2022

Juvenile Probation Officers' Perceptions of Strategies to Reduce Juvenile Delinquency in Maryland

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Walden University
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Abstract

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Ebenezer Obonna

MS, University of Maryland Global Campus, 2015

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Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Criminal Justice and Public Policy

Walden University

February 2022

Abstract

Young offenders aged 10 to 17 years have increasingly become involved with the juvenile justice system, causing concerns about their future prospects and their role in positively contributing to the prosperity of society, particularly in Maryland. The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to provide detailed descriptions of the strategies that stakeholders in the juvenile criminal justice system and the offenders can use to reduce youth crime in Maryland. Cognitive-behavioral therapy theory provided the framework for the study. Data were collected from semistructured interviews with 11 probation officers from Maryland. Findings from thematic analysis demonstrated that some juvenile justice practitioners think that youths act out due to what they experienced in their environment and their relationships with their parents, and that youths' behavior can change by providing corrective, nurturing relationships. Theme 1 was effective strategies must address risk factors for juvenile delinquency. Theme 2 was effective strategies have the potential to mitigate negative social impacts of juvenile delinquency. Theme 3 was counseling, family systems therapy, and social skills training are potentially effective strategies. Findings may be used to develop juvenile delinquency prevention policies and programs and to adapt relational treatment to provide an effective continuum of care for delinquent youths.

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Dedication

This project is dedicated to my best friend, Rose Amaka Nwadili, for being there for me throughout the entire doctoral program.

Acknowledgments

I want to thank my mentor, Dr. Tony Gaskew, for his constructive criticism and his wonderful guidance throughout this project, and my cochair, Dr. Clarence Williamson, for his great help. I want to also thank my good friend and son, Ugochukwu Ude, for his help. I want also to thank Mr. and Dr (Mrs.) Collins Njoku, Sir and Lady Godwin Ugbo, Engr and Dr (Mrs.) Nnamdi Akwara, Chidi and Clara Ahaghotu, Emmanuel and Ebere Njoku, Tony and Josephine Ukadilonu, Nze Allen and Chinyere Ihuoma, Joy Amaraegbu, Sir and Lady Truelove Njoku, Emmanuel Obonna, Christian Obonna, Ijeoma, Obonna Stanley Obonna, and Monica Obonna.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

In 2016, at least 2 million youths were incarcerated in the United States (Elliott et al., 2020). According to Kubik and Boxer (2020), the increase in the number of juveniles being incarcerated raises concern among stakeholders about their future lives. Youth exposure to criminal activities is likely to affect their development process and opportunities in different ways. Yun and Cui (2020) argued for stakeholders to collaborate in reducing juvenile crimes globally. One of the negative ways through which exposure to juvenile crime affects youths is victimization. Grucza et al. (2018) identified the adversative impact of victimization as impaired occupational functioning and overly high unemployment rates among the affected individuals. Young et al. (2017) also reported that exposure to early trauma resulting from living in communities that have high crime rates could have undesirable impacts on the healthy growth of children, including the ability to make rational decisions relating to their lives.

Similar thoughts were reported by Ukwayi et al. (2018) in that juvenile crime could impede economic development in affected areas. Investors fear to invest in areas that are prone to crime because it makes their investment unsecured, creating the possibility of more crime. The literature reviewed suggested that juvenile crime has negative impacts on youths' transition into adulthood because it limits their career growth opportunities, education, and employment.

Thornberry et al. (2018) recommended the need for additional research to explore strategies to reduce juvenile crime and recidivism. The purpose of the current study was to address the gap in the literature by exploring the strategies that can be used to reduce

juvenile delinquencies according to probation officers' perceptions. A study addressing the strategies to reduce juvenile delinquencies may provide valuable information about effective strategies that probation officers can use to reduce delinquency among youths. Chapter 1 includes the background information, problem statement, purpose statement, nature of the study, significance, theoretical foundation, and definitions of terms.

Background

Reducing juvenile crimes has become a major issue of concern to the stakeholders within the criminal justice system in the United States (Thornberry et al., 2018). Juvenile crimes have far-reaching impacts on the economy and social life of the victims and the perpetrators. Juvenile delinquencies have resulted in arrests of young children aged 17 years and below, which has negatively influenced their social life with others in the community (Young et al., 2017). Recent statistics suggested that there has been a surge in juvenile arrests across the United States (Jennings et al., 2019). According to Young et al. (2017), working with offenders and probation officers has become one of the best ways to manage delinquencies.

Proper management of juvenile delinquencies has positive effects. According to Grucza et al. (2018), reducing juvenile delinquencies helps the youths to focus on other aspects of life, such as education. Similar points were argued by Elliott et al. (2020) who noted that education is a key strategy that can be used to reduce crime among youths. Ukwayi et al. (2018) found that educating youths about the dangers of crime could help them focus on issues in their lives other than crime. Thornberry et al. (2018) noted that education provides youths with vital information that informs them of the dangers related

to crime and the need to ensure that they do not participate in criminal activities. Wong et al. (2016) underscored that educational programs have the primary purpose of encouraging youths and providing them with the hope that focusing on career development provides them with more opportunities in life.

Fast et al. (2017) also highlighted the need for proposing strategies to reduce juvenile delinquencies. Strategies changing the focus of youths from returning to crime become the most important approach to mitigating juvenile delinquencies. Community involvement has also been suggested as one of the strategies that probation officers can use to reduce juvenile delinquencies. Community involvement provides the members of the public with the chance to suggest the best strategies that probation officers can use to change criminal behavior (Grucza et al. 2018). Parent involvement is another strategy that scholars have suggested to reduce criminal activities among youths. Elliott et al. (2020) noted that involving parents in suggesting strategies to reduce criminal activities among youths.

Researchers have investigated the effectiveness of probation programs in reducing juvenile crime compared to out-of-home placements (Yun & Cui, 2020). Findings reported by Bui et al. (2018) revealed that probation programs are better options than confinement when the aim is to reduce criminal conduct among youths, particularly juvenile delinquency. Grucza et al. (2018) also reported that juveniles admitted to probation facilities displayed lower rates of criminal activities and recidivism than those who were not admitted to such facilities. In a different study, Yun and Cui (2020)

established that nearly half of juveniles who were not sent to probation facilities repeated their violent acts is less than 3 months after being released from juvenile prisons.

The high juvenile crime rate is an issue of concern because the United States spends billions of dollars annually addressing juvenile crime. However, the crime rates remain high with subsequent recidivism (Young et al., 2017). Probation supervision has been considered one of the strategies that can be used to reduce juvenile crime. Bui et al. (2018) argued that probation supervision had gained popularity in the United States as one of the primary interventions that stakeholders use to reduce juvenile crimes. However, there is a lack of research relating to the views that probation officers have regarding the strategies that can be used to reduce juvenile crime (Sickmund & Puzzanchera, 2018). Thornberry et al. (2018) also argued that the participation of parents in designing strategies to limit criminal activities among youths is critical because parents can offer probation officers with additional information about their children's behavior and conduct. The studies reviewed suggested that addressing criminal behavior among youths is based on the extent to which probation officers collaborate with other stakeholders to propose the best strategies that will reduce recidivism.

Problem Statement

The issue that prompted me to search the literature was young offenders age 10 to 17 years have increasingly become involved with the juvenile justice system, causing concerns about their future prospect and their role in positively contributing to the prosperity of the society, particularly in Maryland (see Sickmund & Puzzanchera, 2018). Grucza et al. (2018) expressed similar thoughts that children who are 10–17 years are

actively involved in 1 in 10 juvenile arrests, with at least 728,280 arrests made annually (Sickmund & Puzzanchera, 2018). Bui et al. (2018) and Young et al. (2017) underscored the alarming rate of juvenile delinquencies and recommended the need to explore strategies that can be used to reduce juvenile delinquencies and help young children grow into respectable people in the community. I discovered that limited research had been conducted to explore and document strategies that can be used to reduce criminal activities in children in Maryland.

Whereas much was known and documented about the juvenile justice system and how it operates to hold children accountable for their criminal activities and thereafter their rehabilitation into responsible citizens in society (see Jennings et al., 2019), the surge of 20,025 juvenile arrests in 2018 in Maryland was alarming (see Sickmund & Puzzanchera, 2018). This raised concerns about youth offenders' future prospects and provided opportunities for researchers to explore strategies that can be used to reduce criminal activities in this population (Kivivuori et al., 2016; Yun & Cui, 2020). It was important to explore and document strategies that could be used to reduce criminal activities among young children because reports showed that compared to juveniles who primarily become engaged in delinquency in their adolescent stage (Sickmund & Puzzanchera, 2018), very young delinquents were considered at higher risk of spiraling into serious and chronic career offenders constituting disproportionate threats to public safety and property (Young et al., 2017; Yun & Cui, 2020).

Several researchers have published on the juvenile justice system and rehabilitation of delinquents (Kivivuori et al., 2016; Yun & Cui, 2020), but limited

research had been conducted on exploring and documenting strategies that can be used to reduce criminal activities among children in Maryland. The current study addressed this gap in understanding by focusing on strategies that can be used to reduce juvenile delinquencies and criminal activities among children in Maryland. Eleven probation officers from Maryland were interviewed. The study findings may help stakeholders in the juvenile justice system institute strategies that can be used to reduce criminal activities among children.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to better understand Maryland probation officers' perceptions of strategies for reducing juvenile delinquency. I sought to provide detailed descriptions of the strategies that stakeholders in the juvenile criminal justice system and the offenders can use to reduce youth crime in Maryland. Although childhood crime rates have been reported to be falling since the 1990s, general fear and political rhetoric relating to juvenile crime have continued to heighten (Kivivuori et al., 2016).

Research Questions

The surge in juvenile delinquencies in the recent past has heightened concerns among the stakeholders about youth offenders' future prospects. Whereas many criminal activities involving youths are not reported, a recently released report by the FBI showed that the number of youths being apprehended for various illegal activities is staggering. In 2017, statistics indicated a 7% increase in the number of arrests involving youths (Hollin, 2019). Similar statistics were reported by Ardi and Sisin (2018) who noted that

approximately 35% of all cases involved youths in 2018, and that 70% of them were between the ages of 10 and 15 years, raising concern for the need to reduce crime rates among youths. The purpose of the current qualitative study was to better understand Maryland probation officers' perceptions of strategies for reducing juvenile delinquency. The overreaching research question was the following: What strategies can be used to reduce juvenile crime in Maryland? The specific research question that guided the study was the following: What are probation officers' perceptions of the problem-focused and emotion-based strategies that can be used to reduce juvenile crime in Maryland?

Theoretical Framework

The present study was guided by the cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) theory. CBT is a renowned theory based on the assumption that irrational misconduct results in antisocial behaviors among people. Researchers have used CBT to influence and change behavior in each direction. According to Young et al. (2017), CBT may help youths reconsider their distorted behavior and misconceptions resulting in criminal activities or behaviors. Hollin (2019) also noted that CBT can be used to change negative behavior among youths to positive thinking that is less criminal.

Behavior change is realized faster in youths because new behavior can be learned (Kivivuori et al., 2016). This implies that youths who engage in criminal activities can learn new practices that are less destructive and antisocial. The focus of CBT therapy among offenders is to help them improve their social skills, problem-solving skills, cognitive styles, self-control, and impulse management (Hollin, 2019). The above-listed

aspects would, in turn, influence the extent to which an individual can learn new positive behaviors.

Researchers have used CBT to examine recidivism among youths. According to the findings reported by Hollin (2019), CBT successfully reduced youth offenders' recidivism by 22%. I used the CBT model to understand the extent to which strategies can reduce criminal activities among youths by focusing on how the youthful offenders can improve their social skills, cognitive skills, self-efficacy, and moral reasoning.

Nature of the Study

The selected research method for the study was qualitative. According to Yin (2015), researchers use qualitative methodology to investigate phenomena through the experiences of the participants and derive key themes that can be used in understanding the event being investigated. The purpose of the current qualitative study was to better understand Maryland probation officers' perceptions of strategies for reducing juvenile delinquency. Qualitative methodology was considered appropriate because it aligned with the purpose of understanding Maryland probation officers' perceptions of strategies for reducing juvenile delinquency. Moreover, qualitative methodology was selected because, according to Yin (2015), the methodology is used by researchers to address what, why, and how questions. I used qualitative methodology to understand how youth crime rates can be reduced based on the views of strategies held by probation officers in Maryland.

A pragmatic paradigm guided this qualitative study. The focus of this philosophical assumption is based on the fact obtained from widely accepted truth (Yin, 2015). The pragmatic approach helps the researcher avoid depending on general truth by

focusing on real information that supports the dualism of mind and offers a pragmatic approach to the topic (Yin, 2015). To achieve this objective, I included probation officers in the juvenile criminal system in the United States. The sample population for the study consisted of 11 probation officers in Maryland.

The main source of data for this study was semistructured interviews. According to Yin (2015), semistructured interviews are used to collect data when the purpose of the study is to explore participants' thoughts and opinions regarding a phenomenon. In the current study, participants' identities were coded during the interviews to conceal their identities. The interview session lasted 60–90 minutes. Interview responses were coded using MAXQDA software and analyzed using the thematic analysis technique. All data were stored in a password-protected computer to prevent unauthorized access by third parties.

Definitions

According to Yin (2015), the researcher has the duty to define technical terms as applied in the study. The purpose is to provide the readers of the study with key information related to the contextual meaning of different terms. The following terms were used in the current study:

Delinquency: Criminal behavior conducted by a juvenile (Thornberry et al., 2018).

Juvenile: A child or young person who has not attained adult age (Elliott et al., 2020).

Recidivism: The practice of repeating undesirable behaviors people have once experienced (Yun & Cui, 2020).

Assumptions

Assumptions refer to statements accept as true without verification (Yin, 2015). I assumed that the participants would be honest and truthful throughout the study. Second, I assumed that the selected research methodology would be appropriate to explore the research problem. Finally, I assumed that the selected participants would have time to participate in the study on the interview day.

Scope and Delimitations

Scope or delimitations refer to the boundaries that the researcher sets to guide the study (Yin, 2015). Although other stakeholders may have used different strategies to reduce juvenile recidivism, only probation officers were used in the current study. The study was also be delimited to the geographical location. The study was based in Maryland, and only participants from the state were interviewed. The selected research methodology also delimited the study. A qualitative descriptive design was selected to guide the study.

Limitations

There were several limitations that I anticipated in this present study. The first limitation related to participants' accessibility (see Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). Gaining access to a sufficient number of study participants could have been difficult (see Yin, 2015). I conducted the study during the COVID-19 pandemic, which reduced my ability to meet participants face-to-face.

The second limitation related to the sample that was to be used. The study was limited to a geographical area and a limited number of participants (see Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). One of the drawbacks of focusing on participants from one location is that their views, thoughts, and perceptions may not be generalizable to the broader population. This could limit the applicability and transferability of the study findings (Yin, 2015).

The third limitation was related to my experience in conducting the study (see Yin, 2015). This study was my first official research. This meant that the skills required may have been above my capability (see Yin, 2015). To mitigate this impact, I consulted experts in the field, including experts in data analysis and software, to analyze data (see Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018).

The last limitation was the research depended on participants' voluntary participation (see Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). There was no way I could compel the participants to be truthful in their responses (see Yin, 2015). The likelihood of bias in participants' responses could have been a limiting factor in the present study.

Significance

Significance to Theory and Practice

I sought to provide valuable information that could be used by researchers, stakeholders, and other criminal justice practitioners to better understand strategies that can be used to reduce illegal activities among youthful offenders. The study may have an effect on the criminal justice system and juvenile justice policies that the government can use to manage juvenile cases. The study was based on CBT theory.

According to Suranata et al. (2020), CBT theory is based on the premise that behavior is something that people learn. To learn new practices, a person has to be influenced toward a set of new behaviors (Barabasz, 2017). The focus on cognitive ability to learn new behaviors that are less destructive is part of the CBT framework, which currently postulates that mental cognition dictates the type of behavior an individual can learn and acquire (Farhodimoghadam et al., 2020). The implication is that once an individual has changed their mental reasoning by learning new practices, the negative behaviors will be replaced by positive behaviors that can be learned over time (Young et al., 2017). The current study results may provide professional therapists with rich information that can be used to reduce recidivism among young offenders.

