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## **Discipline without Punishment for African American Male Juveniles: From the Eyes of a Mental Health Professional**

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*Walden University*

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# Walden University

College of Psychology and Community Services

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Walden University  
2023

Abstract

Discipline without Punishment for African American Male Juveniles:

From the Eyes of a Mental Health Professional

by

Mia Nichole Lee

MS, Saint Leo University, 2019

BS, Norfolk State University, 2016

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Doctor of Philosophy

Criminal Justice

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January 2023

## Abstract

Juvenile rehabilitation and incarceration among African Americans are not equal and up to the standards and recommendations of society. This study focused on identifying the differences between the juvenile rehabilitation and incarceration punishment among African American offenders, with the goal of helping improve the way that the society looks at African Americans. The paper followed qualitative research methodology, which provided social evidence and helped in breaking down information. Data were collected from focus groups, observations, questionnaires, and interviews. The research highlights issues regarding juvenile rehabilitation and incarceration of African Americans, which can encourage change.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

In the juvenile justice system, African American boys are the most overrepresented demographic (Voisin et al., 2017). The influx of African American male adolescents into the juvenile court system has generated a social problem. The presence of African American male kids in the juvenile penal system has societal ramifications (Ryan et al., 2013), including absenteeism, drug abuse, and gang membership (Lucero et al., 2015). If these concerns are not addressed, there is a risk that the child offender may commit crimes as an adult, leading to more serious consequences (Barnette et al., 2015; Schlesinger, 2018).

Juvenile delinquent treatment and punishment presents a principle to consider punishment versus treatment. Though some claim that because juveniles are young, they should receive therapy rather than punishment for their crime, punishment for juveniles who commit murder is preferable to treatment because some contend that they understood fully what they were doing. The purpose of this study paper was to explore the distinctions between juvenile rehabilitation and prison punishment for African American criminals. The study concentrates on identifying the problem in terms of rehabilitation and incarceration and, as a result, changing and improving the way society views African Americans.

### **Background of the Study**

The criminal justice system provides services that ensure offenders do not participate in criminal activities when released into society. The system offers both direct punishment and rehabilitation services to the offenders (Donaldson, 2020). Rehabilitation

provides a chance for individuals to learn about the cause of their problems, learn changes in behaviors, and eliminate the risk of committing a crime. Incarceration includes punishment as a way of correcting the offenders. Individuals taken through rehabilitation seem to show improved behaviors when released than those from incarceration.

In terms of juvenile justice, youths from marginalized communities face differences in the juvenile system compared to youths from other communities. Even though there have been strides in the juvenile's system, the length other stay of the African American male youths in confinement and the level of punishments when incarcerated exceeds what is stipulated on the policies. Policies and individuals argue that tough punishments should be given to violent offenders, and nonviolent offenders should be rehabilitated. Such policies are more likely to affect African American male youths because they are often associated with violent crimes.

Punishment can take the form of parole, life sentences, the death penalty, or a lengthy prison sentence; however, treatment is where juveniles receive assistance, such as counseling or community mentorship (Listwan, 2013). The goal of treatment is rehabilitation (Listwan, 2013). Treatment can happen in schools, households, prisons, or various community institutions (Listwan, 2013). This study was conducted to examine the differences in treatment and punishment among African American juveniles.

### **Problem Statement**

African American male juveniles often do not get offered rehabilitation methods, but they get punished to serve incarceration time (González, 2017). This leads to higher

recidivism rates because they do not have alternative resources. When people are released from prison and return to society, most of them engage in further criminal acts. To assist avoid repeat offenses, it is necessary to implement rehabilitative programs among convicts rather than imposing direct punishment. When juvenile offenders are put into the criminal justice system, the issue is whether they should be sent to serve their penalty automatically or whether there should be rehabilitative approaches that may be used to assist protect them from reoffending.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The study's goal was to determine the difference between juvenile rehabilitation and jail punishment among African American criminals, addressing inequality in juvenile rehabilitation and imprisonment among African Americans. Because the study focuses on identifying this societal problem, the results can encourage improving the way society views African Americans. I used qualitative research methodology, which helped gather evidence.

### **Research Questions**

1. What are the disparities between jail and youth rehabilitation for African American offenders?
2. What are some social issues that African American juveniles are faced with?
3. Why are African American male juveniles not offered other means of rehabilitative punishments?
4. What effects does existing jail and punishment system have on this population?

### **Theoretical Foundation**

According to punishment theories, offenders are taken through the incarceration process to discourage them from getting involved in criminal activities. According to utilitarian philosophy, laws that define a penalty for illegal action should be intended to deter future criminal behavior (Garland, 2018). The punishment serves as an example for the rest of society and a message to others that criminal behavior will be punished. Incarceration also exists to punish the offenders because they deserve the punishment (Donaldson, 2020). Punishment is described as suffering, loss, pain, or any other consequence inflicted on a person by the relevant authorities for the offense. What individuals feel is acceptable in terms of criminal consequences is mainly governed by the ideology of punishment to which they subscribe—that is, individuals tend to agree with the punishment theory that is most likely to produce the outcome they feel is proper (Enns & Ramirez, 2018).

