a vital part that either makes or breaks the study. This section entailed the analysis procedures that were implemented in the assortment of the data collected. Nayak and Hazra (2011) acknowledged the use of analysis of variance (ANOVA) when comparing more than two sets of numerical data. Chi-Square Test was primarily used to compare categorical variables. In this study, the Chi-Square Test used as the first statistical test to contrast the relationship between juvenile recidivism rates and juvenile programs in place to prevent this from happening, such as probation.

The Chi-Square statistic is commonly used to evaluate tests of independence when using a bivariate table. The table presents the distributions of two categorical variables simultaneously, with the intersections appearing in the cells of the table. The test of independence assessed whether a relationship exists between the two variables by comparing the visible pattern of responses in the table to that which would be expected if the variables were genuinely independent of each other. One thing to note was that Chi-Squares are extremely sensitive to the sample size because of how they are calculated. For instance, a large sample size of around 500, almost any small difference appeared statistically significant. The study estimated a sample size of 384 people; thus, the Chi-Square Test produced reliable results. Getting a p value of less than .05 will show that there is a significant relationship between the two, after which the analysis of variance used to test for individual variables.

I used ANOVA when comparing more than two sets of numerical data. ANOVA exists in two forms, i.e., one-way ANOVA used to compare the difference between three or more groups of a single independent variable, and MANOVA used to test how one or more independent variables affect two or more dependent variables. MANOVA is an extension of ANOVA that extended an ANOVA analysis by considering several continuous dependent variables and joined them together into a composite variable. The MANOVA then compared whether the composite variable differs by groups or levels when contrasted with the independent variable. MANOVA tested whether the independent variable directly explained a statistically significant amount of variance in the dependent variable. Due to the nature of the variables of interest in the study,

MANOVA used to contrast between the two independent variables, for example, juvenile arrest records and recidivism rates against dependent variables such as types of crimes being committed, the juvenile programs a convict is enrolled to among other significant factors. Similarly, to the Chi-Square Test, getting a p value of less than .05 indicates a statistical significance between the variables. In SPSS, the p -value is often annotated as the “Sig.” column in either a bivariate (Chi-Square Test) or multivariate (MANOVA) analysis table.

Nayak and Hazra (2011) suggest the use of linear regression to assess the association between variables. Linear regression in the analysis used commonly as predictive analysis. Regression was primarily done to determine two things in research; did a set of predictor variables do a good job in predicting a dependent variable and which variables were significant predictors of the outcome variable. These estimates used to explain the relationship between one dependent variable and one or more independent variables.

In linear regression interpretation, an inverse correlation between two variables will yield a negative coefficient. Also, all correlation coefficients range from 0 to 1, with 0 being the least correlated and 1 being a perfect correlation. Pearson’s correlation coefficient used to assess the degree at which each independent variable affects a given dependent variable. It was from all these analyses that an informed conclusion was made, and generalized recommendations can also be forwarded to the juvenile programs. All analyses conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences software that installed on a computer.

Assurance of Validity

Validity is the extent to which a tool measures what it is supposed to measure. Validity in research entails a similar concept and affects the degree to which the results are accurate. In a quantitative study, validity is the extent to which any instrument measures what it is intended to measure. Validity in research entails two essential components: credibility and transferability. Credibility refers to whether the results are legitimate based on the sampling design and analyses carried out. To some extent, credibility also affected the replication of a study (Mohajan, 2017). In the case of transferability, it shows whether the results can be generalized to a similar group.

With all these cautions in mind, the study met its credibility since it used a globally accepted sampling design. The Fulton County Juvenile Court published the numbers estimated during the population determination, thus are credible and factual. Furthermore, based on the nature of the study, the independent variables interrelated with the covariables to acquire informed conclusions. This process involved a series of procedures all dependent on the previous one, which is bound to make the data more and more legitimate. Additionally, the analysis procedures discussed are statistically accepted and globally used; hence, thresholds are well understood when making conclusions, for instance, the p value in the ANOVA test.

The transferability of the study achieved by obtaining a close representation of the population by choosing a sampling technique that upheld this factor. The ratio of male to female was also tailored to ensure as close as an accurate representation of the population. Also, a description of the age bracket of concern detailed in the population

and sample size category. This ensured that the findings of this study are generalized across a similarly aged bracket with similar characteristics. All these are considerations made to ensure the study is valid.