Significance to Positive Social Change

The study findings may provide valuable information that may be used to address the increased rates of juvenile delinquencies. Many youths may be rehabilitated and turned into valuable members of society who are less criminal (see Ardi & Sisin, 2018). The reduction in illegal activities among youths may positively contribute to community growth as each person may concentrate on career and cognitive thoughts, and fewer ideas may be on robbery (see Hollin, 2019). A sense of security within the community provides safety for the society members to engage positively in their practices to better their lives and society (Yun & Cui, 2020).

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Summary

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The situation that prompted me to pursue the study was limited research had been conducted on exploring and documenting strategies that can be used to reduce criminal

activities among youths in Maryland. To address this gap in the literature, I conducted a qualitative descriptive study to understand Maryland probation officers' perceptions of strategies for reducing juvenile delinquency. Chapter 1 identified the literature gap and the need for the gap to be addressed. In the background section, information on juvenile delinquency, including historical and current data, was provided. Possible consequences of juvenile delinquency were also discussed in the background section. CBT was discussed as the foundational theory guiding the study. Other sections included the nature of the study, research questions, purpose of the study, problem statement, definition of key terms, assumptions, limitations, delimitations, and significance. Chapter 2 includes a review of the literature on strategies for reducing juvenile delinquency. The theoretical framework is also discussed in detail, including how it informed different themes supporting the study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Youths' arrests, subsequent referral to the probation department, and detentions are likely to result in considerable financial costs to the community at an individual level (Kurlychek & Gagnon, 2019). State and federal agencies may have to use additional taxpayer monies to fund programs aimed at preventing juvenile delinquency (Mpofu et al., 2018). Such practices add additional burdens to taxpayers when such resources can be channeled to areas where needed, like health, education, and business growth (Kurlychek & Gagnon, 2019). Offenders also incur unnecessary costs that add extra economic burden to the community members. After being arraigned in court, offending youths are required to pay for probation or raise a certain amount to cover court expenses, such as paying an attorney and the financial cost for the crime committed if convicted. The purpose of the current qualitative descriptive study was to better understand Maryland probation officers' perceptions of strategies for reducing juvenile delinquency. In this chapter, I include the literature search strategy, conceptual framework, and themes related to the literature.

Literature Search Strategy

I used the Walden University Library and Google Scholar to locate databases needed to obtain scholarly articles, books, and other publications that were deemed relevant to my study. I searched several databases, such as PubMed Central, Database of Abstracts of Reviews of Effects, PsycINFO, UpToDate, PubMed, Psycharticles, ProQuest, PsychoInfo, Academic Premier, Sage, JSTOR, ResaearchGate, EMBASE, ScienceDirect, Google Scholar, Cochrane Library, Emerald, EBSCO, and Elsevier. To

maintain the accuracy and reliability of the sources used, I targeted only sources that were published within the 5-year period prior to the study's completion. The search words used included *juvenile justice*, *juvenile justice system*, *juvenile courts*, *delinquent*, *juvenile offender*, *youth offender*, *recidivism*, *juvenile treatment programs*, *juvenile delinquency risk factors*, and *behavior-based strategies to reduce juvenile delinquency*.

Conceptual Framework

CBT was selected as the conceptual framework to guide the study. The juvenile justice system has depended on effective response to juvenile delinquency. Different conceptual frameworks have been suggested to influence juvenile delinquent behaviors. One of the conceptual frameworks suggested was CBT. According to McCarthy (2020), CBT has been used in the juvenile justice system as part of the solution to reducing juvenile delinquency and recidivism. According to Farhodimoghadam et al. (2020), CBT is a set of evidence-based psychotherapy principles. The client is actively encouraged to learn new behaviors, skills, and problem-solving skills that may help them solve problems being experienced. CBT's main premise is to treat the maladaptive behavior in individuals and support them to learn new desirable behavior that can counter negative attitudes that they had before. Research by Farhodimoghadam et al. demonstrated that CBT is one of the most effective frameworks that can help people initiate behavioral changes to address their problems. Additionally, CBT focuses on changing individuals' behavior by learning new desirable behavior and the interconnectedness of an individual's thoughts, emotions, and behaviors, and the extent to which they relate with other individuals within the environment.

Because emotions, thoughts, and behaviors are interlinked, CBT interventions include therapies to intervene and support individuals to learn new behaviors that can be used to mitigate the undesirable behavior they had. According to Savatia and Ruth (2020), CBT's foundational purpose is to empower victims by supporting them to acquire new skills and behaviors to address the problems they had. Treatment includes individuals with anxiety, drug abuse, criminal history, and other conduct disorders. Mohammad et al. (2020) emphasized that CBT is based on the premise that thoughts are primarily responsible for feelings and behaviors. Learning new behaviors can significantly impact the mental capacity to respond to stressors in the external environment. The implication, therefore, is that an individual can change the way they think even if the situations remain the same. By changing how they think, victims are likely to learn new desirable behaviors that can be used to offset the problems they encountered. These include learning new behaviors that can be used to counter criminal thoughts among juveniles. According to Case et al. (2020), CBT treatment is based on cognitive and behavioral aspects.

In most cases, cognitive treatments relate to the process of restructuring an individual's thoughts by learning new knowledge. The primary focus is for victims to understand why they are experiencing certain problems in life and the meaning they create about the symptoms and situations they encountered (van der Put et al., 2020). CBT's objective is to allow an individual to gain a new skill and thinking patterns that can offset negative thoughts linked to criminal activities.

The effectiveness of CBT in influencing behavior among offenders has widely

been researched and documented. For instance, Ardi and Sisin (2018) researched

interventions that can reduce criminal activities among adults and juvenile offenders. In a

meta-analysis, Barabasz (2017) explored hundreds of studies to identify interventions and

programs that have been successful in reducing criminal activities among adult and

juvenile offenders. The studies reviewed related to rehabilitation, education, and

cognitive. The findings established that CBT programs were effective in reducing

criminal activities among juvenile offenders. According to Barabasz, CBT programs

provided opportunities for offenders to improve information-processing capacities and

coping strategies, which played a significant role in reducing criminal activities.

Farhodimoghadam et al. (2020) also investigated the effectiveness of CBT in reducing

criminal activities among juvenile offenders. Findings established that CBT programs

such as family therapy, boot camps, and peer counseling provided the necessary support

for juvenile offenders to rehabilitate effectively. Based on these studies, I selected the

CBT framework to explore behavior-based strategies to reduce juvenile delinquency as

described as probation officers.

Literature Review

Concept of Juvenile Delinquency

Valasik and Barton (2018) argued that social change, especially in urban

neighborhoods, has been linked to increased delinquency due to the breakdown in the

social controls in these regions. A study conducted by Miller and Therrien (2018)

revealed that delinquency in children is directly related to the juvenile's "detachment

from conventional groups" (p. X) and not due to biological or psychological abnormalities. Schmucker and Lösel (2017) defined juvenile delinquency as the behavior of children between 7 and 18 years that violates the current laws. From a comparable standpoint, Mohammad et al. (2020) defined juvenile delinquency as socially aggressive behavior unauthorized by the community from a different perspective.

Contextually, the criminal justice system has identified two types of delinquent acts: status offenses and criminal acts. According to van der Put et al. (2020), status offenses refer to offenses by juveniles that would not be considered criminal if committed by adults. The implication is that legal interventions bind individuals below 18 years of age for specific acts that would be criminal if adults committed them. In the event that juveniles commit crimes and are arrested, they are detained in facilities designed for youthful offenders and adjudicated in a delinquent court as a juvenile (Pereira & Maia, 2017). Scholars such as McCarthy (2020) have linked juvenile delinquency to different behavior disorders, peer influence, economic status, personal factors, and family factors.

The first juvenile court was established in 1899 in Cook County, Illinois (Paterson-Young et al., 2019). The establishment of juvenile court climaxed years of legal and humanitarian concerns for the well-being of children who were held for violating applicable laws, including the criteria used for holding them accountable for their acts (McCarthy, 2020). The pioneers who supported juvenile courts' establishment believed that children were undeveloped and needed protection. Schmucker and Lösel (2017) underscored that the supporters held the perception that children are vulnerable to due influence, making them easily swayed into adults' criminal acts. Goldman (2018)

also argued that the establishment of juvenile court was based on the assumption that the hearings must be less formal with greater discretion on the part of judges to minimize the impact of criminal proceedings on the youthful offender's well-being. Haines and Case (2018) and Williams and Daniels (2020) also argued that the juvenile court's primary focus was facilitating rehabilitation and not sentencing prison life.

After the establishment of the juvenile court in Cook County, several other states embraced it, as did countries in Europe (Haines & Case, 2018). By 1925, all states in the United States had implemented a juvenile justice system that was used to process criminal and noncriminal offenses of youthful offenders (Haines & Case, 2018). The juvenile justice system was also used to offer youthful offenders supportive services toward their rehabilitation (Williams & Daniels, 2020). In addition to juvenile justice courts, other agencies and institutions were proposed for youthful offenders to support their successful rehabilitation into the community (Paterson-Young et al., 2019). In juvenile justice courts, children below the age of 14 years were considered underdeveloped and vulnerable to manipulation, and could not possess satisfactory criminal responsibility to commit crimes (Haines & Case, 2018). However, the conjecture was refutable between the ages of 7 and 14 years (Paterson-Young et al., 2019). On the other hand, individuals 14 years of age and older were considered mature and were held responsible for any crimes committed (Case, 2018). Since its inception in 1959, the juvenile justice system has undergone a significant transformation from punitive policy to more relaxed ones that focus on rehabilitation (Case, 2018).

Juvenile Crime Rates in the United States

Youths in juvenile detention centers are regarded as the most challenging issue by stakeholders in the criminal justice system across the world (Schmucker & Lösel, 2017). In 2008, nearly 81,000 youths were detained in different correctional facilities in the United States with an average placement period of 68 days (McCarthy, 2020). Of the youthful offenders, it was estimated that 85% were male, 40% were African American, 35% were White, 21% were Hispanic, and 71% were age 15 to 18 years (McCarthy, 2020). Statistics indicated that 35% of the offenses were personal offenses, 29 % were property offenses, and 23% were drug offenses (McCarthy, 2020). Scholars argued that due to juveniles' delinquency and conduct problems, youthful offenders have difficulty learning and attaining new skills to improve their lives (Miller et al., 2019).

Maryland's Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services

Maryland's Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services was created in 1970. Currently, the department has the responsibility to supervise and rehabilitate convicted individuals who pose a serious threat to the public (Krawczyk et al., 2020). The functions of the department of public safety and correctional services were officially enacted by the British President and commoner, which have since evolved to fit the local demands and needs (Krawczyk et al., 2020). From 2003 to 2007, the Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services operated in four main areas: administration, treatment services, operations, and property services. However, operations were abolished in 2007, and property service was renamed capital programs (Krawczyk et al., 2020). From 2007 to 2016, the department's three main divisions,

including correction, parole and probation, and pretrial detention services, reported

directly to the secretary of state (Rappaport et al., 2018). The parole and probation

department includes the criminal injuries compensation board, division of capital

construction and facilities maintenance, division of correction, division of parole and

probation, and pretrial detention division (Krawczyk et al., 2020). These divisions are

integrated within the criminal justice system to ensure offenders are held accountable for

their actions (Rappaport et al., 2018).

Crime Rates in Maryland

Juvenile delinquency has remained a major issue affecting many states across the

United States. In the state of Maryland, at least 100,000 arrests, as well as referrals, were

forwarded to the TTJD. The total arrests ranged from 1,500 to 2,000, making it an issue

of great concern to stakeholders in the criminal justice system (McCarthy, 2020).

Historical data indicated that in 2010, 116,305 arrests were made in the following

categories: 21,788 violent, 26,398 property destruction, 13,349 drugs/alcohol, 18,051

curfews/runaway, 17,547 disorderly conduct, and 19,172 other types of offenses

(McCarthy, 2020). In 2011, 98,805 juvenile arrests were made, with the offense category

being as follows: 18,605 violent offenses, 21,929 property destruction, 11,566

drugs/alcohol, 15,220 curfews/runaway, 14,645 disorderly conduct, and 16,840 other

(Case, 2018).

Types of Juvenile Offenses

Juvenile offenses can be divided into two groups, including status offenses and

criminal offenses. According to De Vries et al. (2018), status offenses are acts deemed

unlawful only when committed by an adult. Status offenses include several limits

enforceable on a minor to remain steadfast in their normal activities, including learning

and avoiding drug abuse. Although status offenses may vary across states, they focus on

truancy, curfews, or having illegal drugs (Bouchard & Wong, 2017).

Case (2018) argued that juvenile who committee status offenses tend to come

from unstable families, have exiting unmet mental health problems, have challenges with

learning, and have been exposed to violence, including domestic violence. Nonetheless,

all crimes committed by either an adult or juvenile are classified based on their severity

(Case, 2018). For instance, a felony is considered the most heinous crime, including

crimes such as assault, murder, sex trafficking, rape, and possession of illicit drugs or use

(Haines & Case, 2018). Statistics suggest that of the 2.2 million youthful offenders

arrested yearly, nearly 92000 are arrested for a felony (McCarthy, 2020). This includes

over 46000 nonaggressive or property crimes (McCarthy, 2020). Property crimes include

burglary, larceny-theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson (De Vries et al., 2018). Other

offenses include simple assault, vandalism, weapons law violation, drug abuse violation,

driving under the influence, liquor-law violations, drunkenness, disorderly conduct,

curfew, and loitering, and running away (Department of Defense, 2019).

Referral to Probation

Delinquents are referred to probation when a youthful offender is brought to the

probation unit's attention for review (Bouchard & Wong, 2017). According to Haines and

Case (2018), a majority of the juveniles are referred to the probation department by law

enforcement. Additionally, Schweitzer et al. (2017) argued that some referrals come from

learning institutions, homes, and private or public agencies of concern retitling to the juveniles' conduct. Juvenile referral to the probation department may be new, which usually related to the first-time offenders and subsequent referrals relating to repeat offenders (De Vries et al., 2018).

Upon being referred to the probation department, probation officers will evaluate the issues at hand to determine whether the case forwards should be acted upon, closed, or even transferred to other departments (Kurlychek & Gagnon, 2019). In addition, the probation officer concerned has to decide, based on the case information, whether to release the delinquent, be placed on informal probation and if the offender has to petition before a juvenile court (Case, 2018). For instance, in Maryland, approximately one-third of all juvenile cases referred to the probation department are closed at the initial stage. One-half of the cases are petition before the juvenile court. Once placed on probation, it is the duty of the probation officers in the correctional facilities to offer a supportive environment for the juveniles to rehabilitate and change their deviant behavior (Haines & Case, 2018). This will include the implementation of education-based strategies to allow them to learn a new behavior or other interventions that are recommended by correctional facilities to be used in different instances (McCarthy, 2020).

Impact of Juvenile Delinquency

Concerning the economic burden of crime, McCarthy (2020) suggested that a typical crime could cost society approximately $1.1 million yearly, whether for an adult or juvenile. Contextualizing the juvenile, it is estimated that criminal activities cost the society approximately $80,000-$325,000, or 6% to 22% of the overall costs of a criminal

career (McCarthy, 2020). Haines and Case (2018) argued that delinquents who are detailed in juvenile detention centers are usually associated with a higher financial burden, both to the state and individual levels. Statistics suggest that the state of Maryland spends at least $604,552 to supervise criminal activities daily, including feeding the delinquents, counseling services, and offering education to the convicted juvenile (Mpofu et al., 2018).