Rehabilitation is another utilitarian argument for punishment. The goal of rehabilitation is to allow offenders to succeed within the confines of the law so that they do not commit crimes again (Garland, 2018). In most cases, rehabilitative interventions for criminal offenders involve treatment for mental illness, substance abuse, and recurring violent behavior. The use of educational programs to give offenders with the information and skills they need to engage in the labor market is also part of rehabilitation.

### **Nature of the Study**

The research followed the descriptive research design to focus on helping to find and answer the *how, what, where, and when*. The descriptive research design is also appropriate because it can help establish a research plan. This design helped to understand the reasons between the juvenile rehabilitation and incarceration punishment among the African American offenders.

### **Significance of the Study**

African American male juvenile rehabilitation versus incarceration punishment is worth studying because there are juvenile offenders who were offered rehabilitative methods after their detention center time and ended up in a better situation compared to those who only had direct punishment and were released with no resources. Studying rehabilitative programs and the different therapeutic methods can help assist juveniles with re-entering society. Several conclusions can be drawn from this research: (a) learning and practicing the coping strategies described by the participants would benefit African American male juveniles who are incarcerated and (b) stakeholders would be able to make better decisions when deciding what constitutes a juvenile crime and how the sentencing hearing will be put in place before incurring punishment. Stakeholders may help ensure that laws, regulations, and rehabilitation initiatives are just, meaningful, and consistent, and that the penalty is proportional to the offense. This research might also help Virginia's Juvenile Court System by implementing intervention measures that could minimize juvenile recidivism. The data gathered in this study can be utilized to help reduce recidivism rates among African American male youths in Virginia. The study

adds to the little body of knowledge about the impact of laws, policies, and rehabilitation programs on African American male adolescent recidivism.



## Chapter 2: Literature Review

As a result of rehabilitation or incarceration, teenagers and adolescents who have had involvement with the juvenile justice system have greater incidence of behavioral health disorders. Further, recidivism is common in studies on African American male adolescents (Baglivio & Wolff, 2017; Feld, 2017; Fine et al., 2016, 2017; Western, 2006). U.S. politicians have sought to prevent incarceration and minimize recidivism, but their efforts have not lowered recidivism rates (Sawyer & Wagner, 2020). For example, various reform laws and policies have been in place to control criminal activity among African American. However, though the Juvenile Justice Reform Act's focus was on rehabilitation (Baglivio et al., 2016; Boggs & Worthy, 2016), more than half of individuals who enroll in rehabilitation programs reoffend within 3 years after serving their sentences (Sawyer & Wagner, 2020). Because African American males confront several hurdles when they return to their communities after incarceration, it is critical to comprehend the factors that contribute to their high recidivism rates, such as negative opinions regarding the legal justice system (Augustyn, 2015) and disproportionate minority contact (DMC) with the justice system. Juvenile justice policy in the United States has also gotten increasingly harsh over the last few decades. Today, juveniles as young as 13 or 14 years old (or less) can be prosecuted and punished as adults for a wide range of offenses, including nonviolent crimes, in nearly every state.

The literature on the association between juvenile justice system engagement and youth behavioral issues is examined in this section. The goal of the literature review is to look at how African American juvenile ex-offenders' life experiences have influenced

their views on rehabilitation versus incarceration. The present literature on African American male juveniles, existing programs, recidivism, and the effects, if any, of the Juvenile Justice Reform Act on African American male juveniles is introduced in this chapter. The theoretical underpinning for this study, Sutherland's (1939, 1947) differential association theory, is outlined in the next section. The chapter also covers the history of the juvenile justice system in the United States, the high recidivism rates of African American male adolescents, and rationale for this study based on the literature and the association it has with good societal change in terms of rehabilitation and incarceration.

### **Literature Search Strategy**

The literature review was done by looking for scholarly publications in Internet databases. Government websites and dissertations were also searched to provide a fuller understanding of this issue. Using Walden's University's online resources, databases for this literature review included ProQuest Central and Criminal Justice, *Crime & Delinquency*, *Journal of Forensic Psychiatry & Psychology*, *PsychINFO*, *PsychARTICLES*, *SAGE Premier Google Scholar*, *American Journal of Public Health*, *Journal of Criminal Justice*, *Journal of Juvenile Justice*, and *Journal of Correctional Education*. Keywords like *African American male*, *rehabilitation*, *incarceration*, *recidivism*, *recidivate*, *juvenile*, *reoffending*, *social learning theory*, *labeling theory*, *former juvenile convicts*, *juvenile reentry*, *black male*, *juvenile offenders*, *status offense*, *juvenile laws*, *juvenile acts*, *sentencing*, and *United States Juvenile Justice* were used as the primary strategy for this search.