Measurement of Validity

Cronbach's (1955) coefficient alpha was a measure of internal consistency; that was how closely a set of items are related as a group. It is used in research to test the consistency of the sample population. Cronbach's alpha was a measure of scale reliability. A high value does not imply that the measure was unidimensional; thus, additional tests required to prove that the scale in use was unidimensional. It was important to note that the Cronbach's alpha was not a statistical test, but more of a coefficient of reliability. Based on the nature of how the Cronbach's coefficient alpha calculated, an increase in the number of items under review consequently lead to an increase in the alpha value.

The Kuder-Richardson formula was also another measure of reliability for a test with two variables, i.e., the answers to the test can either be right or wrong with no in-between. The Kuder-Richardson had two tests, that is, the Kuder-Richardson 20 and the Kuder-Richardson 21. The K-R 20 used for items that have varying difficulty, while the K-R 21 used for items with equal difficulty. In the Kuder-Richardson test, a score of above 0.5 was usually considered acceptable. In this case, Cronbach's coefficient alpha, which was a general form of Kuder-Richardson (K-R) 20 formula, used. A value of 0.7 and above was considered acceptable, with 0.9 and above being excellent (Cronbach &

Meehl, 1955). This was done together with the analyses and reported in Chapter 4 of this study.

Population and Population Size

Atlanta is in Fulton County, Georgia, in the U.S. Fulton County covers an estimated area of about 527 square miles, with a population of about 1748 per square mile. The United States Census Bureau (2019) estimated the population of Fulton County to be about 1.05 million people. Persons under 18 years of age account for about 22% of this figure. Generally, the female population was slightly higher in Fulton County, reporting up to 52% of the general population. When it came to education, the United States Census Bureau reports that at least 90% of the people in Fulton County have a high school diploma or higher and 50% possess a bachelor's degree or higher. With such statistics, it was interesting to learn about the recidivism rates in the County and how effective the juvenile programs were in curbing recidivism. With all the above statistics forming the base of the population, the population size was determined. The population of interest was juvenile convicts that enrolled in a program that curbs recidivism and were between the age of 14 and 17 years old. In this case, a program was one that endorsed by the government to mitigate recidivism rates among juveniles. Other non-endorsed programs were not included, despite having similar objectives. For one to be included as a respondent in the study, he or she met the previous criteria. Based on the data reported by Fulton County Juvenile Court, an estimate of about 1,012 juveniles met the above interest criteria, and this was the population from which the sample was drawn.

Summary and Transition

Saunders's (2011) research onion commonly used by researchers to conduct a study systematically. The research onion encompassed six main sections, which are philosophies, approaches, strategies, time horizons, choices, and techniques. All these sections interrelated with each other such that the outer layer affected the subsequent inner layer. In this chapter of the study, focused on choices and time horizons, with a few notable mentions to the last phase of the research onion, which is, techniques and procedures.

Looking at the choices, three methods existed. However, as noted in the discussion, most researchers are familiar with two methods: qualitative and quantitative methods. Quantitative and qualitative research designs existed for use, depending on the nature of the study. Initially, quantitative studies were not preferred when it came to the issue of social justice since, in the past, they used to taint progress in scientific fields. Despite this, several studies published, legitimized the use of quantitative study designs in the field of justice. Furthermore, a significant number of publications on recidivism and juvenile arrests used a quantitative approach.

After careful consideration, with attention paid to the objectives and nature of the study, a one-time cross-sectional study design used to obtain the quantitative data needed to perform the study. The study carried out in Fulton County, Georgia, which has an estimated population of about 1.05 million people living there. National publications indicated that Fulton County is significantly educated, with up to 90% of the population aged 25 years and above holding high school diplomas, with 50% of the same population

having a bachelor's degree or higher. From these statistics, it was interesting to find out the recidivism rates and juvenile conviction patterns and how effective juvenile programs were in the County.