Besides economic burden, juvenile delinquency also causes social and emotional, and psychical problems. The affected delinquents are likely to experience emotional and social problems when removed from the rest of the community and held in respective juvenile detention centers. Mpofu et al. (2018) reported that juvenile offenders are likely to find themselves at the risk of recurring social and academic failures throughout their life as they transition into adulthood. The affected juveniles are likely to drop out of schools, experience mental health problems due to increased anxiety and depression, face employment challenges, and the likelihood of spiraling into crime throughout their adulthood (Bui et al., 2018). Criminal activities at a tender age are likely to have far-reaching implications on delinquents' emotional and psychological well-being, which is likely to lower their quality of life considerably (Case et al., 2020). Family members and friends of the delinquents are likely to also suffer from depression, anxiety, mental health problems, and family destabilization (McCarthy, 2020).

Risk Factors for Juvenile Delinquency

Substance Abuse

Substance abuse is primary a factor associated with criminal behavior, especially among youths. According to a study conducted by Du (2019), offenses resulting from substance abuse have quadrupled during the past two decades, and most of these crimes are committed by youths. Changalasetty et al. (2019) analyze social factors that significantly characterize juvenile offenders. Nearly 1,605 juveniles were sampled based on their character. In view of this study, juvenile participants were categorized as being substance abuser and sex offender (high need), school challenges and criminogenic associations (high risk), and family or home stability and parental supervision (low stability). Changalasetty et al. (2019) further established that 31% of juveniles who were characterized as highly involved in alcohol and drug abuse engaged in multiple felonies before attaining 14 years. About 49% of juveniles had criminogenic interactions with gang membership as a factor that motivated the use of drugs and had an adverse impact on adolescents' behavior (Changalasetty et al., 2019).

Case et al. (2020) reported that there is evidence to link juvenile delinquency to substance abuse. For instance, in a study conducted on 123 juveniles, participants indicated that they had abused drugs before engaging in criminal activities. 67% of the participants underscored that committing crime was directly related to drug abuse as one has to use drugs before committing a given crime. Department of Defense (2019) also noted that substance abuse was considered as the key motivator to lure youths in criminal acts. With time, the youth become addicted to drugs and faced with financial constraints,

it become difficult to but drugs leaving criminal activities as the main options to fund their addictive behavior. Based on the study finding, 56% of the participants noted that they were motived to commit crime because they had no money to buy drugs such as cocaine or marijuana. In view of the literature reviewed, it can be concluded that substance abuse is major risk factor for juvenile delinquency.

Family

Family dynamics such as child abuse, social economic status, and poor parent-child relationship has been identified as another risk factor for juvenile delinquency. In view of Rose et al. (2017), an adolescent's family may be one of the most critical and influential criminal behavior factors among juveniles. According to this study, teenagers from a family with poor sibling-parent relationships were associated with drug abuse, risk of suicide, and poor adult health outcomes, which results in criminal activities among the youths (Bui et al., 2018). A different study by Spruit et al. (2018) reported that 35% of juveniles linked to criminal gangs, had a family member with a history of gang activity, had a family member with a history of criminal activity or imprisonment or the family was unstable. Of the 35% of juveniles characterized as low stability, 20% came low-income backgrounds, and 19 % had inadequate parental supervision (Spruit et al., 2018).

Blomberg and Pesta (2017) conducted a study to examine family experiences of juveniles living with two biological parents, living with one parent, and staying without a biological parent. According to the survey, a total of 852 interviews were completed by a parent or guardian in the family who was well-informed about the child's health (Blomberg & Pesta, 2017). Evaluations were made regarding the comparisons of the

number of biological parents staying in the teenager's household and among subgroups of children lacking parental care, in connection to juvenile delinquency. According to this study's findings, about 2.32 million translates to 3.1% of children living in non-parental care. Furthermore, 15% of those juveniles living in non-parental care were in foster care. 26.1% of the children lived with their biological parents(s), whereas 38% lived with grandparents who acted as guardians (Blomberg & Pesta, 2017). About 25% of the children lived with other relatives or nonrelatives and increased their chances of participating in criminal acts due to limited parental supervision and guidance.

In a comparable study, Spruit et al. (2018) alluded children raised by one biological parent were five times as likely to have experienced caregiver abuse, neighborhood violence, and have lived with a caregiver with a mental health or drug problem caregiver imprisonment than those living with two biological parents. Children lacking parental care were between 6 and 16 times more likely to experience the five adversative impacts mentioned earlier (Ardi & Sisin, 2017; Rose et al., 2017). In view of Rose et al. (2017), approximately 71% of teenagers living with both biological parents did not experience the five negative factors. Nearly 20% of juveniles in the juvenile justice system of Texas, according to a study by Du (2019), were raised with nonparental care.

Children in the foster care system, in view of Anjaswarni et al. (2019), are more likely to fall victim to maltreatment or child abuse. Child mistreatment, including physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, is a factor connected to negative development consequences along with future violent behavior (Anjaswarni et al., 2019). According to

a study by McGee et al. (2018), child abuse refers to failing to do something or doing something that causes harm to a child or makes a child vulnerable to harm. According to this study, most children who have experienced abuse suffer severe emotional rather than physical harm.

Approximately 30% of children admitted to foster care in 2007 had experienced parental substance or drug abuse as a causative factor for entering the system (Pennington, 2017). Pennington further reported that one-half of the juveniles in foster care had been victims of caregiver violence or confinement. Two-thirds had stayed with someone who had a drug or alcohol problem.

Du (2019) commented that children living in foster care and those with a nonparental relative, from the year 2008 to 2009, were more likely to have a history of child abuse, caregiver drug, mental health issues, and economic deprivation, and caregiver incarceration. Family criminality, coupled with adolescents who lack a stable caregiver, is another predictor of juvenile delinquency (Rathinabalan & Naaraayan, 2017). The study established that 9% of families with a family history of criminal conduct accounted for 43% of arrests (Rathinabalan & Naaraayan, 2017). Additionally, McGee et al. (2018) mentioned that adolescents with a sibling or parent criminality were a weighty factor linked to juvenile offending. Family criminality, adolescents living without their biological parents, and child abuse are some of the factors that influence juvenile delinquency (Anjaswarni et al., 2019).

According to Imperiale (2018), low socioeconomic status, over the past, has been associated with a broad range of adverse health results, including more significant

mortality and morbidity, higher rates of chronic illness, as well as involvement in risky behavior. Individuals with low socioeconomic status are vulnerable to poorer health outcomes because of inadequate health care, poor living conditions, greater stress, and lack of knowledge (Anjaswarni et al., 2019).

Education

According to a study conducted by Imperiale (2018), juvenile offenders share many social influences related to juvenile delinquency. Academic challenges and underachievement in school have been the most dominant factors, with 75 % of juveniles having a history of admission in an alternative program, having a failing grade, or dropping out of school (Changalasetty et al., 2019). Changalasetty et al. (2019) noted that approximately 35% to 49% of juvenile offenders have a disability. About 40% of juvenile offenders have a learning disability. In a different study, Tao (2017) established that one-third of juvenile offenders that he surveyed exhibited special education needs and are below their linear age level in terms of mental abilities such as spelling, comprehension, and reading.

Mental Health

A majority of imprisoned juveniles experience mental health complications such as suicidal ideations and depression. According to study findings presented by Cho et al. (2019), mental health in juveniles under the age of 18 is defined by the accomplishment of development and emotional milestones, effective coping skills, and healthy social development. McGee et al. (2018) noted that children who exhibit a positive quality of life are mentally sound and can behave and perform well in school, in their communities,

and at home. According to Cho et al. (2019), mental disorders are severe deviations from expected social, emotional, and cognitive development. According to these researchers, mental disorders might be an outcome of challenges at home, in the community environment, with peers, and with relationships.

Behaviors are grouped into two classes, namely, internalizing and externalizing behaviors. As McGee et al. (2018) explained, externalizing behaviors usually cause distress to others and conduct that can be seen or noticed. On the other hand, they asserted that internalizing behaviors are inner feelings. Examples of internalizing conditions include anxiety and depression that have symptoms experienced individually. In view of Tao (2017), such symptoms may consist of unhappiness, loneliness, and worry. Internalizing adjustment syndromes are not always obvious and present challenges related to diagnosis (Mason, 2017). Research findings from a study by Blomberg and Pesta (2017) suggested high rates of substance abuse disorders and mental health as well as increased mortality rates among individuals who spent time in correctional facilities and low educational and vocational accomplishment. Mental health disorders most often arise with youth in the juvenile justice system because of substance abuse availability.

According to Imperiale (2018), over 63% of juveniles involved in the criminal justice system meet substance abuse criteria. The study's findings further established female juvenile offenders demonstrated higher rates of internalized and externalized disorders such as mood disorders, depression, suicidal ideations, and anxiety. Juvenile offenders are an underprivileged group who often come from families prone to maltreatment and dysfunction (Cho et al., 2019). Tao (2017) supported the above

findings by amplifying adolescents who had been victims of abuse and violence were more likely to display delinquent behavior. Youth violence and anger-based problems have increased the awareness of mental health disorders among the general population.

It is estimated that a total of 14%-23% of children in the United States have a mental health problem (Rathinabalan & Naaraayan, 2017). In 2010, suicide was the second leading delinquent behavior among adolescents whose ages ranged from 12 years to 17 years (Roccaet al., 2019). According to these researchers, suicide may happen because of mental disorders and other compounding factors. Approximately 70% of teenagers in the juvenile justice system have a diagnosable mental disorder (Tao, 2017).

Children associated with a mental health problem have a higher likelihood of developing mental disorders as they transition into adulthood. According to Mason (2017), a majority of mental health issues are not identified during imprisonment. Adolescents in the juvenile justice system who have mental health disorders are at greater risk of harming themselves or others and have specific needs that must be resolved while serving jail terms (Cho et al., 2019). This study underscored that the frequency of behavioral and emotional problems among imprisoned juveniles is greater than that of the overall population (Young, 2017).

Protective Factors

Mason (2017) commented that protective factors diminish adolescents' probability of getting involved in delinquent behaviors that may affect their health. Protective factors are grouped into external assets and internal assets. Assets include empowerment, support, positive self-image, boundaries, social life, and commitment to

learning. Adolescents who lack assets or protective factors are more likely to experience health problems and develop unhealthy behaviors (Taşkıran et al., 2017). When juveniles have positive assets, they are more likely to achieve higher grades in school, have higher levels of coping skills, and display higher self-esteem. After coding interview responses of juvenile participants in the study by Taşkıran et al. (2017), seven themes were identified; individual, employment, family, peers, education, independent living, and community. Some of these protective factors have been discussed below.

Individual Factors

Adolescents identified their individual choices as an essential protective factor (Taşkıran et al., 2017). 86% of the adolescents identified themselves as having a productive transition into adulthood with lessened criminal activity. Additionally, 76% identified their poor choices as a challenge to succeeding in life. Taşkıran et al. (2017) reported that these teenagers described the relationship between peers and family as having an undesirable influence on their delinquent behaviors as well as antisocial behavior.

Family

Family is a vital positive factor in regard to juvenile delinquency (Taşkıran et al., 2017). According to the study results, 72% of the juvenile participants described the need for strong emotional support to enter adulthood successfully. Teenagers regarded positive family relationships as vital factors in minimizing delinquent behaviors. 39% of respondents reported that the lack of emotional support negatively impacted their developmental process success (Taşkıran et al., 2017). In this survey, juveniles identified

their families as barriers to their success because of family members' engagement in alcohol, gangs, drug, and other crimes. The surveyed adolescents suggested they need to have a supportive and healthy place to live.

According to Kroska et al. (2017), a family setting with a strong attachment, democratic rules, good communication, and parental supervision is considered a protective factor. As such, a family lacking parental supervision, rules, and having poor communication is regarded to have a potential for delinquent behavior development in adolescents.

There is a literature gap concerning the effect of parental engagement on delinquent behavior among teenagers (Anjaswarni et al., 2019). Parental involvement is a crucial part of teenage development. Adolescents with high levels of parental engagement show fewer behavior problems (Kroska et al., 2017). Moreover, this study explained that adolescents who feel a connection to adults, especially their parents as well as their community, are less likely to engage in antisocial and criminal behavior.

Peers

Taşkıran et al. (2017) noted that peers have an impact on the wellbeing of adolescents. Adolescents cited the significance of having support from other peers, positive social relationships, and enjoying school as factors that positively influence their quality of life. A section of the interviewed participants reported peers as a negative influence by citing barriers, such as continued involvement with gangs, substance abuse, and antisocial behavior. In a different study, Blomberg and Pesta (2017) underscored that peer influence is necessary during puberty. According to this study, as supported by

Taşkıran et al. (2017), adolescents with supportive peers often post good school performance and healthy relationships with their classmates and teachers. Adolescents who have peers with negative behaviors are vulnerable to behavior problems (Taşkıran et al., 2017).

Community

About 47% of juvenile participants in a survey conducted by Taşkıran et al. (2017) noted community as a factor influencing their success in life. Adolescents identified various activities or amenities they would wish to see in their communities, such as churches, gyms, fishing, hunting, and reading (Taşkıran et al., 2017). According to the surveyed youths, involvement in positive community activities significantly mitigates the chances of their engagement in antisocial and reoffending behavior. Of the 45 imprisoned juveniles, 32 reported educational programs significantly influenced their lives. According to another study by Cho et al. (2019), juvenile correction amenities allow children to complete high school education, earn diplomas, begin college studies and enhance their academic capabilities and skills. In view of most respondents of this study, a sense of accomplishment after participating in educational programs while being incarnated significantly reduced their engagement in re-delinquent behavior.

Employment

Most adolescent participants also noted that employment was a positive factor that reduced their re-engagement in antisocial behavior (Taşkıran et al., 2017). They further reported that employment enhanced their ability to achieve personal goals and

being successful in life. In like manner, 25% of the participants highlighted a need to live

autonomously to have a supportive atmosphere and successful life (Taşkıran et al., 2017).

Delinquency Programs and Treatments

According to Bui et al. (2018), adopting key evidence-based practices in juvenile

justice system is a new phenomenon despite its noticeable logic and basis. Previously,

Juvenile justice system have been criticized for implementing a tactful program that is

essentially well-intended and acceptable but grossly ineffectual (McCarthy, 2020).

Paterson-Young et al. (2019) noted that a set of Juvenile policies and programs were

publicized by media and had legislative support, which could cause people to believe

there are effective when not at all. Prior to adopting the literature that is supporting the

refutation of the effectiveness of common delinquency programs, the key program and

interventions (Case et al., 2020), including Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE),

boot camps, custodial juvenile correctional facilitates, and Scared Straight programs,

were commonly used and accepted as the effective approaches to minimizing juvenile

delinquency, including their rehabilitation (Mason, 2017).

As noted by Valasik and Barton (2018), such programs had minimum impact on

youthful offenders' rehabilitation because interventions such as boot camps, custodial

juvenile correctional facilities increased recidivism among juveniles. An analysis of

Scared Straight programming illustrates the consequences of adopting ineffective

delinquency prevention policies (Ardi & Sisin, 2018). For instance, Scared Straight was

introduced in the early 1970s in New Jersey with the aim of scaring delinquents or at-risk

youths from engaging in adult criminality. The basic method was to present the horrific

experiences of inmates incarcerated within the penal system. Hardened criminals

presented these experiences. In some cases, much of the information concerning the

inmates' stories was grossly exaggerated (Mason, 2017).

In 1992, an independent study was conducted to assess Scared Straight programs'

effectiveness, a key program that was meant to reduce juvenile delinquencies (Paterson-

Young et al., 2019). The study finding did not establish a significant link between Scared

Straight programs and offenders' behavior compared to youthful offenders recruited to

the programs (Haines & Case, 2018). The study findings surprisingly revealed that

participant who participated in Scared Straight programs had higher recidivism rates

(McCarthy, 2020).

Consequently, scholars and practitioners started to questions the usefulness of

juvenile programs such as Scared Straight in preventing juvenile delinquency and

possible recidivism (Case, 2018). Further studies revealed that some of the juvenile

delinquency programs adopted by states' correctional facilities were infective and only

increased crime rates among youths (Ardi & Sisin, 2018). For instance, research

conducted by Paterson-Young et al. (2019) established that juvenile delinquency

programs increased crime rates between 2% and 19% compared to youthful offenders

who were not recruited to such programs. The implication was the resulting criticism of

the juvenile delinquency programs widely publicized by states, yet they only increased

the amount of crime among the youths (Williams & Daniels, 2020).