### **Theoretical Foundation**

Sutherland's (1939, 1947) differential association theory provided the theoretical foundation for the study. The theory explains that when a person engages in illegal activity, the frequency with which such action occurs varies based on the person's direct personal relationships (Mowen & Boman, 2018). Differential association theory can be used to explain aspects of a person's procriminal behavior through interaction with a close associate whose conduct is deviant (Hanson et al., 2018), making it useful for explaining the type of punishment the justice system imposes, such as rehabilitation or incarceration.

Sutherland (as cited in Kassem, 2017) proposed nine distinct association arguments, the first of which implies that criminal conduct is not dictated by DNA. Second, interpersonal communication is a type of communication. Third, small intimate groups are the key gathering where the majority of learning occurs. Fourth, the directing of urges, rationalization, and perspective are all tactics for committing a crime. Fifth, the direction in which the urges and motivations proceed demonstrates awareness of whether they correspond with the terms of the law. Sixth, being delinquent demonstrates that some has broken the law. Seventh, deviance will alter the frequency with which something occurs, the duration with which it occurs, the preference with which it is preferred, and the strength with which it is effective. Eighth, processes and noncriminal conduct present a possibility for an individual to benefit by studying and practicing the behavior in the same way that criminal behavior is studied and shown. The differential association manifestation of criminal conduct is the last statement. Although wants and

values may not explain why criminal conduct exists, both criminal and noncriminal behavior reflects an individual's needs and values.

The differential association theory has been considered as the most complete theory of delinquency and youth criminal activity. Gray et al. (2015) used the theory to analyze teenage marijuana usage and discovered that it could explain 40% of the behavior. Based on their findings, when people have a personal connection to those who engage in illegal or deviant activity, the consequences on their mental attitude and value definition might enhance the risk of repeating the same undesirable behavior through imitation and reinforcement. Deviant conduct is influenced by communal features (Nuo & Katz, 2018). For instance, poverty, a large proportion of ethnic minority populations, and a diminishing population overall, as seen in Chicago and Georgia, were recognized as three perceived criteria for towns with high rates of adolescent delinquency (Mowen & Boman, 2018). Perpetrators who were affiliated with persons who committed the same crime were also more likely to reoffend, according (Damm & Gorinas, 2016; Ouss, 2011). Similarly, a juvenile who hangs out with people who have done or are going to commit a crime gets a kick out of the bad conduct that leads to peer pressure to commit or reoffend.

The differential association theory gives a lens through which to understand the elements that contribute to juvenile recidivism as well as the significant impact that reoffending has on African American males. The theory explains the delinquent conduct of many African American males as a result of their living situation, which may include a lack of a positive male role model in the household. African American male minors may

have seen or known someone of their own race who got a small sentence for a criminal offense (e.g., selling drugs or stealing) and was freed after serving a short time in prison. Young African American boys who see these minimal repercussions for undesirable behavior may wonder what would happen to them if they committed illegal offenses based on their views and observations of those who have done so. This theory offers a lens through which to understand some of the elements that contribute to juvenile recidivism as well as the significant impact on young African American males who socialize with reoffending peers.

### **Conceptual Framework**

As previously stated, punishment theories suggest that criminals are subjected to jail to deter them from engaging in illegal activity. Punishment indicates that rules exist and are utilized to enhance society's satisfaction. Punishment has ramifications for both the offender and society and is associated with the creation of overall good conduct in a person. The retributive philosophy emphasizes the offense as the basis for enforcing punishment. The utilitarian view looks forward and bases punishment on societal advantages, whereas the retributive approach looks backward and bases punishment on the transgression. Human beings have independent will and are capable of making reasonable judgments, according to retributivists. Insane or otherwise inept offenders should not be punished. An individual who deliberately chooses to disturb society's equilibrium, on the other hand, should be penalized. Incarceration as a kind of punishment can be considered as a type of retribution, since wrongdoers must suffer because they cause others to suffer. As a result, incarceration might be justified as a

means of protecting both society and the offender's lawful rights. Punishment demonstrates society's respect for the wrongdoer's free choice by allowing the criminal to repay the debt to society and then return after jail, ideally free of guilt and disgrace.

A utilitarian justification for punishment is rehabilitation. The purpose of rehabilitation is to keep criminals from committing crimes again by providing them the tools they need to prosper within the constraints of the law. Treatment for mental illness, substance dependency, and recurrent aggressive conduct are common rehabilitative approaches for criminal offenders. Educational programs are frequently used in rehabilitation to provide offenders with the information and skills they need to succeed in the employment market.

### **Literature Review**

The criminal justice system is expected to either rehabilitate or punish offenders or criminals. The purpose of this study was to investigate the efficacy of punishment and rehabilitation in reducing crime in society. The study discusses the effectiveness of both punishment and rehabilitation in deterring crime as well as the effects on the individual/offender, the victim and their families, the social and fiscal effects on society, and the management of those who have already been convicted and are under community supervision.