The population of interest was juvenile convicts enrolled in a program endorsed by the government to reduce recidivism rates. For one to be included as a respondent in this study, the inclusion mentioned previous criteria was met. From the large population size of juvenile convicts in Fulton County, Georgia, a sample was drawn using stratified probability sampling, where the population segregated based on sex, male and female. This followed by purposive sampling to obtain a sample size composed of both genders at the ratio of 3:2 with males being the higher proportion. This is because, based on the literature review, the probability of males being adjudicated is higher than that of females; hence, this consideration ensured the validity of the results.

Other than the descriptive analyses which were usually familiar to most people, inferential statistics using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences software conducted. I used Chi-Square and ANOVA tests to determine the significance of the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. These analyses supplemented by the Pearson correlation coefficient, which determined the nature and degree of correlation between the variables.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the effectiveness of rehabilitation programs in the management of juvenile delinquency. The chapter includes data collection, research questions and hypothesis, analysis of independent variables, research findings, trustworthiness, credibility, transferability, and summary and transition.

The methods of data collection and data analysis have been discussed in Chapter 3 (refer to Section 3). In this chapter, the research findings are discussed. It contains the results of the quantitative methodology study based on objective data collected to answer the questions and hypothesis made in Chapter 1. In this chapter, the research findings (based on semi structured techniques) discussed are as follows:

- Analysis of the delinquency and recidivism rates of juveniles within Fulton County, Georgia, between the years 2013 to 2017.
- Effect of diversion programs introduced by the DJJFC on the delinquency and recidivism rates in the county, while suggesting further intervention strategies that may be of formidable use to the DJJFC, to effectively reduce recidivism.
- Identifying essential strategies in reducing trauma related to delinquency and recidivism among juveniles in the county, by enhancing the rehabilitation process.

The results also aim to highlight the analysis of independent variables as stated in Chapter 1. Furthermore, it intends to convey the discoveries made, while scrutinizing the credibility, trustworthiness, and transferability of the research findings of the study, as a means to investigate the efficacy of the rehabilitation programs instituted by the DJJFC in

preventing delinquency and recidivism in juveniles within Fulton County, Georgia. Additionally, it seeks to identifying other programs that minors, together with their families, could employ to improve the rehabilitation process and thus reduce crime and recidivism within juveniles in the County.

Data Collection

Quantitative research was deemed the appropriate means of research methodology for this study as a significant proportion of studies published on juvenile recidivism have adopted this approach technique (Cottle, Lee, & Heilbrun, 2001; Letourneau & Armstrong, 2008) with success. This is due to the nature of data required being mainly numerical in nature in the systematic assessment of social phenomena (Watson, 2015).

Data gathered at the Fulton County Juvenile Court with the help of the Court clerk with permission from the Georgia District Attorney's Office.

Additionally, a comparative approach adopted within the research study to determine any statistically significant difference in the rate of arrest and recidivism rates among juveniles within the county as means to better understand and compare the data collected by giving it a pragmatic baseline for suitable conclusions to be drawn.

Sampling

A stratified sampling approach adopted and utilized to first segment the population by sex. A purposive sampling technique employed to identify the core sample for this study (i.e., aged between 14 and 17 years). Of the 384 juveniles of interest, approximately 230 represented the male population, and 154 represented the female population, as based on gender as a factor affecting the occurrence of a crime. The

variant in sex was due to the disparity rate in delinquency amongst the two sexes at a ratio of 3:2.

The study estimated a sample size of 384 people; thus, the chi-square test can still be relied on to produce reliable results. Getting a p value of less than .05 will show that there is a significant relationship between the two, after which the analysis of variance was used to test for individual variables.

Due to the fact that the research methodology required comparison of more than two sets of numerical data, I used the chi-square test as the first statistical test to contrast the relationship between juvenile recidivism rates and juvenile programs in place to prevent this from happening, such as probation.

Due to the nature of the variables of interest in the study, MANOVA used to contrast between the two independent variables (i.e., juvenile arrest records) and recidivism rates against dependent variables such as types of crimes being committed, the juvenile programs a convict is enrolled in, and other significant factors. Similarly, to the chi-square test, finding a p value of less than .05 indicates a statistical significance between the variables. In SPSS, the p value is often annotated as the “Sig.” column in either a bivariate (chi-square test) or multivariate (MANOVA) analysis table.

Using linear regression to assess the link between the two variables as a predictive analysis in this case to ascertain the dependent variable and the outcome variable. These estimates used to explain the relationship between one dependent variable and one or more independent variables. All analyses conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences software that was installed on a computer.