With time, research on prevention programs and intervention has expanded over

the past two decades, and more effective strategies have been devolved, especially

interventions that are behavior –focused. Elliott et al. (2020) argued that three evidence-based strategies are being used to reduce and manage juvenile delinquency, with the primary goal of reducing recidivism in the future. The three evidence-based programs include direct evaluation, execution of programs certified by authoritative sources, and implementation of interventions that have been tested through meta-analysis, promising better results than previous methods that were punitive in nature (Farhodimoghadam et al., 2020).

Direct evaluation involves the utilization of experimental control groups to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions being suggested to curb juvenile delinquency. In so doing, direct evaluation allows practitioners and scholars to explore the extent to which a given intervention is successful and introduce corrective mechanisms if the interventions are not achieving the predefined goals (Fast et al., 2017). To be successful, Grucza et al. (2018) suggested that direct evaluation intervention must utilize well-educated technical experts who have a breadth of knowledge in juvenile issues. Their knowledge is likely to be used to support the identification of key areas that need the attention of probation officers and other stakeholders within the criminal justice system (Gutierrez & Newsome, 2017).

The second technique involves the implementation of models that are certified by authoritative sources. To achieve this, stakeholders need to review all possible interventions that are meant to reduce recidivism among youthful offenders and recommend the best strategy to be used (Jennings et al., 2019). Professionals must evaluate each strategy's possible expected outcome with their corresponding probabilities

of how effective each of the approach adopted will be after being implemented in different scenarios. Hollin (2019) argued that such programs' effectiveness is contingent upon implementation across the states and in different settings. Probation officers are advised to ensure that they do not adjust the suggested models. This would negatively impact its effectiveness when generalized to other groups whose models were not adjusted or interred with by probation officers. Kivivuori et al. (2016) called for strict adherence to all programs that have been supported by certified authorities.

The last approach, according to Kubik and Boxer (2020), is the use of evidence-based practices through meta-analysis. Pardini (2016) argued that meta-analyses effectively allow researchers to explore studies that have examined treatment programs by different stakeholders and report the success of each method used. In so doing, meta-analysis can be used to generalize the most effective ways each article has discussed. Additionally, metal analysis results for juvenile delinquency programs provide opportunities for researchers to further research on the key interventions or treatment programs that have been developed. Such practices result from ineffective strategies and interventions being recommended to mitigate the surge in juvenile delinquency across the United States (Williams & Daniels, 2020).

Delinquents in the juvenile justice systems have presented a set of complex issues that the stakeholders have to address relating to academics, mental well-being, and prosocial behavior (Sickmund & Puzzanchera, 2018). Considering the background aspects, delinquents need inquiry-based evidence interventions to promote their psychological, social, and physical well-being in society (Singh & Punia, 2018).

Effective treatment programs that target specific crime or behavior sets are likely to reduce juvenile delinquency as well as recidivism. A study conducted by Suranata et al. (2020) investigated the effectiveness of life skills and psychoeducational programs on juvenile delinquency and recidivism presentation. A total of 120 participants were recruited to take part in the study. All participants were recruited to a seven-week psychoeducational program that utilized presentations and group discussions on the negative impact of juvenile delinquency on the offenders' future in the community.

Additional life skills interventions that were used included role-playing, reinforcement, and education on the dangers of criminal activities at a tender age. Discussion in groups includes participants discussing their feelings and coping strategies when faced with felonies at a tender age and their general view towards juvenile delinquency and its consequences. In terms of content sessions, delinquents were asked to disused feelings that trigger criminal activities, anger, and stress management strategies. This study implied that behavior-based approaches were the best intervention that probation officers could use to reduce juvenile delinquency by learning new desirable behavior.

The study findings suggested a direct relationship between participants in the control group and those in the treatment groups. Based on the findings, it was established that 605% of the delinquents who received behavior-based intervention such as counseling did not re-offend during the time of the study, and only 20% of the delinquents who recommitted crimes did so after three months. The study findings point

to the effectiveness of behavior-based strategies in reducing juvenile delinquency, and probation officers' need to adopt such measures.

Behavior-Based Strategies to Reduce Juvenile Delinquency

Family/Systems Therapy

According to Thornberry et al. (2018), family therapy is based on the assumption that delinquents' behavior can be developed and maintained through a set of maladaptive family relationships that could induce coercion and aggression exchanges. To address such dysfunctional patterns in the family, family therapy intervention incorporates different techniques, including behavioral contracting, rule specification, and positive reinforcement to support children-parent communication (Ukwayi et al., 2018).

Evidence exists linking family system therapy to reduced juvenile delinquency and recidivism. For instance, Yun and Cui (2020) established that participants who took part in functional family therapy reported lower intention to participate in crimes and recidivism rates. Wong et al. (2018) also reported of the 176 delinquents who took part in family therapy systems, 64% of them had no intention of repeating the offense they committed compared to 36% of them who did not participate in functional family therapy to hare their criminal thoughts with family members. Wong et al. (2018) also reported that family therapy uses family members, such as parents or loved siblings, to influence a delinquent juvenile's behavior. Such influence of love and assurance of care by family members is likely to convince the delinquent juvenile of family support and avoid criminal activities that could jeopardize their future (Young et al., 2017). Similar results

were reported by Spruit et al. (2018) who established that family therapies are effective in reducing juvenile delinquency.

For instance, studies have established that youths who took part in family empowerment interventions considerably lowered their probability of committing crimes and reoffending. However, it is important to emphasize that some meta-analyses (Ardi & Sisin, 2018) have refuted that behavior-based family therapies can reduce juvenile delinquency. According to critics, family therapies are short term behavior focused strategies that only work in the short-term, after which the delinquent's offers may revert to committing crimes.

Nonetheless, Young et al. (2017) argued the need to support more of the family-based therapies because they give family members an added advantage to influence their family members' behavior reducing juvenile delinquency, which could be easier compared to law enforcement officers. Studies have shown that family members are like to change the attitude of delinquent juveniles against crime four times than law enforcement officers. Thus far, it can be concluded that the support of family support therapies by probation officers to influence juvenile delinquents because is one of the best strategies that can be used to reduce juvenile delinquency in the United States.

Life Skills Training and Juvenile Behavior Modification

Social and life skills training is anticipated to offer individuals a basis for changing their delinquent behavior and embrace desirable conduct. By influencing behavior, life skills, and social training allows a juvenile delinquent to be empowered and acknowledge his or her social duties as well as their responsibilities to other people in the

community, including warranting their security and safety of mutual coexistence. Through social and life skills training, a juvenile delinquent is likely to learn new behavior that will help them be mindful of their life choices and promote a sense of self-responsibility against criminal activities in the community. Individuals will also be trained to develop positive social relationships and interpersonal relationships with people in the community to offer the necessary support toward their rehabilitation process.

Previous studies have suggested a significant relationship between life skills training and juvenile behavior modification, which automatically results in new behaviors being learned to reduce juveniles' involvement in criminal activities (Williams & Daniels, 2020). The common social and life skills training forms include psychoeducation relating to effective discipline, prosocial behavior modeling (van der Put et al., 2020), and instruction in negotiation, which will improve their communication and negotiation skills, whose absence is likely to result in aggression and felonies when their thoughts are not integrated or adopted by the peers (Case, 2018). After investigating the relationship between life skills and social training and behavior change in juvenile delinquents, Spruit et al. (2018) reported that participants who took part in the study reported a greater reduction in felonies as they gradually learned positive behaviors that could reduce their willingness to commit a crime or re-offend.

Department of Defense (2019) also reported that training youths in social and skills, particularly focusing on drug abuse prevention measures, has the comicality to underscore socio-psychological elements that can be used to avoid drug abuse among

children. Life skills can also improve mediation levels among children about their current and future lives. Savatia and Ruth (2020) reported that social skills and life skills improve mediation among children, thus helping them avoid possible violence by strengthening their social and emotional capabilities and learning new behaviors that can be used to manage the urge to commit a crime.

Spruit et al. (2018) also established that teaching social and life skills support children in controlling tier self-assertion, self-esteem, and confidence that support them in making appropriate decisions regarding the new type of behaviors they need to adopt to reduce their potential involvement delinquencies in society. Similar thoughts are reported by Williams and Daniels (2020) who argued that social skills consist of foundational social and interpersonal aptitudes responsible for helping individuals make better choices and decisions reading their lives. This includes developing a positive social relationship with people in the community, sharing with the potential drug thoughts, and being advised on avoiding such thoughts. In so doing, youths gain technical skills that are key for decision-making and are influenced regarding the best approaches to undertake to change their learning new behavior that is not related to criminal activities.

Peer Counseling and Juveniles' Behavior Change

Peer counseling has become a widely used technique in counseling individuals who have difficulties in their behaviors. As such, a peer counselor is a person who has achieved training in communication, listening skills, and assertiveness to offer guidance to their peers. In this case, the peer will use strategic strategies to influence individuals' behavior displaying challenges with their views. In most cases, peer counselors are

referred to as mentors. According to Savatia and Ruth (2020), peer counselling interventions are centered on self-discussions relating to self-disclosure and honesty, interpersonal openness, modification of behaviors and self-image, and taking of responsibilities for one's actions.

Scholars believe that peer counselling is a traditional entrant and an important behavioral intervention that can change behavior in individuals who have problems such as drug abuse and other criminal related actions. Peer counseling focuses on using people who are known to each other to influence their thinking and behavior by uttering the extent to which they conceive and perceive a given problem. However, researchers have expressed dissatisfaction with how peer counseling can influence behavior change among peers. According to Young et al. (2017), one of the flaws has been linked to methodological problems whereby participants are randomized, making it difficult to replicate studies. A study by Steinbuck (2018) exploring the effectiveness of peer counseling among juvenile offenders established minimal evidence to support peer counselling's long-term effectiveness in influencing behavior change among juvenile offenders.

On the other hand, current research supported by meta-analysis shows that peer counseling effectively influences behavior change in individuals who have drug-related problems. According to the findings, individuals who are on the same level are likely to have a greater influence on their peers in terms of practices to undertake and desirable behaviors that are likely to maintain their relationships. However, it is important to emphasise that peer counseling does not exclude the need for formal treatment and other

supervisory interventions because peer counselors may be less trained in administering behavior change techniques to juvenile offenders. According to Steinbuck (2018), it can be summarized that peer support that involves providing professional guidance to delinquent offenders has proved to have long term impacts in crime-related problems.

In a study to investigate the effectiveness of peer counselling, Ajah and Ugwuoke, (2018) investigated 20 offenders in Nigerian correctional facilities. According to the findings, the participants emphasized that peer support from people they trusted was critical in influencing their behavior from criminal activities to normal life, especially when there is need to live a better life like their peers. Similar findings were reported by McCarthy (2020), who investigated the influence that peer counselors had on delinquent behaviors. According to the study findings, it was established that early teenage relationships created a strong sense of influence that peers could use to guide their colleagues towards positive behavior that could deter them from engaging in delinquent behavior including the probability of future delinquency.

The same findings were reported by Williams and Daniels (2020) who investigated the probation officers view towards the effectiveness of different strategies that can be used to reduce juvenile crime. The study findings revealed that probation officers strongly linked peer counseling to reduce juvenile delinquency because of the strong relationship both parties had over the years. Equally, Case et al. (2020), underscored that peer counselling effectively reduces recidivism among juvenile offenders because peers are likely to act as recovery catalyst to motivate juvenile offenders to abandon their criminal activities and align their life to future hopes and

opportunities. Goldman (2018) also argued that peer counselling provided peers with the opportunity to guide juvenile and empower them through the rehabilitation process by offering moral and social support. This includes discussing with the offenders their life goals and how criminal activities can deter them from achieving them. According to Young et al. (2017), such discussions can have positive implications of changing juvenile offenders' minds and re-streamlining it with positive behaviors that are consistent with their life goals.

Additionally, peer counselling can offer peers an opportunity to engage in activities that can be used to reduce the time offenders have to commit crimes. Through their influence, peer counselors can convince juvenile offenders to participate in different curriculum and non-curriculum activities such as social work and other sporting activities that can keep them busy. According to Savatia and Ruth (2020), when juvenile delinquency is kept busy and kept committed to positive activities, they are likely to have less time to engage in unwanted thoughts that are offensive in nature. If they have once been convicted, sporting activities and other community services are likely to keep the juvenile delinquents occupied throughout with no time left to engage in criminal activities (Ajah & Ugwuoke, 2018). In turn, this will help the rehabilitation process by learning new and desirable behaviors free from criminal thoughts.

Boot Camps

Boot Camps are examples of interventions that are used to change juvenile behavior. Boot camps became common after military training in the world war and have been used over the years as short time residential programs to instill discipline among

offenders (Miller & Therrien, 2018). In most cases, boot camps have been used to fight recidivism by promoting positive behaviors while punishing negative behaviors. After being admitted to boot camps, juvenile delinquents will have at least 16 hours a day participating in productive activities. The activities include learning, discussing their problems, suggesting ways to address their problems, taking part in sporting activities, and doing manual work. Evidence from meta-analysis has suggested that boot camps could also influence juvenile behavior in the long term if well used.

The primary premise for such assumption is that while in boot camps, juvenile offenders re kept engaged in different activities that limit the amount of time they have to think about criminal behaviors, on the contrary, juvenile offenders are given a chance to participate in activities to productive behaviors while minimizing external influence. Department of Defense (2019) also argued that taking part in different activities in boot camps help juvenile offenders successfully by separating from peers or activities that could lure them into crime. Nevertheless, boot camps have been criticized for being ineffective in changing behaviors among offenders despite their success. According to Farhodimoghadam et al. (2020), such allegations can be linked to the fact that while in boot camps, offenders are subjected to manual labor and other activities that further make them failures.

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative study was to better understand Maryland probation officers' perceptions on strategies for reducing juvenile delinquency. In this section, the researcher discussed the CBT as the main conceptual framework guiding the study. In

addition, the researcher discussed different theme and concepts related to the topic including concept of juvenile delinquency, juvenile crime rates in united states, crime rates in Maryland, types of juvenile offenses, referral to probation, impact of juvenile delinquency, risk factors for juvenile delinquency and protective factors. Delinquency programs and treatments and behavior-based strategies to reduce juvenile delinquency were also discussed. In Chapter 3, the researcher discussed research methods and procedures that were used to collect and analyze data.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The problem addressed in the current study was that limited research had been

conducted on strategies that can be used to reduce criminal activities in Maryland.

Statistics indicated that there had been an increase in the number of juvenile arrests in

Maryland among offenders age 10–17 years, with of 728,280 arrests yearly (Sickmund &

Puzzanchera, 2018). Bui et al. (2018) suggested the need for researchers to document the

strategies that can be used to address juvenile delinquency in different states, including

Maryland. To address this gap in the literature, I conducted a qualitative descriptive study

to explore Maryland probation officers' perceptions of strategies for reducing juvenile

delinquencies.

Chapter 3 includes a discussion of the research methodology that I used to

conduct the study. The main sections included the research design and rationale, my role

as the researcher, methodology, data analysis plans, and issues of trustworthiness. I also

discuss ethical issues related to the study and offer a transition to Chapter 4.

Research Design and Rationale

A qualitative research design was selected to investigate probation officers'

perceptions of strategies for reducing juvenile delinquency. Qualitative studies are used

by researchers when the purpose is to investigate a phenomenon using participants'

views, perceptions, and attitudes in their natural setting (Merriam & Grenier, 2019).

Qualitative studies also allow researchers to document detailed descriptions of a

phenomenon using participants' views, perceptions, and thoughts for an enhanced

understanding of the current status of a phenomenon (Merriam, 2002). In the current

study, the rationale for selecting qualitative methodology was that it helped me to investigate probation officers' perceptions of strategies to reduce juvenile delinquency in a natural setting (see Yin, 2015), which was juvenile correctional facilities. Another justification for using qualitative methodology was the need to collect detailed information on strategies that can be used to reduce juvenile delinquency by soliciting responses from participants using probing interview questions (see Stake, 2010). By using probing questions, I collected detailed descriptions of participants' opinions, perceptions, and views regarding the strategies that can be used to reduce juvenile delinquency in Maryland.