Recidivism among African American youth the involvement in reoffending behaviors by adolescents is one of the key factors to the rise in juvenile crime, prompting the debate over rehabilitation versus incarceration for African American juveniles. High rates of juvenile recidivism—being convicted for crimes after being discharged

(Department of Juvenile Justice, 2022)—impact people’s and communities’ quality of life (Mauer, 2011). The social context, such as the consequences of poverty, may play a role in recidivism (Sanej & Mir-Khalili, 2015). Ejection or school dropout, a lack of educational possibilities, difficulties of living status (low-income housing regions), and high unemployment rates are all factors that contribute to juvenile recidivism (Upadhyayula et al., 2015).

Punishment as a way to address crime, is the most common method of reducing crime or misbehavior in the criminal justice system has been to penalize those who have been convicted (Morris & Rothmn, 1995). As a result, society views punishing the criminal as the most efficient means of ensuring that the victim receives equal justice. The main goal of executing punishment in prison systems is to hold not just the criminal but also the community accountable for their misdeeds (Sutherland et al., 1992). Punishment is seen as a means of teaching society, particularly those preparing to commit crimes, about the repercussions of their actions. People learn through example (Gilligan, 2012). As a result, the harsh sentence meted out to a criminal act as a lesson to society’s members, preventing them from committing crimes.

The Juvenile Justice Reform Act of 2013 addressed several issues that concerned stakeholders in the United States. The expense, the rate of recidivism, and the diversion of young offenders from jail to more focus-based therapy for small or misdemeanor offenses were the most urgent problems (Okonofua et.al, 2021). These programs became recognized as community-based programs, and their principal goal was to minimize adolescent criminal activity via rehabilitation. Community-based programs were created

to address the underlying issues that contribute to delinquent conduct in the context of the juvenile's community. These issues originate from a range of life concerns, such as work, educational learning, mentorship, and housing, to name a few (Okonofua et al., 2021). Georgia, for example, provides resources to help children transition from jail to their home communities (Tan & Zapryanova, 2020). Furthermore, the penalty would be ineffective in deterring crime from those who have been described as being overwhelmed by emotions or having a sort of disordered thinking when it comes to caring about the repercussions of their actions.

Another point of contention has been how to assess the success of punishment and rehabilitation in reducing the negative consequences for victims and their families. From this perspective, rehabilitation has shown to be the most successful since it is said to provide victims and their families with stability and protection following the release of their offender. Rehabilitation increases the many changes by rebuilding a feeling of self-worth so that they may return to the society and be useful and respected. Individuals who participate in rehabilitation programs improve their communication skills, which they will use once they are freed ("BOP: Community Ties," n.d.). Some victims' family see these changes in their ex-offender, who expresses regret for their actions. Learning such abilities also aids offenders in managing with negative influences and learning how to deal with the victims they have wronged, preventing recidivism. Putting the criminal in rehabilitation instills terror in the victims and their family, who are concerned that the offender will still come after them when he or she is released. However, with good rehabilitation therapy, criminals modify their ways and feel guilt for their wrongdoing.



As a result, they require a second opportunity in the community to reclaim their dignity and self-confidence in themselves and their employers. Consequently, they are able to manage and deal with their employees in order to earn a livelihood and meet social and personal duties such as housing. This boosts the country's economy as well as public faith in people who have been wronged (<https://bjs.gov/>).

The impact of a punishment or rehabilitation procedure on society may also be used to assess its success. Despite the argument that some delinquents may change after being punished, unfriendly and brutal treatment, such as incarceration, has been observed to increase tolerance among criminals, hence boosting recidivism rates ("Bureau of Justice Statistics (<https://bjs.gov/>)," n.d.). That indicates punishment has flaws since it requires full intensity to be successful; otherwise, the effect would be transient, and tolerance would be required in the long term.

Furthermore, the administration of heavy punishment to delinquents may be viewed as a violation of society's sense of fairness and justice. As a result, compared to rehabilitation, the penalty would be judged to have an impact of increasing recidivism and the frequency of crime in society. Recidivism or re-involvement in misbehavior is common among rehabilitated criminals, according to statistics ("Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS)," n.d.). As a result, most criminals may utilize rehabilitation as a ruse to reclaim a chance to reintegrate into society. This makes punishment more attractive since it promotes long-term imprisonment and delinquent correction.

The purpose of rehabilitation, according to reports, is to protect or enhance the victim's long-term security and safety when the delinquent is released back into the

society (“Topic: Justice System | NCJRS,” 2018). It could be argued that justice is based not only on the importance or effectiveness of providing the victim with equitable justice in punishment as a means of retribution, but also on the creation and instilling in the delinquent a sense of respect for the rights and property of others (“BOP: Resources For Victims,” n.d.). Rehabilitation is a more dependable kind of punishment that aims to restore peace and allow people to reintegrate into society. It trains offenders for reintegration into society.