Analysis of Independent Variables

MANOVA used to contrast between the two independent variables (i.e., juvenile arrest records) and recidivism rates against dependent variables such as types of crimes being committed, the juvenile programs a convict is enrolled to among other significant factors.

Research Findings

Juvenile cases placed on probation and those that were diverted between 2013 and 2017 were evaluated for recidivism. Recidivism in this case was considered as new cases of adjudication 2 years after the date of probation or new cases of adjudication any time after the date of diversion.

The trend of undesignated juvenile cases has been dropping steadily since 2013. It experienced a dramatic drop of 716 cases in the year 2017. This kind of drop showcases the efforts of the DJJFC to further focus on reducing zero tolerance efforts or charging minors and thus removing the burden on the justice system.

The designation of these cases is an improvement in ensuring that juveniles are not lost within the system and thus allowing the presumption that efforts to be made to assist this individuals with the various diversion programs or a laxity to prosecute when there are other means of intervention available to the community and the justice system of Fulton County, Georgia.

Table 1

Trend of Juvenile Cases Between 2013 and 2015 in Fulton County, Georgia

Year	Undesignated delinquency cases
2013	3,747
2014	3,631
2015	3,417
2016	2,717
2017	2,001
Total	15,513

The total number of juvenile cases reported between 2013 and 2017 were 15,513.

The population sample includes both male and female juveniles aged between 14 and 17 years.

Table 2

Juvenile Recidivism in Fulton County, Georgia, Between 2013 and 2017

Year	Probation	Adjudicated	Diverted	Adjudicated
2013	1,628	366	1,373	117
2014	1,381	231	1,468	120
2015	1,059	185	1,494	124
2016	892	191	1,185	94
2017	886	189	778	70
Total	5,846	1,162	6,298	525

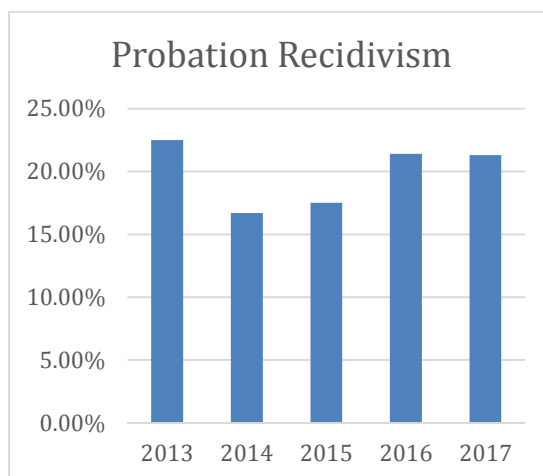
The total number of juveniles put on probation were 5,846, with 1,162 being adjudicated, while those diverted were 6,298, with 525 being adjudicated. Both numbers account for the total juvenile recidivism rates in Fulton County, Georgia.

Table 3

Rate of Recidivism in Fulton County, Georgia, Between 2013 and 2017

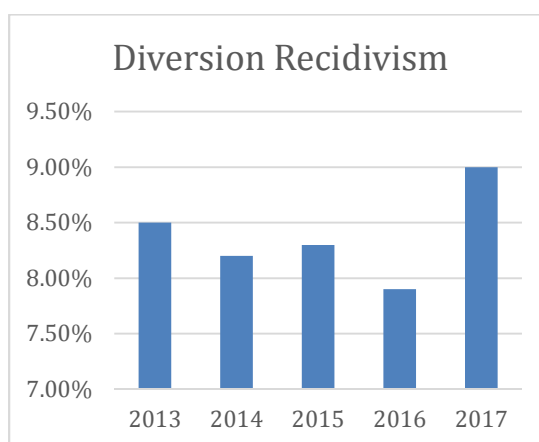
Year	Rate of recidivism of probation cases	Rate of recidivism of diverted cases
2013	22.5%	8.5%
2014	16.7%	8.2%
2015	17.5%	8.3%
2016	21.4%	7.9%
2017	21.3%	9.0%

In Fulton County, Georgia, recidivism rates fluctuated. In 2013 the rate was at 22.5% which was the highest among the 6 years. The rate reduced in 2014 to 16.7% and increased to 17.5% in 2015. 2017 saw a 0.1% drop from 2016's 21.4%.