Qualitative methodology focuses on providing descriptions of a phenomenon using nonnumerical data. According to Yazan (2015), qualitative research methodology allows researchers to investigate the phenomenon using nonnumerical data in instances in which quantifying a phenomenon would be inappropriate to understand its current status. Another rationale for selecting qualitative research methodology was that the phenomenon being investigated (probation officers' perceptions of strategies to reduce juvenile delinquency) could not be quantified because I collected firsthand information based on participants' perceptions (Merriam, 2002). This made qualitative methodology appropriate in investigating the current problem concerning limited information on strategies that can be sued to reduce juvenile delinquency in Maryland.

Alternative research methodologies such as quantitative methods were considered but rejected because they did not align with the study's purpose. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) argued that quantitative methodology is used when the researcher intends to

quantify variables using numbers and figures. Patton (2014) also suggested that quantitative methodology is used when researchers intend to investigate relationships between dependent and independent variables. Quantitative methodology was inappropriate for the current study because I did not intend to quantify variables or examine relationships between variables. Instead, I sought to describe perceptions that probation officers have related to strategies that can be used to reduce juvenile delinquency.

A mixed-methods approach was also considered for the study but rejected. Sandelowski (2000) noted that researchers use a mixed-methods approach when the study requires qualitative and quantitative data. Researchers who employ a mixed-methods approach have the opportunity to offer deep and enhanced understanding of the phenomenon by substituting the weakness in one research methodology with the strengths of another research methodology (Patton, 2014). The current study's focus did not require me to collect quantitative data. Therefore, the mixed-methods approach was rejected.

A qualitative descriptive design was selected to guide the data collection process. Dulock (1993) defined a qualitative descriptive study as a design used to systematically and accurately describe the facts and characteristics of a given population or area of interest. As explained by Dulock, a qualitative descriptive design is used to provide a precise portrayal or account of characteristics of a particular individual, situation, or group; these studies are a means of discovering new meanings, describing what exists, determining the frequency with which something occurs, and categorizing information on

a given phenomenon. The rationale for selecting a qualitative descriptive design aligned with the current study's purpose to provide an accurate portrayal of Maryland probation officers' perceptions of strategies for reducing juvenile delinquency. The qualitative descriptive design aligned with the purpose of the study, which was to provide an accurate representation of the strategies for reducing juvenile delinquency using detailed descriptions of probation officers' accounts and perceptions to provide a better understanding (see Lambert & Lambert, 2012).

Koh and Owen (2000) argued that a qualitative descriptive design is used when researchers intend to address questions in a study based on an ongoing event. In the current study, a qualitative descriptive design was appropriate because I addressed an ongoing social problem, which was the increase in juvenile delinquency and the need to address it. Lastly, a qualitative descriptive research design is used when researchers need to address what and how questions to understand why certain events are happening or what contributes to their occurrence (Sandelowski, 2000). In the current study, a qualitative descriptive design aligned with the research questions that were structured using the what and how format to identify what strategies can be used to reduce adolescent crime in Maryland.

Alternative qualitative research designs were also considered but rejected for this study. For instance, a phenomenological design was assessed for its propriety in the current study. Aagaard (2017) argued that a phenomenological design is used when researchers intend to investigate participants' lived experiences regarding a given phenomenon. However, the current study's focus was not to use participants' lived

experiences to investigate the current phenomenon (see Aagaard, 2017),. A

phenomenological design was rejected because it did not align with the study's focus of

providing detailed strategies that can be used to address juvenile delinquency.

The ethnographic design was also considered but deemed inappropriate for the

current study. Fusch et al. (2017) maintained that ethnographic designs are used when the

researcher intends to investigate participants' culture or aspects of a given culture. An

ethnographic design was found to be incompatible with the current study's focus because

I did not intend to investigate participants' culture (see Fusch et al., 2017). Rather, I

explored probation officers' perceptions to provide detailed descriptions of the strategies

used to reduce juvenile delinquency.

The phenomenon being investigated in the current study was probation officers'

perceptions of strategies that can be used to reduce juvenile delinquency. Juvenile

delinquency is considered one of the threatening acts that negatively affect the youths'

lives in the community by limiting their future career goals and employment

opportunities. As Kubik and Boxer (2020) maintained, addressing juvenile delinquency

using different strategies is important for all stakeholders.

Role of the Researcher

In qualitative studies, the researcher has different roles in conducting the study. In

the current study, I had different roles while conducting the study. Yin (2015) argued that

the researcher is the primary instrument in qualitative studies. As the primary instrument

in the current study, I selected the best research method, collected data from participants,

analyzed the data, and presented the findings.

I developed personal relationships with each participant throughout the study (see Patton, 2002). Strong relationships with participants provided an ample opportunity for me to provide a conducive environment for participants to participate in the study openly. To achieve this objective, I scheduled a meeting with each participant to get acquainted with them before conducting the study (see Merriam, 2002).

In qualitative studies, researcher bias is a key impediment to the transferability of results to other settings. Researcher bias could include preconceived misconceptions relating to the phenomenon, untrue beliefs, unjustifiable myths, and unfounded personal perceptions and misbelief about the phenomenon (Patton, 2014). It was my responsibility as the researcher to minimize researcher bias in the current study. Researcher bias was managed through different techniques such as the bracketing technique. The bracketing technique was defined by Cypress (2017) as an approach that researchers use to avoid using personal biases in conducting a study. To minimize the negative aspects of bias, I documented personal feelings in a field journal for further reference. The member checking technique was also used to allow participants to cross-check the data for accuracy and to make any clarification of their responses before final data analysis.

Another role that I had in this study was to follow applicable ethical considerations. I observed all ethical requirements as outlined in the Belmont Report (see Yin, 2015). These included the principle of justice, the principle of beneficence, and respect for persons. All participants were asked to sign a consent form after being briefed about the study's purpose. Participants were informed that participating in the study was voluntary as outlined in the consent form (see Yazan, 2015).

The next role was to protect participants' privacy and confidentiality. To achieve this objective, I used pseudonyms to conceal participants' identities. Interview responses were coded with unique codes that were known only to me. Data collected were securely stored and will be preserved for 5 years, after which they will be destroyed by deleting information from my personal computer and shredding all hard copies.

Methodology

Participant Selection Logic

The target population for the study included probation officers in a Maryland juvenile correctional facility. The population was selected because it best matched the study's focus to investigate probation officers' perceptions of strategies for reducing juvenile delinquency. Only juvenile probation officers were selected to take part in the study. Participants were recruited through purposive sampling. A purposive sampling technique is a nonparametric technique that researchers use to select participants who have a shared characteristic related to a phenomenon. Dulock (1993, as cited in Creswell & Creswell, 2018) maintained that depending on the approach selected, purposive sampling comprises three primary considerations:

- Whom to select as a participant and site,

- The type of sampling strategy to be used, and

- The sample size that will be studied.

As explained by Sandelowski (2000, as cited in Patton, 2014), the purposive sampling technique focuses on selecting information-rich cases in which individuals learn new information about a phenomenon that suits the study's purpose. In the current study,

the type of purposive sampling technique used to recruit participants was criterion sampling. Creswell and Creswell (2018) defined criterion sampling as a sampling approach that helps researchers select participants who satisfy the researcher's criteria. Criterion sampling allows the researcher to increase the probability of choosing participants who possess valuable information relevant to the phenomenon under study, which was appropriate for the current study because participants were selected based on my criteria (see Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In the current study, inclusion and exclusion criteria were used to recruit participants. Participants were considered to take part in the study if

- they were correctional probation officers in juvenile facilities in Maryland,
- they had at least 3 years of experience as probation officers, and
- they were residing in Maryland at the time of the study.

Twelve probation officers from Maryland were recruited to take part in the study. Krejcie and Morgan (1970) recommended that a sample size of two to 15 participants is appropriate for a qualitative descriptive study. Ritchie et al. (2003) also argued that at least six participants could be considered adequate for qualitative studies based on the volume of data collected and analyzed. Using a small sample size helped me to reduce variations, simplify the analysis, and focus on similarities of participants' responses.

Participants in this study were recruited after gaining approval from Walden University Institutional Review Board. The researcher then contacted the participants through flyers and word of mouth. Using the researcher's contact information on flyers, interested participants were contact the researcher to express their interest in the study.

After successfully passing the criterion established to participate in the study, they were asked to sign a consent form before being included. Upon signing the consent form (Appendix A), the researcher acknowledged their willingness to participate in the study. Contact with the participants were maintained through phone calls and social media where necessary.

The rigor of the study was also be guaranteed through data saturation. The researcher will continue to sample and analyze data to the point where no new data appeared and all concepts well developed. The researcher also presented inadequate examples and concepts that can negatively affect the research process and analysis.

Instrumentation

Interviews was the main instrument for data collection in this study. Data was collected through online semi-structured interviews conducted through Zoom or Skype. Cypress (2017) argued that one of the benefits of using semi-structured interviews in the study includes the alliance for reciprocities between participants and interviewer. Patton (2014) also argued that semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to gather detailed information about a phenomenon using probing questions. In addition, semi-structured interviews were selected for this study because they were flexible and allow the researcher to use minimum resources in the data collection process (Merriam 2002). The researcher developed interview questions for this study. An interview protocol guided the interview questions (Appendix B). Before taking part in interview sessions, the researcher upheld participants' confidentiality and privacy by using pseudonyms to identify their transcripts. During the interview sessions and after obtaining permission

from participants, the interviews were audiotaped to ensure that possible data loss is accounted for. Additionally, while interviewing participants, the researcher made supplementary notes in a field journal for reference in the data analysis stage.

To establish the sufficiency of data collected through interviews, the researcher used an expert panel to address interview questions' validity. The expert panel consisted of two Ph.D. holders in the study's related field. The expert panel was responsible for checking the wording of research questions, identifying possible instances of the researcher's bias in interview questions, and determining if the interview questions addressed the required content (Cypress, 2017). After receiving the expert panel feedback, interview questions will be rewarded, reorganized, and possible additions and deletions made. Therefore, the process ensured that the data collected through interview instrument is sufficient to address the research topic or problem.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Participants were recruited in this study after gaining approval from Walden IRB. Upon approval, the researcher used flyers and word of mouth to invite participants to the study. Interested participants were required to contact the researcher using the researcher's contact information on the flyers. After contacting the researcher to express their interests, participants were asked to sign a consent form. Due to measures that have been to contain the spread of Coronavirus, the consent form was signed electronically or face-to-face as deemed appropriate. Upon signing the consent form, successful participants were recruited to take part in the study. A sample of 11 probation officers

from Maryland were recruited to take part in the study. A criterion purposive sampling technique was used to recruit participants.

Data collection was done through semi-structured interviews virtually. Interviews were selected as the primary source of data collection because the researcher intended to collect detailed information about the strategies that can be used to reduce juvenile delinquency. After explaining to the participants, the purpose of the study and the permission to conduct the interview, all the 11 selected participants were allowed to participate in the data collection process. During the data collection process, participants' identities were concealed using pseudonyms known to the researcher. Data collection took place virtually through zoom. As the primary instrument in the study, the researcher conducted interviews with all participants. The interviews lasted for 60-90 minutes to provide participants enough time to respond to interview questions confidently. All data was collected during audiotape recorder with prior permission from participants to be recorded. Field notes when interviewing partisans was also documented in a field journal. All data was securely stored on a personal computer and password protected.

Follow-up interviews were conducted. This includes the need for the member-checking process. All participants exited from the study after a debriefing meeting with them that discusses the study's purpose and how the data collected shall be used.

Data Analysis

Data analysis began by transcribing interviews. The interviews were transcribed by a third party, Rev.com, to avoid researcher bias when transcribing them. The data collection related to emotion-based and focus-based strategies that can be used to reduce

juvenile delinquency in Maryland. Open coding was used to code data. The coding process was done using the SPSS software. The resulting data output was analyzed using the inductive method. The thematic analysis outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) was used to analyze data.

The first step in data analysis was the researcher becoming familiar with the study. This process includes the researcher reading and rereading interview transcripts. The second step included generating initial codes. In this step, the researcher identified codes and attach them to repetitive phrases or keywords. The third step was searching for themes. After identifying initial coding, the researcher will search for themes by combining and categorizing codes to form themes. Step four was reviewing themes. In this step, the researcher reviewed themes to ensure that they align with the research question. Step five was defining themes. Whereby professional names as informed by literature was attached to themes generated. The final stage was the write-up stage, whereby the researcher wrote the final report and offer discussion based on the current literature.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is an important concept that researchers use to evaluate rigor, which is defined as the study's accuracy (Cypress, 2017). For qualitative research findings to be considered trustworthy, the researcher must demonstrate a consistent, precise, and detailed description of methods used to collect and analyze data beyond a reasonable doubt (Patton, 1999). In qualitative studies, achieving trustworthiness include

establishing dependability, confirmability, reliability, and credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Credibility

Credibility is defined as the confidence that people have in study findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To establish credibility in this study, the researcher used different techniques such as member checking. Member checking technique refers to the process whereby participants can countercheck their interview transcripts before conducting their final analysis (Patton, 1999). This ensured that the responses were what they intended to explain during the interview sessions, thus guaranteeing the study results' credibility and validity (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006).

Transferability

Transferability refers to a researcher's practice demonstrating that the study results apply to other settings or contexts. In this study, transferability will be achieved through thick descriptions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Thick descriptions is defined as a researcher's practice providing a detailed account of experiences where the investigator explicitly creates patterns of social and cultural relationships and contextualizes them in the study (Cypress, 2017). In this study, the researcher provided a detailed account of probation officers' perceptions of strategies to reducing juvenile delinquency. Such information provided the reader with enough information that was used to transfer the study findings to other situations (Patton, 1999).

Dependability

Dependability is defined as the research findings' capacity to be consistent and can be replicated by other investigators (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this study, dependability was achieved through an audit trail. An expert panel was used provide feedback on the nature of data collection, interpretation, and conclusion (Patton, 1999). Consequently, the researcher provided an opportunity for the researchers to replicate the current study.

Confirmability

Confirmability is defined as the degree of neutrality of study findings informed by participants' views rather than the researcher's bias (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). An audit trail was used to establish conformability. An audit trail refers to providing o detailed description of the researcher's steps from the beginning of the study to the final step (Patton, 1999). By documenting an audit trail of raw data, data reduction, data reconstruction, process notes, and instruments development information, the researcher supported the study results' conformability.

<div align="center">

Ethical Procedures

</div>

The study was conducted based on the guidelines provided by Walden IRB. Prior to data collection, the researcher sought approval from IRB. Upon approval, the researcher contacted participants to the study. The researcher ensured that all Belmont report principles of justice, beneficence, and respect were adhered to (Office for Human Research Protections [OHRP], 2018). The researcher guaranteed that all participants had equal opportunity to participate in the study. The researcher also ensured that participants

understand the study and feel safe while participating in the study (OHRP, 2018). All participants were allowed to review transcripts as assurance that their intentions are not misrepresented.

Prior to taking part in interviews, participants were asked to sign a consent form for voluntary participation in the study. Pseudonyms were used to conceal participants' real identities from third parties (Cypress, 2017). Dissatisfied participants were free to disqualify from the study at any period and their data discarded. All data gathered shall be stored for five years before being destroyed. Electronic data shall be deleted from personal computer hard disks. Information stored in hard copies shall be shredded.