While in imprisonment, the offender considers how they will prove to the society that they have changed, whether they will obtain work or jobs, the parole authorities’ directives, where they will live, and whether or not their relatives would accept them back. “National Criminal Justice Reference Service | NCJRS,” n.d., states that “rehabilitation programs require finances to provide for medical therapies counseling to minimize anxiety that increases as their release date approaches.” The fear of being exposed to society makes offenders fearful, leading them to repeat their crimes. Paying psychologists and caseworkers helps to cover the workload and so reduces the offender’s sensations or emotions. As a result, adopting rehabilitation can be perceived as a flaw in crime because of the economic implications and the perception that it merely leads to counseling and other medical therapies rather than the severe and sometimes brutal punishment administered by security officials in jail. Furthermore, rehabilitation procedures and processes are seen to be more expensive for both the community and the government.

Officers who are inherently punitive, on the other hand, may find it difficult to build rehabilitation programs (Burton Jr et al., 1991). Punishment tries to confine criminals and ensure that they feel the consequences of their actions while incarcerated. Confinement is claimed to be a possible technique of minimizing the likelihood of repeating the same offenses once freed. It is clear from an examination and study of the effectiveness of both punishment and rehabilitation that, based on the two justice methods, rehabilitation of the criminal is better since it eliminates inhumane treatment. As a result, the likelihood of recognizing physiological modeling of the delinquent's regular conduct increases.

When deciding whether punishment or rehabilitation is successful, both the social and financial effects of the society should be addressed. Charges against recidivists in California are based on three main strike rules, according to Adler et al. (2009). For strike two, the offenders would be accused with twice the at-hand offense term with barely any release time before serving an 80 percent of the term, and for strike three, they would be sentenced to 25 years to life without the possibility of parole before serving an 80 percent of that 25-year sentence. If all states applied or implemented such laws, the society would feel safer. This would minimize a variety of misbehaviors in society, such as drug misuse, gun violence, and any other type of crime.

As a result, rehabilitation will save money because it does not necessitate the construction or installation of prisons. However, in the United States, more monies have been allocated to the construction of prisons than to the establishment of rehabilitation programs ("National Criminal Justice Reference Service | NCJRS," n.d.). In addition, as

they prepare for their release, rehabilitation programs aid delinquents in finding work, finding a place to live, and reducing anxiety. Government money is required for rehabilitation programs. It fosters good self-esteem and obtaining work via the learned job aids in demonstrating to the victims, their families, and the society that they have shown regret and improved themselves.

There is a need to recognize and appreciate the value of long-term security in terms of the consequences on victims and their families, the effect on the offender, social implications, and budgetary effects on the community. Most proponents of punishment have argued that punishing criminals is the best option, claiming that it gives equitable justice for misconduct or wrongdoings committed against other members of the society. Punishment has also been demonstrated to have little effect on reducing crime in society since criminals may grow tolerant, increasing recidivism. Offenders, on the other hand, may utilize rehabilitation as a ruse as they prepare to be freed. Victims and their family fear rehabilitation because of the possibility that their abusers would be freed and come after them. Offenders, on the other hand, require a feeling of self-worth and trust that can only be gained via rehabilitation. Funding rehabilitation programs and establishing prisons are some of the linked social and economic expenses. Proponents to argue for rehabilitation, claiming that it strives to make criminals more trustworthy in terms of respecting other people's human rights, have used this argument. Due to the related expenses, everyone in society should embrace and maintain harmony.

Youth who were considered boisterous, uncontrollable, or disobedient were either given a tolerated flogging or transported to adult jails until the 1800s. These facilities

were rat-infested, dangerous, and in dreadful shape (Springer & Roberts, 2011). During this period, children as young as seven years old were deemed old enough to face charges such as stealing, aggression, graffiti, parental abuse, and neglect (Bilchik, 1999; Juvenile Crime, Juvenile Justice, 2001).

There were no distinct juvenile justice systems for minor offenders prior to the Progressive Era. Delinquent minors were either dealt with by the adult criminal court system or placed in shelters (Amdur, Davidson, Mitchell, & Redner, 2013). As an alternative to prisons, homes of refuge were patterned like impoverished dwellings. Youth were placed in a residential facility with the goal of removing them from the harmful settings that lead to their bad behavior in the first place (Amdur et al., 2013). They operated on a rigid educational, hard labor, and disciplined paradigm. The idea was that these harsh standards, rather than love and care, would lead to recovery. By the 1840s, there were about 25 homes of refuge scattered across the nation (Springer & Roberts, 2011). Each refuge home housed between 200 and 1,000 young people (Springer & Roberts, 2011). Houses of shelter became a detention center for marginalized adolescents, with limited success in rehabilitating them. Furthermore, the residences were plagued with overpopulation, staff abuse, and hazardous circumstances, rendering them outdated (Springer & Roberts, 2011). Other options for dealing with delinquent kids were sought by reformers (Amdur et al., 2013).