*Graph 1: Juvenile Probation Recidivism between 2013 and 2017*

The probation recidivism chart displayed high percentages of recidivism. This could only mean that probation in Fulton County was not as successful in diverting juveniles from reoffending. It was important to compare the numbers of probation

recidivism to the diversion recidivism. Although in 2017 diversion recidivism elevated the number of juveniles placed in diversions programs were close in range to the number of juveniles placed on probation with each year. Meaning the diversion programs were more successful at rehabilitating juveniles since the percentage of recidivism was lower than probation recidivism.



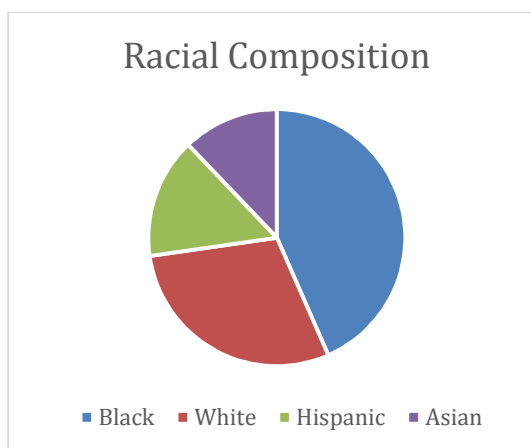
Graph 2: Juvenile Diversion Recidivism between 2013 and 2017

However, the uptake of recidivism in 2017, purported to relay that despite being under the country average, there was a hike in both recidivism for both parole cases and diverted cases. This lent the question as to what happened to undo some of the great efforts of the programs and the minimalization of cases involving minor infractions. Another observation made if those same successful programs benefited from being revamped to better connect with the current generation of juveniles.

One suspected factor was the rise in female crimes over the last 5 years as this was a period of great empowerment. Another was that despite the efforts of the DJJFC, the school systems that fed into the prison system pipeline had a surge in uptake due to zero tolerance policies that caused expulsions and suspensions for the risk demographic

and thus caused an increase in juveniles referred to the juvenile justice system. The Fulton County School System and the Atlanta Public School System both fed into the Department of Juvenile Justice in Fulton County, Georgia (DJJFC). Fulton County Schools are within the fourth largest school district in Georgia and Atlanta Public Schools are within the sixth largest. Due to the rise in school shootings, school systems are stricter on placing charges against student bringing weapons on school grounds; tasers, knives, guns, and BB guns. Since the two main school systems that fed into the Department of Juvenile Justice in Fulton County, Georgia (DJJFC), are included in the top 10 largest school systems in Georgia that put Fulton County at a higher risk of a juvenile delinquency issue.

Racial bias and systemic racism within the justice and school system cannot be ignored as propagating factor. Some minorities choose to act out in defense due to the stressors they face from their peers or racism and classism from their counterparts and community within Fulton County. The Fulton County School System is majority black with whites leading behind. Hispanics and Asians falling below both black and white percentage.



Graph 3: Fulton County School System Racial Composition

Most of all, as detailed in Chapter 2, the recidivism rates increased due to the fact that most juveniles who undergo through this pipeline have fewer opportunities available to them after serving their sentences and thus end up relapsing (especially in the first two years) as a means of finding validation, providing for themselves and their families or merely as an act of rebellion.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The following were the research questions and hypotheses posed by the researcher prior to the research study.

RQ1: Quantitative: What are the frequencies of the juveniles' arrest and rate of juvenile recidivism in Fulton County, Georgia?

RQ2: Quantitative: Is there a significant relationship between the rate of arrests and recidivism among juveniles within Fulton County, Georgia.

H1: Based on objective data, there is a statistically significant difference in the rate of arrest and recidivism rates among juveniles within Fulton County, Georgia.

H0: Based on objective data, there is no statistically significant difference in the rate of arrest and recidivism rate among juveniles within Fulton County, Georgia

Research Question 1

RQ1: Quantitative: What are the frequencies of the juveniles' arrest and rate of juvenile recidivism in Fulton County, Georgia?