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to understand better Maryland probation officers' perceptions of strategies to reduce juvenile deliquesce. A qualitative research design systematically described how the phenomenon of probation officers' perceptions on strategies for reducing juvenile delinquency. A qualitative descriptive study focused on providing a detailed description of a given phenomenon without making prior assumptions while maximizing participants' perspectives of the phenomenon. Semi-structured online interviews were recommended for data collection. In Chapter 3, the researcher provided a detailed description of the methodological procedures used in collecting and analyzing data, the researcher's role, issues about trustworthiness, and ethical procedures of the study. Chapter 4 included a review of the purpose of the study as well as research questions. The chapter also included a discussion

on the study setting, participants' demographics, data collection analysis processes,

evidence of trustworthiness, and study findings based on the collected data.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to better understand Maryland probation officers' perceptions of strategies for reducing juvenile delinquency. The overarching research question was the following: What strategies can be used to reduce juvenile crime in Maryland? The specific research question that guided the study was the following: What are probation officers' perceptions of the problem-focused and emotion-based strategies that can be used to reduce juvenile crime in Maryland? The purpose of this chapter is to present the study results. The chapter begins with a description of the study setting, followed by a description of the study participants. Next, the chapter includes descriptions of the data collection and data analysis procedures, followed by a discussion of the evidence of the trustworthiness of the study results. This chapter concludes with a presentation of the study results and a summary.

Setting

Data collection from 10 of the 11 participants took place through the cloud-based videoconference application Zoom. I was able to see the participants during the interviews. Zoom was chosen as the forum for the interviews to comply with social-distancing guidelines associated with COVID-19 mitigation to ensure the safety of the participants and me. Participants were asked to choose a time for the interview when they would be free from other obligations and able to provide rich and detailed responses to the interview questions. Participants were also asked to access Zoom from a safe location where they would have privacy and few distractions. P11 preferred to submit his responses in written form by typing them into a copy of the interview guide and emailing

them to me. There were no organizational or other conditions that affected the way in which the study results were interpreted.

Demographics

The study participants were 11 correctional probation officers in juvenile facilities in Maryland who resided in Maryland at the time of study and had at least 3 years of experience as probation officers. Table 1 indicates the demographic characteristics of the study participants.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Participant	Years of experience as a probation officer
P1	5
P2	5
P3	5
P4	7
P5	20
P6	5
P7	6
P8	19
P9	5
P10	4
P11	No response

Data Collection

A single one-to-one semistructured interview was conducted with each of 10 participants through the cloud-based videoconference application Zoom. P11 submitted

responses in writing via email. The Zoom interviews were audio recorded using a handheld recording device. The average duration of the interviews was 40 minutes. No unexpected circumstances were encountered during data collection, and the only deviation from the procedure described in Chapter 3 was P11's submission of written responses.

Data Analysis

The audio recordings of the Zoom interviews were transcribed verbatim by a professional transcription service, Rev.com, under a confidentiality agreement. The interviews were transcribed verbatim into Microsoft Word documents. P11 submitted written responses as a PDF. The transcripts and written response were imported as source files into NVivo 12 computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software. This was a deviation from the procedure described in Chapter 3, which indicated that SPSS would be used. SPSS is a statistical analysis package used for quantitative (numerical) data. NVivo 12 was substituted because it was appropriate for analyzing qualitative data.

The data were analyzed according to the six-step, inductive, thematic procedure recommended by Braun and Clarke (2006). In the first step of the analysis, the data were read and reread in full in NVivo to gain familiarity with them. The second step involved coding the data by labeling and clustering excerpts from the source documents (data excerpts) that were relevant to Maryland probation officers' perceptions of strategies for reducing juvenile delinquency. Each relevant data excerpt that contained enough information to express a complete perception was assigned to an NVivo node, which represented an initial code. The initial codes were labeled descriptively to indicate the

relevant meaning of the data assigned to them. When different data excerpts expressed similar meanings, they were assigned to the same code.

As an example of the initial coding process conducted in Step 2 of the analysis, P4 stated during the interview "some of the children you meet there [in juvenile facilities], you can tell that they come from very dysfunctional homes. Some of them, their parents have taken poor choices in life and exposed these children to very bad advice." The relevance of this response was that it was provided an answer to the question of what the risk factors are for juvenile delinquency. P4 was intending to describe poor or unskilled parenting as such a risk factor. The response was therefore assigned to a code, poor parenting. P5 answered the question regarding risk factors in part by stating "intended poor parenting or unintended poor parenting is one of the biggest factors." This response was similar to P4's response, in that it indicated that poor parenting was a risk factor for juvenile delinquency. The similarity between the two responses was further evidenced by all participants' tendency to use the terms family, home, and parents interchangeably when discussing risk factors. Other factors affecting the family, such as poverty, were always discussed separately. P5's response was therefore assigned to the same initial code as P4's: poor parenting. A total of 12 data excerpts from nine participants were assigned to this code. Overall, using this method of clustering responses with similar meanings, a total of 116 data excerpts were assigned to a total of 18 codes. Table 2 is a list of the initial codes.

Table 2

Initial Codes

Initial code (alphabetized)	*n* of participants contributing data (*N* = 11)	*n* of data excerpts included
Counseling can be helpful in identifying and addressing issues	8	10
Counseling can provide a positive role model	3	3
Delinquency can cause family stress and instability	7	7
Engagement in positive peer interactions	6	6
Exposure to violence	4	5
Family therapy can improve communication	6	6
Family therapy involves the child's immediate social system	10	12
Feeling supported	3	4
Gang involvement impacts communities	5	5
Interpersonal trauma	2	3
Low socioeconomic status	8	8
Negative impact on community safety and prosperity	8	10
Poor parenting	9	12
Risky sexual behavior impacts community	3	3
Social skills training (SST) can build belief in achievement	3	3
SST can build skills	6	8
SST can improve communication	1	2
Substance abuse impacts communities	5	6

In the third step of the analysis, related codes were grouped into themes. As an example of this process, the code poor parenting was grouped with three other codes, including exposure to violence, interpersonal trauma, and low socioeconomic status. These four codes were identified as related because they all referred to risk factors for juvenile delinquency, which became the preliminary label given to the theme. In NVivo, the codes were grouped as child nodes under the same parent node, which represented the theme. A total of three themes were formed from the 18 codes.

The fourth step of the analysis involved reviewing the themes. The accuracy of the themes was checked by reviewing the original data to ensure that the themes reflected patterns in participants' responses. The themes were compared to one another to ensure they referred to different ideas and should not be combined. The codes within each theme were also reviewed to ensure that each theme represented a single idea rather than a compound idea that would be more appropriately broken down into multiple themes.

In the fifth step of the analysis, the themes were labeled. This step involved reviewing the data assigned to each theme again and comparing it to the research question: What are probation officers' perceptions of the problem-focused and emotion-based strategies that can be used to reduce juvenile crime in Maryland? As an example of this process, the theme with the preliminary label risk factors for juvenile delinquency was renamed: effective strategies must address risk factors for juvenile delinquency. Table 3 indicates how the codes were grouped to form the finalized themes.

Table 3

Grouping of Related Codes Into Themes

Theme *Initial code grouped to form theme*	*n* of participants contributing data (*N* = 11)	*n* of data excerpts included
Theme 1. Effective strategies must address risk factors for juvenile delinquency	9	31
Poor parenting		
Exposure to violence		
Interpersonal trauma		
Low socioeconomic status		
Theme 2. Effective strategies have the potential to mitigate negative social impacts of juvenile delinquency	10	31
Delinquency can cause family stress and instability		
Gang involvement impacts communities		
Negative impact on community safety and prosperity		
Risky sexual behavior impacts community		
Substance abuse impacts communities		
Theme 3. Counseling, family systems therapy, and social skills training are potentially effective strategies	11	54
Family therapy can improve communication		
Family therapy involves the child's immediate social system		
Counseling can be helpful in identifying and addressing issues		
Counseling can provide a positive role model		
Engagement in positive peer interactions		
Feeling supported in positive peer groups		
Social skills training (SST) can build belief in achievement		
SST can build skills		
SST can improve communication		

The sixth step of the analysis involved creating the presentation of results provided in this chapter. The presentation of results is organized by theme. The discussion of each theme includes direct quotes from the data as evidence.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

The four components of trustworthiness are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The components correspond, respectively, to the quantitative constructs of internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity. The following subsections are descriptions of the procedures used in this study to strengthen each component of trustworthiness.

Credibility

Results are credible when they accurately represent the reality they are intended to describe (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility in the current study was enhanced by audio recording the interviews and hiring a professional transcription service (Rev.com) to transcribe them verbatim. This procedure ensured that the data subjected to analysis accurately represented the words participants used in their interview responses. Member checking was also conducted to enhance credibility. Member checking involved emailing each participant a summary of the codes and themes found in their interview and asking them to respond by verifying the accuracy of the researcher interpretations or recommending corrections. All participants verified the accuracy of my interpretations. A thematic analysis procedure was also used to strengthen credibility. This procedure enabled me to identify codes and themes that represented the perceptions of all or most

participants so the likelihood of any individual participant's errors or biases threatening the credibility of the findings would be reduced.

Transferability

Findings are transferable when they hold true of other populations or study settings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Transferability was enhanced in the current study through the use of thick description in presenting the findings. Presenting direct quotes from the data as evidence for all findings preserved participants' perspectives, which were grounded in their social, individual, and organizational contexts. Transferability was also strengthened by providing descriptions in this chapter and in Chapter 3 of the target population, study setting, and sample.

Dependability

Findings are dependable when they can be reproduced at a different time in the same research context (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Clear descriptions of the current study procedures and their execution were provided in Chapter 3 and the present chapter to enable the reader to verify the integrity of the research. An audit trail was also created, including documentation of all decisions made during the study and their rationales, to enhance the dependability of the research. The use of an expert-panel-vetted semistructured interview guide consisting of prescripted open-ended questions also contributed to making the data collection procedure potentially replicable.

Confirmability

Findings are confirmable to the extent that they represent participants' perceptions rather than the researcher's (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The audit trail created during this

study has been used to document decisions and their rationales as evidence that decisions were not influenced by bias. The member-checking procedure enabled participants to verify that the researcher's interpretations of their data expressed their intended meanings rather than researcher bias. The presentation of direct quotes from the data as evidence for all findings will enable the reader to verify the confirmability of the findings independently.

Results

The specific research question used to guide this study was: What are some of the problem-focused and emotion-based strategies that can be used to reduce juvenile crime in Maryland? Three major themes emerged during data analysis to address this question, including: (Theme 1) effective strategies must address risk factors for juvenile delinquency, (Theme 2) effective strategies have the potential to mitigate negative social impacts of juvenile delinquency, and (Theme 3) counseling, family systems therapy, and social skills training are potentially effective strategies. The following subsections are presentations of these themes.

Theme 1: Effective Strategies Must Address Risk Factors for Juvenile Delinquency

Nine participants indicated that effective problem-focused and emotion-based strategies that can be used to reduce juvenile crime should be focused on addressing risk factors. No participants expressed disagreement with this perception. The risk factors participants cited as needing to be addressed included poor parenting, low socioeconomic status, exposure to violence (e.g., witnessing violence in the community), and interpersonal trauma. Nine participants cited poor parenting as a risk factor that effective

problem-focused and emotion-based strategies should address. P1 stated that effective

strategies should, "Look at poor parenting." P4 stated that juvenile criminals were

negatively influenced by,

> I will say also poor choices by parents. Most of the parents, some of them, their
>
> parents have taken poor choices in life and exposed these children to very bad
>
> advice like alcoholism, drugs, prostitution, and gang activities. So that's all these
>
> kids, it's like you having a role model, and all you learn from your role model in
>
> life is alcoholism, drugs, prostitution, and gang activity.

Notable in P4's response was that the negative influence of parenting was through

the poor example set for the child by parental role models rather than through abuse and

neglect. P5 agreed with P4 in stating that the influence of poor parenting was often

through unintentional behaviors rather than through deliberate neglect or abuse:

> We have unintended consequences of poor parenting, we have children being
>
> raised or being born by children. People might think about it as moral compass,
>
> but no. I really believe that when a child is not raised right, the parent doesn't
>
> have the parental skills to raise a child, the consequences of it is very, very loud,
>
> because now, you have the tendency of this child that is not being raised right
>
> wind up being a delinquent child.

P5's response suggested a perception of poor parenting as negatively influencing

children through a lack of appropriate parenting skills ("the parent doesn't have the

parental skills") rather than through a lack of conscience or an unwillingness to parent

appropriately ("moral compass"). Participants also discussed the negative parental

influence on children of a broken home or of the absence of a parent. P7 cited these

manifestations of a dysfunctional family in reporting, "Broken homes can be a problem.

Separation of these children from their parents, either they went to jail, or broken homes

through like divorce."

Eight participants cited low socioeconomic status as a risk factor for juvenile

delinquency. P7 described poverty as negatively impacting children via deprivation:

One of the outstanding ones [risk factors for juvenile delinquency] is the

socioeconomic status of a family. It's believed that poverty has really, really been

a big problem when children are not being cared for as they should, not getting

the basics of what they need. It really gives them a rough growing up.

P9 corroborated P7's response, stating, "Low socioeconomic status tends to

increase juvenile delinquency." P10 provided further evidence that low socioeconomic

status was perceived as a significant risk factor for juvenile crime, stating, "Research has

shown that low socioeconomic status is associated with increased levels of delinquency."

Thus, according to most participants, low socioeconomic status was a risk factor for

juvenile crime, and the influence of poverty was perceived as affecting children via

deprivation.

Four participants described exposure to violence in the community as a risk factor

for juvenile delinquency. P4 described exposure to violence in the community as

associated with juvenile crime:

I see that generally all the kids I have come across working as a probation officer

there, you can tell from the neighborhoods they come from, that these are

neighborhoods that are prone to violence, where you get cases of violence, so

they're [juvenile offenders are] exposed to violence.

P7 expressed the perception that disorganized communities negatively influenced

children via the weakness of environmental checks on negative behaviors: "Community

environment where the child grows up also has a part to this. Some environments are full

of crimes and drugs, disorganized neighborhoods, which allows for social control

network to be really, really poor." Thus, P7 implied, the absence of strong social controls

in the community meant that the crime associated with other risk factors was not

effectively discouraged or addressed.

Two participants described interpersonal trauma as a risk factor for juvenile

delinquency. These participants described deliberate abuse and neglect as occurring

through poor parenting or through the child's relationships with other adults. P4 stated

that trauma could begin during the earliest stages of the child's development: "Some of

them [juvenile offenders] have been brought up with poor childcare in the early stages of

development." P4 described interpersonal trauma in the form of parental neglect as

causing some children to feel that they were not valued and to respond by devaluing other

people: "You can tell from my experience talking with them [juvenile offenders] that

they're neglected. And that makes them feel like, 'Okay, nobody cares about me,' and

they don't care about the world." P4 also expressed the perception that many juvenile

offenders were victims of abuse, either from parents or other adults:

> You can tell that they've been abused. These are kids that have been abused from
>
> childhood, either from parents or relations, or people they have come in contact

with. And it kind of turns them to make them be bad and violent and prone to dysfunctionality.

P7 corroborated P4's response. In P7's perception, an important risk factor for juvenile crime was, "Childhood trauma . . . prolonged abuse and neglect of these children." Thus, abuse and neglect of the juvenile offender were perceived as risk factors by two of the participants, and the way in which abuse and trauma led to juvenile crime was through young offenders' passing onto their victims the devaluation they experienced from their abusers.

In summary, participants noted four risk factors that problem-focused and emotion-based strategies to reduce juvenile crime should address to be effective. Poor parenting was a risk factor for juvenile crime because parents involved in criminal activity served as negative role models, and because unskilled parenting led to deprivations and a lack of effective supervision. Low socioeconomic status was also a risk factor because of the negative effects of the deprivation associated with it. Exposure to violence in the community, and neighborhoods with generally weak social controls, set harmful examples for youth and failed to discourage criminal activity. Abuse and neglect were described as risk factors for juvenile crime because children who felt devalued by their caregivers were likelier to devalue others and victimize them accordingly. Participants expressed that where these risk factors existed, juvenile crime was more likely to occur. Thus, to be effective in reducing juvenile crime, problem-focused and emotion-based strategies should address some or all of these factors.