Jane Addams and Julia Linthrop lobbied for legislation that resulted in the first juvenile court in Cook County, Illinois, being established in 1899. (Springer & Roberts, 2011; Thompson & Morris, 2015). Except for Wyoming and Maine, every state had a

functioning juvenile court by 1925. (Juvenile Crime, Juvenile Justice, 2001). These courts were more concerned with rehabilitation than with punishment. Early juvenile justice systems concentrated on therapy and rehabilitation rather than punishment because of the youngster's immature moral, social, emotional, and intellectual qualities (Thompson & Morris, 2016).

Even though the federal government began to pay attention to juvenile justice in 1912 (OJJDP, n.d.), Congress did not approve any official statutes connected to juvenile delinquency until 1960. (Olsen-Raymer, 1983). The Juvenile Delinquency and Youth Control Act has been changed, updated, and renamed multiple times since it was first enacted in 1961 (Delcea et.al, 2019). The Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJJPA, 1974) gave the juvenile justice system nearly complete power over the treatment of juvenile delinquency (Tan & Zapryanova, 2020). At this period, the criminal justice system served as both a deterrent and a control for delinquency. Status offenses like as truancy or noncriminal misconduct were used to hold youth who were thought to be susceptible to criminality. Because the judicial system had been criticized, revisions to the JJJPA were made, stating that the justice system could only act once a delinquency had occurred, rather than preventatively (Hawkins & Weis, 1985).

The juvenile justice system is starting to take on the characteristics of the adult judicial system (Thompson & Morris, 2016). While emulating the adult judicial system has shown to be advantageous in terms of protecting these young offenders' rights, it has also resulted in a more severe approach to dealing with juvenile lawbreakers. The juvenile justice system has been incarcerating adolescents at an increasing rate since

adopting adult-style techniques (Thompson & Morris, 2016). According to Aizer and Doyle (2015), approximately 130,000 juveniles are jailed in the United States each year, with 70,000 children incarcerated on any given day. Juvenile imprisonment is linked to lower school completion rates and higher adult incarceration rates, according to data collected from over 35,000 young offenders (Aizer & Doyle, 2015). A juvenile justice system that emphasizes jail and punishment can be harmful to children (Aizer & Doyle, 2015; Thompson & Morris, 2016).

Researchers have discovered that the adolescent frontal lobe and prefrontal cortex are immature. These areas of the brain influence Planning and self-control in adolescents. In comparison to adults, kids are more inclined to act rashly and neglect long-term effects (Monahan, Steinberg, & Piquero, 2015). These considerations should be taken into account when deciding how to interact with juvenile offenders. Discipline and control-oriented interventions have been proven to be ineffective (MacKenzie & Farrington, 2015). Punishment-based rehabilitation programs that employ a bootcamp mindset and tough discipline have had dismal results (Young, Greer, & Church, 2017). Nisar et al. (2015) investigated the juvenile justice system's growing "get-tough" approach, which leads to more children being transferred to adult courts and prisons rather than getting rehabilitative treatment.

In 2015, there were around 82,940 juvenile offenders aged 12 to 18 who were not living at home (Sickmund, Sladky, Kang, & Puzanchera, 2017). These children were housed in residential placement institutions such as juvenile detention centers and correctional facilities (Campaign for Youth Justice, 2016). On average, 21% of all

juveniles who are brought before the courts for minor infractions are sentenced to jail.

Hoy et al. (2016) looked at the link between juveniles being detained and their subsequent involvement with the juvenile justice system and street life. According to Hoy et al., incarceration does nothing to rehabilitate kids and instead increases their likelihood of engaging in activities that lead to subsequent incarceration. Raphael (2014) suggested that incarcerating children for delinquent conduct can have detrimental consequences for their scholastic and production results, leading to further offending.

Retaining juvenile offenders in the community while providing rigorous intervention can improve the odds of success for the youngster's rehabilitation (May, Osmond, & Billick, 2014). When compared to those who were sentenced to in-home probation, those who were sentenced to detention facilities had a 2.12 times higher chance of reoffending (Ryan, Abrams, & Huang, 2012). Interventions focusing on skills training and restorative practices, on the other hand, have been shown to be helpful in the rehabilitation of juvenile delinquent kids (MacKenzie & Farrington, 2015).

Rehabilitation groups educate kids how to manage their hostility, which has been linked to a decrease in violent conduct. Conflict resolution approaches and interpersonal skills training are complimentary therapies used to improve the mental processes and interpersonal behavioral tactics that cause children to participate in deviant conduct (OJJDP, 2016). Anger management strategies, conflict resolution skills, issue identification, and social resistance training are among the abilities targeted by these therapies. These treatments encourage cooperative behavior and can help adolescents



build good peer bonds while also helping to reduce negative behaviors (OJJDP, 2016; Trupin, 2007).