As per Table 3, the rate of recidivism in 2017 was at 9% for diverted cases while it stood at 21.3% for probation cases. This showed that diversion intervention over the

last 5 years worked despite the spike in the last year on record. This disparity was an indicator to the efficacy of these programs and influenced policy makers to fund more projects to enhance and expand diversion intervention among juveniles as a means of curtailing crime and aiding in their future.

Research Question 2

RQ2: Quantitative: Is there a significant relationship between the rate of arrests and recidivism among juveniles within Fulton County, Georgia.

Yes, there is. As per research from Chapter 3, as well as initial data from earlier chapters, it was clear to ascertain that the decrease in arrests and charges against minor had a significant reduction in the amount of recidivism. For recidivism to exist, the minor must first have an offense. This offense tended to put them through various traumas such as dealing with the social stigma, law enforcement, as well as association with offenders during a sentencing in a facility.

It was safe to surmise that because relapse rates for recidivism are highest in the first two years after finishing a sentencing. The community exhausted all interventions (especially preventative measures) to aid in avoiding arrests all together.

Trustworthiness

As detailed in Chapter 3, from the large population size of juvenile convicts in Fulton County, Georgia, a sample drawn used stratified probability sampling, where the population segregated based on sex, male and female. This followed by purposive sampling to obtain a sample size composed of both genders at the ratio of 3:2 with males being the higher proportion. This was because, based on the literature review, the

probability of males being adjudicated is higher than that of females; hence, this consideration made to ensure the validity of the results.

Other than the descriptive analyses which were usually familiar to most people, inferential statistics used Statistical Package for the Social Sciences software. The research used Chi-Square and ANOVA tests determined the significance of the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. These analyses then supplemented by the Pearson correlation coefficient, which determined the nature and degree of correlation between the variables.

Credibility

The study met its credibility since I used a globally accepted sampling design. The Fulton County Juvenile Court published the numbers estimated during the population determination, thus are credible and factual. Furthermore, based on the nature of the study, the independent variables interrelated with the covariables to acquire informed conclusions.

This process involved a series of procedures all dependent on the previous one, which is bound to make the data more and more legitimate. Additionally, the analysis procedures discussed were statistically accepted and globally used; hence, thresholds were well understood when making conclusions, for instance, the p value in the ANOVA test.

Transferability

The transferability of the study achieved by obtaining a close representation of the population by choosing a sampling technique that upheld this factor. The ratio of male to

female also tailored to ensure as close as an accurate representation of the population. Also, a description of the age bracket of concern detailed in the population and sample size category. This ensured that the findings of this study generalized across a similarly aged bracket with similar characteristics. All these are considerations ensured the study is valid.

Summary and Transition

Juvenile arrests and undesignated diversion cases decreased during the 2013 to 2017 period. Although there was a minor increase in recidivism for both probation and diversion cases, diversion cases experienced a much lower percentage rate of recidivism.

This information should propel the county of Fulton to seek to expand these measures and find means to emphasize intervention rather than punishment.

The next chapter shall seek to discuss these social phenomena by emphasizing critical thinking via breaking down the data further, highlighting limitations of the study and providing recommendations and conclusions.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

Communities such as Fulton County, Georgia, tend to lack the necessary resources to tackle income inequality; effective mental health programs; offender re-entry programs; and substance abuse programs. All of these have been noted to help prevent or curtail the rates of recidivism in ex-offenders (Polaschek, 2012). There is formidable research as stated in Chapters 1 and 2 regarding the issues behind juvenile delinquency and recidivism. However, it is also important to note that despite all current data, it is believed that more information is needed to tackle the scourge of recidivism properly and effectively among offenders (Prince, Butters, 2013).

Decreasing recidivism would take the time and cost burden off the justice and penal system as well as improve community safety as Hamilton and Campbell (2013) supposed in their review of the matter. Improved safety and well-being of a community allow for investments and influx of business that may propel the county of Fulton to not only make up for the cost of intervention measures but could possibly lead to a marked increase in the entire community's socioeconomic output. The costs to families with incarcerated juveniles would also be eased in this case, allowing for them to be able to funnel their income into more proactive measures to aid themselves and supposedly and consequently aid the growth of the Fulton County economy and security and well-being.