Theme 2: Effective Strategies Have the Potential to Mitigate Negative Social Impacts of Juvenile Delinquency

Ten participants discussed negative social effects of juvenile crime as outcomes that effective problem-focused and emotion-based strategies to reduce juvenile crime have the potential to mitigate. These negative outcomes included the negative impacts of gang activity, risky sexual behavior, and substance abuse on the safety and prosperity of communities, as well as the stress and instability that delinquency caused in families. P10 described negative community impacts of juvenile crime in stating, "There is a correlation between juvenile delinquency and drug use, gang involvement, alcohol abuse, and sexual behavior." P1 described the potential, negative effects of juvenile crime as far-reaching in stating, "A delinquent child is capable of destabilizing the entire family, and also the entire community." P4 reported perhaps the most damaging outcome associated with juvenile crime in stating that it could result in the loss of lives: "In neighborhoods where there are these high concentrations of juvenile delinquent kids, the murder rate is high." P4 also cited damage to property as a significant, negative outcome associated with juvenile crime:

> Juvenile delinquents are prone to crime and most times leads to vandalism, destruction of lives and property. Theft, violence on the streets. And then economic and financial waste, which includes cost of replacing these items that these kids end up stealing, and some of the properties that they destroy. Some of these properties belong to individuals, to families, and even to the society.

P7 agreed with P4, describing loss of life and other negative community effects as outcomes of juvenile crime: "If all these delinquencies are about stealing, robbery, killing, sexual problems, that would definitely have a huge impact on the community. The community is not safe, and the people find it affects their economy. It runs down the neighborhood." P9 spoke of community safety and prosperity as negatively impacted both by juvenile crime and by potentially costly attempts to suppress criminality: "The community is unsafe, and [juvenile delinquency] creates a financial burden to maintain peace and safety." P11 described the negative economic effects on the community as persisting when juvenile offenders aged into adulthood: "Non-productive juveniles grow up to be non-productive adults. No contributions means low tax base, then low social network."

Seven participants referred to the destabilization of families as a negative outcome of juvenile criminality that problem-focused and emotion-based strategies to reduce juvenile crime have the potential to alleviate. P2 described juvenile crime as traumatic for the offender's family: "There's a trauma to the family of having a member or a person who is a juvenile delinquent, creating some instability for other relatives." P3 agreed with P2, stating that juvenile crime was destabilizing to offenders' families: "The youth who has been delinquent can also create instability in the family, I believe." It was notable that participants described broken homes as a risk factor for juvenile delinquency (see Theme 1), and they also described broken homes as a potential, negative outcome of juvenile delinquency. P4 stated that the disruptions caused by a juvenile offender could break families apart:

They [juvenile offenders] bring undue stress to the family. So, you can tell by

interaction that those families are stressed out by behavior of these delinquent

children. And it eats into the foundation of family relationships because this

undue stress leads to parents pointing accusing fingers or, "Who caused this, and

who's responsible for this?" and the parents [can] end up quarreling and getting a

divorce.

P7 added to previous participants' responses the perception that juvenile offenders

had special needs related to their offender status that families had to struggle to meet,

thus increasing the stress the delinquency caused them. P7 described this perception in

stating, "For the family, it creates a lot of instability. Feelings of guilt, and family

constantly looking for ways to help their loved one meet their needs, is very troubling and

very exhausting." P10 corroborated P7's response in stating that attempting to meet the

needs of a juvenile offender could destabilize families: "The trauma of having a juvenile

delinquent in a family can potentially create instability for other members of the family.

The family has to meet the needs of the juvenile in trouble."

In summary, findings indicated that juvenile crime had severe, negative effects on

offenders' communities and families that effective problem-focused and emotion-based

strategies to reduce juvenile crime have the potential to mitigate. Communities were

disrupted by the loss of life, destruction and theft of property, reduced safety, and costs

associated with experiencing or trying to mitigate juvenile crime. Offenders' families

were destabilized by trauma resulting from the crime and by the stress and cost of

meeting needs associated with the offender's legal troubles.

Theme 3: Counseling, Family Systems Therapy, and Social Skills Training Are Potentially Effective Strategies

All 11 participants provided evidence that counseling (including individual counseling and peer group counseling), family systems therapy, and social skills training are all potentially effective problem-focused and emotion-based strategies to reduce juvenile crime. In Theme 1, the findings indicated that effective strategies should address some or all of the risk factors poor parenting, low socioeconomic status, violence in the neighborhood, and child abuse and neglect. Participants considered the strategies discussed under the present theme effective because they perceived the strategies as addressing those factors.

Eleven participants described family systems therapy as an effective modality for reducing juvenile crime. P4 expressed the importance of family systems therapy in stating, "Some of the kids that end up in our facilities, they never experienced a good parent-child relationship. The kids who have these good relationships with their parents were guided, they don't end up coming here." P4 added of the parent-child relationship, "I believe this is one of the places where the family systems therapy can come in and turn these kids around." P5 stated that when family therapy is used to address juvenile crime in Maryland, "Families are getting into the basic foundation of where the decay started and how they can rebuild that foundation, and that has helped reduce the presence of delinquent violence . . . actually 5%, statistically." P10 referenced the perceived efficacy of family systems therapy in improving parenting skills in stating, "Poor parenting, for example, can be addressed by teaching parenting skills and providing family support

services." P7 added to other participants' responses that family systems therapy was effective because it made family members readier to help and sympathize with one another:

> Family systems therapy involves large family members or people who are close in relationship rather than just one person. It is very useful because it can help people within the system sympathize with one another, their communication is improved, their relationship becomes stronger and they're ready to help each other.

Nine participants described individual counseling for the offender as an effective strategy for reducing juvenile crime, and no participants expressed disagreement with this view. P10 described a key distinction between family systems therapy and individual counseling in stating, "Unlike individual psychotherapy, family systems therapy most often focuses on the relationship between the people, rather on than the traumas or childhoods of each individual." P3 described individual counseling as effective for a number of reasons, including helping juveniles identify their emotions and giving juveniles a sympathetic adult to whom they could express themselves:

> I believe that mental health counseling can help [reduce] juvenile delinquency in so many ways. First, I believe that a lot of juveniles in the system, they don't have anyone to share their emotions or their problems with . . . And also, the mental health counselors can help address problems in a positive way and help in clarifying their issues. I also believe that they can develop strategies to increase self-awareness with delinquents.

P4 agreed with P3's perception that many juvenile offenders lacked a listening ear and that individual counseling could help to provide that important resource: "Some of them don't even have that support where they can air out and tell somebody how they're feeling or why they're feeling or why they're acting out or why they're depressed," with P4 adding of individual counseling, "That will provide a medium for some of them to discuss their problems with somebody." P7 stated that individual counseling helped professionals to identify the causes of delinquency in individual children so that supports could be implemented to set the youth on a more constructive life trajectory: "Counseling helps to identify the individual issues of the child and helps to individualize their situation and help to redirect them." P11 specified an area in which individual counseling could help to identify individual children's issues in stating that it could be used to detect coping deficiencies: "Counseling exposes coping skills deficiencies and provides the needed help in dealing with the problem." Thus, individual counseling was perceived as a way of helping adolescents who feel devalued by neglect or abuse to feel valued in a positive relationship with a caring adult, as well as a way of identifying the causes (e.g., neglect or trauma) of negative behaviors and teaching positive coping skills.

Eight participants described peer group counseling as an effective strategy for reducing juvenile crime, and no participants expressed disagreement with this view. P8 described peer counseling and its perceived efficacy:

> We do have peer mediation groups. Most times when the juveniles are together, the same age group, they tend to interact more and tend to believe each other more than with the adults. So yes, the peer group definitely is part of our

treatment we offered several groups a day, and it has really helped them to voice out some of the concerns they have and share their stories together and learn from each other's experience. So yes, it does help.

Notable in P8's response was the description of the peer group, from the juvenile offenders' perspective, as a more credible source of guidance than adults. P8's response also suggested that young offenders might be more likely to be candid about their issues and backgrounds with peers than with adult providers. P7 referenced other forms of peer group counseling than those conducted in juvenile facilities, citing community and religious organizations as effective forums for moderated peer interactions: "With different religious groups, community programs, which are organized after school and being supervised by competent persons, these activities help to reduce juvenile delinquency." P7 emphasized that when peer counseling groups were properly moderated, peer-to-peer influences could be harnessed to teach positive rather than negative behaviors: "If it's properly guided and supervised, with proper rules and regulations guiding the activities, these youth, as much as they learn bad things from each other, they also can learn good things from each other." Thus, peer group counseling was perceived as an effective means of addressing the risk factor of negative community influence, including exposure to violence and crime among neighbors and peers.

Eight participants described social skills training (SST) as an effective strategy for reducing juvenile crime, and no participants expressed disagreement with this view. P3 described SST as reducing juvenile delinquency by helping youth to build strong, positive relationships: "I believe that the use of a social skills training, it can be effective

with juvenile delinquency . . . It can help each juvenile be sympathetic toward one another and build stronger relationships." P4 described how SST can help juvenile offenders to build positive relationships in stating that many of the youths had aggressive social manners that would likely alienate people who could otherwise have a positive influence on them:

> Some of them talk to us like they're fighting, even when they ask me for a favor, because they don't know any better. So, these are some of the social skills that they need to be trained. Because for an ordinary person who doesn't work in our facilities, walks in here and sees a kid asking you for even a pen to write with, and that kid is shouting at the top of his voice, that person will be like, "What is wrong with this person?" I mean, we're used to it, but we know that these are some of the trainings and skills that they need to learn.

In summary, findings indicated that individual and peer group counseling, family systems therapy, and social skills training (SST) were perceived as effective problem-focused and emotion-based strategies to reduce juvenile crime. Individual counseling was perceived as a way of helping adolescents who feel devalued by neglect or abuse to feel valued in a positive relationship with a caring adult, as well as a way of identifying the causes (e.g., neglect or trauma) of negative behaviors and teaching positive coping skills. Peer group counseling was perceived as an effective means of addressing the risk factor of negative community influence, including exposure to violence and crime among neighbors and peers. Family systems therapy was perceived as effective in stabilizing family relationships, increasing empathy and willingness to help within families, and

addressing skills deficits that created risk factors for juvenile crime (e.g., parenting skills deficits). SST was perceived as effective in teaching young offenders how to interact with others positively, in a manner conducive to forming strong, positive relationships. Notable in participants' responses was an absence of any strategies perceived as effective in reducing the risk factor of low socioeconomic status.

Summary

The specific research question used to guide this study was: What are some of the problem-focused and emotion-based strategies that can be used to reduce juvenile crime in Maryland? Three major themes emerged during data analysis to address this question. Theme 1 was: effective strategies must address risk factors for juvenile delinquency. Participants noted four risk factors that problem-focused and emotion-based strategies to reduce juvenile crime should address to be effective. Poor parenting was a risk factor for juvenile crime because parents involved in criminal activity served as negative role models, and because unskilled parenting led to deprivations and a lack of effective supervision. Low socioeconomic status was also a risk factor because of the negative effects of the deprivation associated with it. Exposure to violence in the community, and neighborhoods with generally weak social controls, set harmful examples for youth and failed to discourage criminal activity. Abuse and neglect were described as risk factors for juvenile crime because children who felt devalued by their caregivers were likelier to devalue others and victimize them accordingly. Participants expressed that where these risk factors existed, juvenile crime was more likely to occur. Thus, to be effective in

reducing juvenile crime, problem-focused and emotion-based strategies should address some or all of these factors.

Theme 2 was: effective strategies have the potential to mitigate negative social impacts of juvenile delinquency. Findings indicated that juvenile crime had severe, negative effects on offenders' communities and families that effective problem-focused and emotion-based strategies to reduce juvenile crime have the potential to mitigate. Communities were disrupted by the loss of life, destruction and theft of property, reduced safety, and costs associated with experiencing or trying to mitigate juvenile crime. Offenders' families were destabilized by trauma resulting from the crime and by the stress and cost of meeting needs associated with the offender's legal issues.

Theme 3 was: counseling, family systems therapy, and social skills training are potentially effective strategies. Findings indicated that individual and peer group counseling, family systems therapy, and social skills training (SST) were perceived as effective problem-focused and emotion-based strategies to reduce juvenile crime. Individual counseling was perceived as a way of helping adolescents who feel devalued by neglect or abuse to feel valued in a positive relationship with a caring adult, as well as a way of identifying the causes (e.g., neglect or trauma) of negative behaviors and teaching positive coping skills. Peer group counseling was perceived as an effective means of addressing the risk factor of negative community influence, including exposure to violence and crime among neighbors and peers. Family systems therapy was perceived as effective in stabilizing family relationships, increasing empathy and willingness to help within families, and addressing skills deficits that created risk factors for juvenile

crime (e.g., parenting skills deficits). SST was perceived as effective in teaching young offenders how to interact with others positively, in a manner conducive to forming strong, positive relationships. Chapter 5 is a presentation of the conclusions derived from these findings.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to provide detailed descriptions of the strategies that stakeholders in the juvenile criminal justice system and the offenders can use to reduce youth crime in Maryland. The study findings may provide valuable information that may be used to address the increased rates of juvenile delinquencies. Chapter 1 highlighted the literature gap and the need for the gap to be addressed. Chapter 1 also outlined the nature of the study, research questions, purpose of the study, problem statement, definitions of key terms, assumptions, limitations, delimitations, and significance of the study. Chapter 2 presented CBT theory as the conceptual framework guiding the study. Chapter 2 also included a review of existing literature related to the concept of juvenile delinquency, juvenile crime rates in United States, crime rates in Maryland, types of juvenile offenses, referral to probation, impact of juvenile delinquency, risk factors for juvenile delinquency, and protective factors. Chapter 3 provided a detailed description of the methodological procedures used in collecting and analyzing data, the researcher's role, issues of trustworthiness, and ethical procedures of the study. Chapter 4 included a description of the participants and an account of the theme development process that generated the themes. The current chapter includes an interpretation of the findings, the limitations of the study, the implications of the results in the context of literature and existing theory, and suggestions for future research.

Interpretation of the Findings

The main question that guided the study was the following: What are probation officers' perceptions of the problem-focused and emotion-based strategies that can be used to reduce juvenile crime in Maryland? This research question was expected to elicit strategies that can be used to reduce criminal activities in youths in Maryland. Although researchers had explored how the juvenile justice system functions to hold youths accountable for their criminal activities and their rehabilitation into responsible citizens in the society, the increase of up 20,025 juvenile arrests in 2018 in Maryland was alarming (Sickmund & Puzzanchera, 2018). This research question emerged from the call to explore strategies that can be used to reduce criminal activities in youths because reports showed juveniles who primarily became engaged in delinquency in their adolescent stage (Sickmund & Puzzanchera, 2018). In response to these calls, three themes emerged from the current study. Theme 1 was effective strategies must address risk factors for juvenile delinquency. Theme 2 was effective strategies have the potential to mitigate negative social impacts of juvenile delinquency. Theme 3 was counseling, family systems therapy, and social skills training are potentially effective strategies. Chapter 5 presents these findings in context of studies explored in the literature review.

The first theme emerging from this study was that effective approaches that can reduce juvenile crime in Maryland must address risk factors for juvenile delinquency. The risk factors participants cited as needing to be addressed included poor parenting, low socioeconomic status, exposure to violence (e.g., witnessing violence in the community), and interpersonal trauma. The findings of this study demonstrate that poor

parenting is a risk factor that effective problem-focused and emotion-based strategies should address. These findings support the literature that demonstrated how parents' beliefs can be passed along to their children (Mason, 2017). Jones and Prinz (2016) stated that youths may learn beliefs about their self-efficacy or self-worth by observing their parents' behavior. Specifically, parents' positive or negative beliefs (e.g., personal self-efficacy) may become the beliefs their children develop. Case (2018) argued that juveniles who commit status offenses tend to come from unstable families, have unmet mental health problems, have challenges with learning, and have been exposed to violence including domestic violence. The current study also found that exposure to violence in the community is a risk factor for juvenile delinquency.