Wong, Bouchard, Gravel, Bouchard, and Morselli (2016) investigated whether restorative justice practices were most effective in rehabilitating delinquent juveniles and reducing recidivism. Even though the study found that restorative justice methods that hold the offender accountable for his or her actions are more successful than punitive measures like jail, there were sample size and exclusion criteria limitations. Furthermore, peer-reviewed publications were lacking in the literature. As a result, the suggested research is required as a tool for policy reform.

### **Summary and Conclusions**

Juvenile criminality and delinquency are a social problem that has a significant emotional impact on society (Pardini, 2016). Several elements contribute to adolescents being delinquent. The broad literature analysis provided insight into the problem's history, scale, and complexities, with the goal of better understanding the success of African American male rehabilitation vs incarceration.

The emphasis of this study endeavor was on African American male juvenile delinquents. The factors that led to their incarceration, according to Omboto, Ondiek, Odera, and Ayugi (2013), are frequently not adequately treated inside bars. As a result, the study focuses on the role of the criminal justice system in rehabilitating or incarcerating these kids. The subject of African American male juvenile delinquents was explored in this area of the capstone, as well as the study's consequences for the social work community, the juvenile justice system, and this delinquent adolescent population.

The key gap identified throughout the literature research is the absence of therapeutic participation for African American male juvenile delinquents with gang connection since the court system typically employs a punitive strategy when dealing with this demographic. As a result, these children are deprived of the opportunity to learn new skills, create healthy peer connections, and learn how to avoid recidivism in the future.

### Chapter 3: Research Method

Juvenile delinquency affects communities all around the world (Shoemaker, 2017). Being a member of a gang is a predictor of criminal behavior (Dong & Krohn, 2016), and youth gang involvement is disproportionately African American (Pyrooz & Sweeten, 2015). To avoid ongoing criminal behavior, it is critical to learn how the criminal justice system views their involvement in the rehabilitation or incarceration of African American, gang-affiliated, adolescent delinquents.

#### **Research Design and Rationale**

Qualitative researchers value the input of each participant to the research process (Roller, 2015). Action research may be used to achieve criminal justice goals through empowering people (Brydon-Miller et al., 2003). Because the study was conducted to look into rehabilitation versus incarceration in the treatment of African American juvenile issues, feedback from experts who currently work with this demographic was crucial. In addition, the research aimed to enable participants to advocate for change at the micro, meso, and macro levels.

#### **Role of the Researcher**

As the study's researcher, I created the groundwork for the study with the goal of gathering as much relevant data from the participants as possible. I also analyzed and interpreted the data. During the study, it should be critical to adhere to the procedures and ethical standards to preserve participants' rights. There were no breaches of confidentiality, or any type of compulsion used to get important information. There were efforts to guarantee that the participants' participation has no negative consequences.

## **Methodology**

Data were gathered from licensed social workers and licensed mental health professionals who deal with African American males who engaged in delinquent behaviors as juveniles or have worked with them in the past. Interviews were completed to obtain information (see Guest et al., 2017), which related to what values and abilities African American juvenile delinquents lack the most. Furthermore, the questions aided in the investigation of rehabilitation strategies for African American, gang-affiliated adolescent delinquents as an alternative to punitive measures. Furthermore, the interviews findings will aid in the development of a framework for the criminal justice system's debate over rehabilitation versus imprisonment. This will include systemic concerns and impediments that obstruct the capacity to achieve the stated goal of instilling values in youngsters for them to behave better in social roles.

### **Participant Selection Logic**

Utilizing nonprobability sampling, five licensed social workers and five licensed mental health professionals, who have dealt with African American males who engaged in delinquent behaviors as juveniles, will be chosen to partake in the research. be recruited to participate in the study. For qualitative study, Ritchie, Lewis, Elam, Tennant, and Rahim (2013) advocate utilizing nonprobability sampling to choose individuals with characteristics that are relevant to the issue. The goal of the research is to learn how the criminal justice and correctional systems see their responsibilities and capabilities in assisting African American male adolescent delinquents. When it came to selecting

volunteers for the study, homogeneous samples that were meant to offer an in-depth look at a certain topic were chosen.

Email will be used to recruit participants. Those that are contacted will be familiar with the people with whom they work in this group. The snowball approach was used to identify the five social professionals that took part in the study. The snowball approach will also be used to identify the remaining twenty people. Male and female volunteers will be included in the sample size. Participants will range in age from 21 to over 40 years old and come from any ethnic background.

Although some of the potential volunteers have already been identified, the researcher will have no personal ties to any of them. Bias won't be a problem. To avoid bias in action research, Creswell (2013) proposed only asking open-ended questions. The researcher is not restricting the replies based on prejudice by employing open-ended questions. If the researcher asks closed-ended questions, the responder must pick from the options provided rather than the response that he or she believes best answers the question. The researcher's personal sentiments will not impact the participants' replies by asking open-ended questions (Creswell, 2013). Furthermore, by gaining informed permission, participants will be educated about the research procedure and aim.