This chapter presents summaries of the research findings, conclusions and recommendations based on the two questions posed in the beginning of the study as well as the hypothesis stated. This is regarding the quantitative research methodology to

evaluate the currently increasing delinquent recidivism and measure effectiveness of current rehabilitation programs practiced by the DJJFC. The findings were as follows

Interpretation of the Study

Vocational training has in effect being a useful tool in enhancing the skills of many of the target population. Formal and informal education are crucial to aiding these individuals to find and keep purpose. There should be an emphasis on ensuring that minor offences and situations whereby, intervention can be carried out in privacy, and in the care of the parents, mentors, teachers, and others before any law enforcement intervention would greatly help to curtail the effects of the juvenile-police interaction, which has been noted to influence negative behavior in certain cases.

Rehabilitation programs along with reduction in law pursuant punishments have notably reduced the incidences of delinquency and recidivism during the 5-year scope of the study (2013-2017). The further prominence of rehabilitation over mere punishment in many states has also shown that the greatest tool in the DOJ arsenal should be funding of rehabilitation and intervention programs to curtail the behavior of troubled youth. Essentially, less referrals of juveniles from school system to juvenile court and more referrals of juveniles from school system to diversion programs.

The segregation based on sex (i.e., to conduct the study and increase its efficacy) is not only part of the methodology to ascertain the cause and effect elements through the quantitative research, but it is also an indicator of the current dichotomy of things, whereby delinquency and recidivism is at a higher rate among males than females.

The findings of this study confirm the need for diversion programs as opposed to the current system of zero tolerance within schools and the justice system at a disproportionate effect on minorities, specifically black community members of Fulton County. Based on the findings of the study, the county should refocus its budgetary allotments or policy into interventional diversionary programs to cater to the troubled youth and thus propagate a cycle of positive development.

The system should be proactive rather than reactionary in this regard. The study may be used as a detailed case study to help employ the use of mental health professionals and counsellors to not only reduce recidivism, but also prevent initial criminal behavior among minors.

Limitations of the Study

Per the Chapter 1 overview, as with most studies, the approach taken does have certain limitations. The use of quantitative research methods for the overall study was wise based on the numerical figures available to cater to the study parameters. However, utilization of a qualitative method would have allowed for an inference on causality, regarding the core reasons and stressors behind these social phenomena.

There is a high focus on delinquent males despite the currently changing dynamic discussed in Chapter 2, whereby female juvenile offenders are on the rise especially as there has been a gradual shift with regard to gender roles and equality; reduced reliance in informal training skills; as well as the empowerment of females with regard to provision and safeguarding of the family unit. This is especially apparent in the cases of inclusive stressors such as the disparity of sex-based violence these group face in

comparison with their male counterparts. These factors have essentially created a melting pot whereby despite overall delinquency decreasing during the last few years, there has been an uptake in delinquency and recidivism by females.

The unavailability of data from the DJJFC detailing the situations where parental diversion was mandatory, was unavailable during this research. It is therefore important to research the matter in future studies as well as have parental diversion included within the framework of diversion intervention in most cases to allow for greater success. This is since recidivism reduced by 30% with parental involvement as per Chapter 1 research of the DJJFC data.

A final limitation within this study was due to the scope and time of the study, information on counsellor, mentor, or mental health care providers was not covered. This factor coupled with possible biases these groups may hold regarding the minority population may affect the efficacy of their work and thus influence the success of the diversion programs.

Recommendations

Suspension and expulsions within schools should meet a higher bar without a racial disparity bias. These should be measures undertaken in the extremes when all other options have been exhausted. There should also be an emphasis in racial sensitivity training between students as well as teachers. It is crucial for these engagements to involve a top-down investment as systemic racism and wealth inequality have been sowed into the fabric of U.S. for hundreds of years and, thus, only with continued efforts

from all stakeholders can the county and the state of Georgia begin to heal and change for the better.

Further involvement of parents and guardians should be a key implement in ensuring that change is “effected” within this community. Studies detailed in Chapters 1 and 2 showcase the necessity to have stronger familial ties between juveniles and a positive and nurturing environment that may foster growth and positive change. Mental health funding within the county is a critical undertaking whereby there will be no crucial change without addressing the physical, emotional, and sexual traumas faced by these young offenders. Rehabilitation centers with a core focus on mental health should be an essential focus for change in the county. This is inclusive of personality disorders, substance-related disorders, and disruptive disorders have been discovered to cause a high chance of reoffending (Bessler et al., 2018).