Tao's (2017) findings were consistent with current findings by indicating that adolescents who had been victims of abuse and violence were more likely to display delinquent behavior. Youth violence and anger-based problems have increased the awareness of mental health disorders among the general population. The participants in the current study described interpersonal trauma as a risk factor for juvenile delinquency. These findings align with previous research that found both single and multiple incidents of trauma to be associated with justice-involved youths, along with further delinquency and perpetration of violence (Elliott et al., 2020; Young et al. 2017). Young et al. (2017) reported that exposure to early trauma resulting from living in communities that have high crime rates could have undesirable impacts on the healthy growth of children, including the ability to make rational decisions relating to their lives. Additionally, research has found that youths who have experienced abuse might exhibit delinquent

behaviors at an earlier age and have more interaction with the justice system over their lifetime (Elliott et al., 2020). Finally, research has found low socioeconomic status associated with increased antisocial behavior and delinquent behaviors (Piotrowski et al., 2015).

The findings of the current study indicated that effective strategies have the potential to mitigate negative social impacts of juvenile delinquency. These negative outcomes included the negative impacts of gang activity, risky sexual behavior, and substance abuse on the safety and prosperity of communities, as well as the stress and instability that delinquency caused in families. Children in the foster care system, according to Anjaswarni et al. (2019), are more likely to fall victim to maltreatment or child abuse. Child mistreatment, including physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, is a factor connected to negative development consequences along with future violent behavior (Anjaswarni et al., 2019). According to McGee et al. (2018), child abuse refers to failing to do something or doing something that causes harm to a child or makes a child vulnerable to harm. Substance abuse is a factor associated with criminal behavior, especially among youths. According to Du (2019), offenses resulting from substance abuse have quadrupled during the past 2 decades, and most of these crimes are committed by youths. It can be concluded that substance abuse is major risk factor for juvenile delinquency.

The results of the current study demonstrated that counseling, family systems therapy, and social skills training are potentially effective strategies for reducing juvenile crime in Maryland. Social and life skills training is anticipated to offer individuals a basis

for changing their delinquent behavior and embracing desirable conduct. By influencing behavior, life skills and social training allows a juvenile delinquent to be empowered and acknowledge their social duties as well as their responsibilities to other people in the community, including their security and safety of mutual coexistence. Through social and life skills training, a juvenile delinquent is likely to learn new behavior that will help them be mindful of their life choices and promote a sense of self-responsibility against criminal activities in the community. Individuals will also be trained to develop positive social relationships and interpersonal relationships with people in the community to offer the necessary support toward their rehabilitation process.

Previous studies have suggested a significant relationship between life skills training and juvenile behavior modification, which results in new behaviors being learned to reduce juveniles' involvement in criminal activities (Williams & Daniels, 2020). The common social and life skills training forms include psychoeducation relating to effective discipline, prosocial behavior modeling (van der Put et al., 2020), and instruction in negotiation, which will improve juveniles' communication and negotiation skills, the absence of which is likely to result in aggression and felonies when their thoughts are not integrated or adopted by the peers (Case, 2018). After investigating the relationship between life skills and social training and behavior change among juvenile delinquents, Spruit et al. (2018) reported that participants who took part in the study reported a greater reduction in felonies as they gradually learned positive behaviors that could reduce their willingness to commit a crime or reoffend.

The findings of the current study associated family system therapy with reduction in juvenile delinquency and recidivism. Family systems therapy was perceived as effective in stabilizing family relationships, increasing empathy and willingness to help within families, and addressing skills deficits that created risk factors for juvenile crime (e.g., parenting skills deficits). These findings are consistent with Yun and Cui's (2020) findings that participants who took part in functional family therapy reported lower intention to participate in crimes and recidivism rates. Wong et al. (2018) also reported that family therapy uses family members, such as parents or loved siblings, to influence a delinquent juvenile's behavior. Such influence of love and assurance of care by family members is likely to convince the delinquent juvenile of family support and help them avoid criminal activities that could jeopardize their future (Young et al., 2017). Similar results were reported by Spruit et al. (2018) who established that family therapies are effective in reducing juvenile delinquency.

The current findings established that counseling has a significant role in reducing juvenile crime in Maryland. Peer group counseling was perceived as an effective means of addressing the risk factor of negative community influence, including exposure to violence and crime among neighbors and peers. These findings contribute to the perception that peer counseling is an important behavioral intervention that can change behavior in individuals who have problems such as drug abuse and other criminal actions. Peer counseling focuses on using people who are known to each other to influence their thinking and behavior by uttering the extent to which they conceive and perceive a given problem. A study by Steinbuck (2018) exploring the effectiveness of peer counseling

among juvenile offenders established minimal evidence to support peer counseling's long-term effectiveness in influencing behavior change among juvenile offenders.

The results from the current study demonstrated that engagement in positive peer interactions and feeling supported in positive peer groups reduced juvenile delinquency and recidivism. These findings are line with the significance of having support from other peers, having positive social relationships, and enjoying school as factors that positively influence their quality of life as outlined in the literature review. Taşkıran et al. (2017) noted that peers have an impact on the well-being of adolescents. Blomberg and Pesta (2017) underscored that peer influence is necessary during puberty. According to the current study, as supported by Taşkıran et al. (2017), adolescents with supportive peers often post good school performance and healthy relationships with their classmates and teachers. Adolescents who have peers with negative behaviors are vulnerable to behavior problems (Taşkıran et al., 2017).

Limitations of the Study

Study limitations are weakness of the research that are beyond the researcher's control. The current study had several limitations that affected the outcome. The qualitative approach allows for critical, in-depth analyses of data from a population. Participant accounts from the current study addressed only the subjects included in this research. Therefore, broader claims about the applicability of the study findings are tentative. However, through in-depth analysis, original information was accessed, which may be relevant in informing practice and policy pertaining to a relatively underresearched population. A secondary reflection on the study concerned the

researcher and interviewer role. It is important to recognize the subjective stance all

individuals occupied, and the ways that this may have impacted both the development of

the research project itself, for example the construction of the interview protocol, as well

as the facilitation of the interviews. Smith et al. (2019) reflected on the fact that there

may be multiple possible interpretations of the data, and that qualitative descriptive

studies are an invitation for readers to attempt to make sense of a researcher's attempt to

make sense of participants' experiences. Therefore, despite my awareness of my

subjectivity, the positioning of this research can only be colored by my approach. This is

a shortcoming of the research process.

Additionally, there might have been a weakness in the validity of the results. For

instance, conducting a thematic analysis from survey responses rather than in-person

interviews might have limited the validity of the themes. In addition, participants might

have interpreted the questions differently than I intended, which may have been avoided

during in-person interviewing. Furthermore, the validity of the themes might also be

weak due to my bias (support for CBT theory). Using a convenience sample might have

limited how much the results can be generalized to other juvenile justice practitioners in

the United States (see O'Dwyer & Bernauer, 2014). This type of nonprobability sampling

method (convenience sampling) was used to select individuals who were easily

accessible to me (see O'Dwyer & Bernauer, 2014). Another possible limitation was the

number of participants in the study. According to O'Dwyer and Bernauer (2014), if

individuals from the sample choose not to participate once the study begins, this can lead

to the sample becoming systematically different from the intended population, otherwise

known as a nonresponse error. The outcome of a nonresponse error could have been possible due to the administration of the interview questions electronically to maintain COVID-19 social distancing, which distanced me from the participants (see O'Dwyer, & Bernauer, 2014).

Recommendations

Based on previous research and results from this study, it is essential for future research to explore how much of an understanding juvenile justice practitioner have about themselves, others, and the world (Kingshott et al., 2004; Wolfe, 1998; Wolfe & Bailey, 2008). Future research should explore how one's view of "self" in the relationship replicates or corrects behavior. The types of training provided to juvenile justice practitioners, as well as supervision, should be considered. For example, because police officers might be more likely to have punitive-oriented beliefs about youth behavior, future research should address where these beliefs originated and how juvenile justice practitioners' training and supervision might be reconstructed. Like juvenile probation officers and youth specialists, police officers interact with youth. Police officers were found to be the primary source of delinquency referrals in the U.S. between the years 2005-2018 (Hockenberry & Pazzachera, 2020). Therefore, it would be beneficial for police agencies to provide police officers with resources to improve upon the ability to self-reflect and understand youth and to guide police officers' referral decisions properly.

Future research should assess what variables (age, sex, years in department) might reflect a more positive or negative view of youth. One possible method might be focusing

on the effectiveness of police-youth mentorship programs. According to Kingshott et al. (2004), mentorship programs can provide new cultural norms that can change working models that reinforce overentitled beliefs in police officers. Additionally, police officers involved in mentorship programs can provide opportunities that challenge traditional ways they are trained to see the world (i.e., us vs. them mentality). Overall, the corrective relational experience police have by mentoring youth might change the police officer's own overentitled working models and rules of living and replace them with healthy ones (Kingshott et al., 2004; Wolfe, 1998; Wolfe & Bailey, 2008).

Past research has made efforts to address the issue of police officers having punitive oriented beliefs. According to Kingshott et al. (2004), police officers might be overentitled due to being under entitled by the police culture and militaristic training. As a result, police officers might address youth delinquent behavior through punitive-oriented beliefs (Skaggs & Sun, 2017; Wolfe, 1998; Wolfe & Bailey, 2008). Kingshot et al. (2004) have provided recommendations to address this. One recommendation is for program and policymakers to develop training programs that do not use a militaristic foundation inherently under entitling in nature. Another recommendation is to educate police recruits and active police officers specifically about entitlement issues and problems. Kingshott et al. (2004) further recommend police officers be provided a class in introspective and interpersonal coping skills and provide psychological prevention and intervention opportunities. In addition, the authors recommend that a police psychologist should not carry this out due to being "bound to the same dysfunctional paradigm"

(p.198). Finally, the authors recommend that future policy and program makers should promote changes in the police culture.

Implications

Practical and Policy Implications

The current study generated evidence that may contribute to children's right. The current study highlighted issues in relation to poor parenting, low socioeconomic status, exposure to violence (e.g., witnessing violence in the community), and interpersonal trauma. These findings about contraventions of children's right have been supported by existing studies. For example, Case (2018) argued that juvenile who committee status offenses tend to come from unstable families, have exiting unmet mental health problems, have challenges with learning, and have been exposed to violence, including domestic violence. The negative social impact of juvenile delinquency includes the negative impacts of gang activity, risky sexual behavior, and substance abuse on the safety and prosperity of communities, as well as the stress and instability that delinquency caused in families. The results of this study demonstrate that counseling, family systems therapy, and social skills training are potentially effective strategies for reducing juvenile crime in Maryland. Social and life skills training is anticipated to offer individuals a basis for changing their delinquent behavior and embrace desirable conduct. By influencing behavior, life skills, and social training allows a juvenile delinquent to be empowered and acknowledge his or her social duties as well as their responsibilities to other people in the community, including warranting their security and safety of mutual

coexistence. Policy makers can use this study to understand aspects of children's right model as they seek to provide interventions that improve young people's behaviors.

Theoretical Implications

The findings of this study have contribution to the literature. Limited research has been conducted on exploring and documenting strategies that can be used to reduce criminal activities in children in Maryland. This study responds to Bui et al. (2018) and Young et al. (2017) recommendations to explore strategies that can be used to reduce juvenile delinquencies and help young children grow into respectable people in the community. The findings from this study are unique as it demonstrates the strategies that stakeholders in the juvenile criminal justice system and the offenders can use to reduce youth crime rate in Maryland. The study findings may provide valuable information that may be used to address the increased rates of juvenile delinquencies. The themes emerging from this study also extents the aspect of cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) theory. As demonstrated in the literature review, CBT is a renowned theory based on the assumption that irrational misconducts result in antisocial behaviors among people. Youths who engage in criminal activities can learn new practices that are less destructive and antisocial. In particular, the focus of CBT therapy among offenders is to help them improve their social skills, problem-solving skills, cognitive styles, self-control, and impulse management (Hollin, 2019). This study contributes to CBT theory by demonstrating risk factors for juvenile delinquency in Maryland.

Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to provide detailed descriptions of the strategies that stakeholders in the juvenile criminal justice system and the offenders can use to reduce youth crime rate in Maryland. Findings from the study demonstrated that some juvenile justice practitioners believe that youth act out due to what they experienced in the environment, their relationships with their parents, and that youth behavior can change by providing corrective, nurturing relationships. The findings indicated that effective strategies should address some or all of the risk factors poor parenting, low socioeconomic status, violence in the neighborhood, and child abuse and neglect. It might be likely that life experiences influence juvenile justice practitioners' beliefs about changing youth behavior. This outcome might be from juvenile justice practitioners' own experiences as a parent, what practitioners learned from academics, or what practitioners experienced in their occupations (which might positively shape their beliefs toward youth). Additionally, juvenile justice practitioners might believe that youth behavior can change through relationships or punishment and accountability. Future research should explore these areas further. Overall, having future juvenile delinquency prevention policies and programs adapting relational treatment to provide an effective continuum of care for delinquent youth might prevent replicating relational experiences.

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Appendix A: Consent Form

CONSENT FORM
Reducing Juvenile Delinquency: The Voices of Juvenile Probation Officers in Maryland

Researcher: Ebenezer Obonna

You are invited to take part in a research study about Reducing Juvenile Delinquency: The Voices of Juvenile Probation Officers in Maryland. This study is being conducted by Ebenezer Obonna who is a doctoral student at Walden University under the mentorship of Ebenezer Obonna invites adult probation officers ages (25 and older) who have had practical experiences managing juvenile delinquents in different juvenile correctional facilities to participate in this study. This form is part of a process called "informed consent". This form is provided for the purpose of giving the potential participant understanding of this study before he or she decides whether or not to take part in this research study.

Background Information
The purpose of this qualitative study is to better understand Maryland probation officers' perceptions on strategies for reducing juvenile delinquency.

Procedures
If you agree to be in this study:
1. The format of interviews will be based on your preference of instant messaging, phone call, or video meeting. You will be debriefed and have an opportunity to ask questions following the interview. The interview process will be audio recorded and may take 45 minutes to 1 hour of your time.
2. Follow up communication will based on your preference (phone, text, video meeting, or email) and may take an additional 10 to 20 minutes of your time. This will allow you the opportunity to confirm whether or not your experiences were accurately depicted.

Here are some sample questions

Voluntary Nature of the Study
This study is voluntary. You are free to accept or turn down the invitation. No one at Walden University will treat you differently if you decide not to be in the study. If you decide to be in the study you can still change your mind later. You may stop at any time. The researcher will follow up with all volunteers to let them know whether or not they were selected for the study. Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study Being in this type of study involves some risk of the minor discomforts that can be encountered in daily life, such as fatigue, stress or becoming upset. Being in this study would not pose risk to your safety or wellbeing.

Payment
There is no payment for participating in this research study. The personal benefit will be that you were a part of an advocacy participatory study, which allows participants/subjects to contribute to the research by providing their true lived experiences and perspectives concerning real world phenomena. In this case the phenomena of young reducing delinquent crime.

Privacy
Reports coming out of this study will not share the identities of individual participants. Details that might identify participants, such as the location of the study, will not be shared. The researcher will not use your personal information for any purpose outside of this research project. Data will be kept secure by storage in password protected computers and replacing identifiable details of information with pseudonyms. Participant names, and other identifiable information will be removed or altered with alias information to protect participant identity. Participants will be made aware that only the researcher and the faculty have access to the data provided. Data will be kept for a period of at least 5 years, as required by the university.

Contacts and Questions
 You may ask any questions throughout the research process for your understanding. Walden University's approval number for this study is ----------------and it expires on ----------.
Counseling information for those who may need support!
The community crisis stabilization number -----------for participants who may become distressed during the interview. This support is free to all the participants. The community crisis stabilization hotline offers 24 hour support, and is not geographically restricting. Please print or save this consent form for your records.
 Obtaining Your Consent
 If you feel you understand the study well enough to make a decision about it, please indicate your consent by: Consent will be audio recorded or a screenshot of the text, or IM will be taken to protect the research participant.

Appendix B: Interview Questions

1. How long have you been serving in juvenile correctional facility?

2. What are the key risk factors or predictors of juvenile delinquency?

3. What are the negative impacts of juvenile delinquency to an individual, family, and society?

4. How does family or systems therapy influence juvenile delinquency?

5. How effective is the use of social skill training effective in reducing juvenile delinquency?

6. In what ways does mental health counseling support to reduce juvenile delinquency?

7. How does peer-group counseling help to reduce juvenile delinquency?