Peer influence management to reduce recidivism by initial offenders to lead them away from falling back into gang life. Entrenching life and social skills within the juvenile delinquent population would help them garner individualism of thought while also finding the benefits of other more fruitful and productive endeavors. This would help steer them away from the need for association or identity within gangs or troublesome activities. Funding of socioeconomical policy gains and investment within this community is crucial. For as long there is poverty, there will be a propensity to survive as per the differentiated association theory, where individuals may choose crime when they feel it outweighs the rewards of being law abiding citizens.

Family counseling and therapy for mental health issues should be superfluous with health care provision as often is the case, even when the physical health needs of a community are being met, emotional and psychological health needs are often left to the wayside. Furthermore, there should be policy changes that seek to further decriminalize first offences and rather focus to reedify the juveniles on the nature and effects of their actions while still holding them accountable without the stigma of labelling.

Incentives and educational policy making programs should be instituted to edify parents and guardians to the importance of maintaining healthy relationships with their children while also being aware of the signs of mental health and criminality issues as a means of proactively dealing with these elements at an early stage and thus negating the need or use of more invasive measures that may cause trauma to the youth. It is important for parents and guardians to note that their relationships with their children or people under their care vastly impact how they relate to the outside world.

Future research studies should focus on the opportunity risk assessment between diversion intervention programs and the highlighted costs of the justice system to help validate the need for wide spread programs that focus more on reducing recidivism and tackling mental health issues early as opposed to the lifelong budgetary strain of multiple offenses by the affected community of Fulton County.

Implications for Social Change

The focus of this study illuminates the current state of recidivism and delinquency in the Fulton County community. Results of this study may present an opportunity for change in regard to enhancement of predelinquency measure; increase the focus of

rehabilitation, as opposed to punishment; and reentry programs for all juveniles to remove the stigma and labelling that occurs after prosecution for their offences. Changes may heavily rely on mentorship programs that seek to connect the individual with their support group or family, as well as, create opportunities that allow for growth and development within the community.

Conclusion

An emphasis on rehabilitation rather than punishment seems to be one of the most crucial elements in helping juveniles to overcome and succeed within their environment. The fact that there are various stressors should not be lost on anyone, and thus, the reliance on a multifaceted approach to attack this problem is crucial to Fulton County's community success at lowering juvenile delinquency, as well as, recidivism. Fulton County must aim to curtail the school to prison pipeline.

A focus on truancy and substance abuse within this high-risk demographic should be dealt with interventions that forego the need for labelling and immediate law enforcement intervention to avoid trauma and thus perpetuate a cycle of recidivism. This can be attained through more hands-on diversion programs such as counseling to not only make the individual realize and understand the extent of their actions but to also make them aware of the risks involved. This education coupled with continuous assessment measures to help steer them from substance abuse would in my view, pay heavy dividends for the individual and community at large, in the future.

The socio-economic, racial bias, and wealth disparity must therefore change to allow for these minority communities to flourish. An emphasis on social programs to aid

in welfare, income opportunities, unbiased employment, and a fair and just penal system would make strides in ensuring that the lives of these target populations improved and thus become a beacon for other states to match and follow.

Improvement in income opportunities for minorities would aid the multifaceted approach in tackling this issue as it would allow for more caregivers and parents to have better mental health due to income security, as well as, more time to focus on rearing their children rather than solely focusing on trying to put food on the table at the expense of nurtured familial relations.

A juvenile's negative behavior reduces when different types of interventions increase. Nisar et al (2015) showcased how research showed an association between the community and the type of recidivism in crime for juvenile offenders.

Funding and expansion of Fulton County's current diversion programs would vastly reduce recidivism and prevent minors from being offenders. This coupled with reentry programs that offer the offender's opportunities within the Fulton County community will curb the currently rising recidivism rate. This would be particularly effective right after the sentence is completed.

Lastly, this improvement in their economic welfare would also ease the annual \$90,000 spent (PEW, 2013) in the penal system (detaining youth in long term facilities) and thus allow funneling of these moneys to programs that may benefit the entire Fulton County community such as improved mental health care along with more enterprise opportunities for this high-risk demographic.

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