### **Instrumentation**

The interview questions during the interview, would be open-ended in nature. Open-ended inquiries allow the respondent to express themselves freely. Furthermore, employing open-ended questions allows the reply to add their own perspective to the topic (Zull, 2016). A consent form regarding each participant's duties in the interview,

was distributed in the invitational email. Following that, the interview participant was given a guided list of open-ended questions to answer. This provided an opportunity for the interview participants to see how they were going to discuss how to effectively provide rehabilitation to African American male juvenile delinquents. “What are the disparities between jail and youth rehabilitation for African American offenders? one question asked. “What effect do you believe the existing jail and punishment system has on this population?”

### **Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection**

Participants in this study will mostly come from two Virginia cities: Chesapeake and Virginia Beach. To recruit people, I employed random sampling. First, I sought data of five licensed social workers and five mental health professionals, both who have worked with individuals who engaged in delinquent behaviors as juveniles. Once these individuals were chosen, I set up a date and time to have a phone interview with them to present myself and my study. I then sent them an email requesting their permission to participate. An invitational email and consent form is a good way to present the research to participants (Wise & Cantrell, 2018). In addition, I screened all replies to ensure that only those who met the criterion of being willing to discuss their lived experiences working with African American male adolescents were interviewed. Participants had the opportunity to meet me and learn more about the study over the phone or in a designated location. Those chosen received an email or phone call thanking them for their time and inviting them to all meetings and interviews. After interviews, participants had the chance

to see and revise transcripts of the interviews, or if they prefer, in a public area where they felt at comfortable and safe (e.g., libraries, restaurants, or cafés).

### **Data Analysis Plan**

Content analysis is widely used by qualitative researchers to examine data by grouping information into groups depending on interpretation (Elo et al., 2014; Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). Interviews were recorded and transcribed into text. Themes were selected to categorize the material after gathering the data and transcribing the tape. The topics discovered from the interview transcript were categorized using hand coding. The tallying took place in accordance with the topics that the group agreed on as well as the areas where there were differences of opinion. Conclusions were formed when all the data had been collected, processed, and examined. Having active participation in the project allowed my preconceptions and prejudices to be addressed by the other participants, ensuring the project's trustworthiness and rigor (Padgett, 2017).

### **Issues of Trustworthiness**

To communicate the study data, a written representation of the in-depth fieldwork was completed. The textual depiction gives the background that created this research's overall credibility and reliability. The findings of this study can be used to future studies of a similar nature. All standards were followed to guarantee the data collecting, trustworthiness, credibility, and analysis processes were all protected.

### **Dependability**

Using Walden University's outline as a foundation for my research helped me to collect data from participants in a succinct and accurate manner. To guarantee that the

overall study quality was reliable, every method outlined in Walden's standards had to be followed. Using a strategic skill set allowed me to define and carry out the research's overall objectives.

### **Confirmability**

Confirmability is shown when others can verify the participants' results (Patton, 2015). I based my conclusions only on the information gathered during the study. The body language and expression of the individual participants as they discussed their impressions of their lived experiences with African American male juvenile ex-offenders were captured through observations in this study. In addition, I checked the results based on the data obtained.

### **Ethical Procedures**

It is a researcher's obligation and responsibility to follow the ethics outlined in the NASW (2017) code of ethics when doing research (Fowler, 2013). Walden's Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved the research study before it was carried out (approval no. 12-02-22-1023123). All procedures were included while filling out the IRB permission application. All IRB-approved protocols for ensuring ethical and procedural practice in the research project were followed.

Before participating in an action research study, participants must sign a permission form. A definition of the study, the participant's role, the fact that the study is voluntary and no compensatory, and confidentiality requirements were all mentioned in the consent form. Each participant had the right to withdraw from the research at any time and obtain copies of everything that were discussed and signed. When providing



information through email, everything was encrypted and password protected. Each participant was given a unique password to correctly examine their materials. Other important documents will be kept in a safe box at a secure place. Finally, all names and other identifying information were redacted and replaced with code numbers to protect each participant's identity. The master key that identifies each participant's pseudonym, as well as the tape and transcript of the interview, are kept in a locked safe. I am the only one who can get into the safe. The data will be kept for a minimum of 5 years before being destroyed.

### **Summary**

This chapter outlined a strategy for gathering data through interviews in addition to identifying and contacting potential applicants. I also covered data analysis methodologies. Ethical concerns were addressed, including a suggestion on how to appropriately keep data for at least 5 years. This section was modified after the experiment was completed to add more information about the participants, data collecting, and data analysis.

## Chapter 4: Results

### Research Setting

An introductory email was sent to the five social workers and five mental health professionals who agreed to participate in the study. The goal was to obtain information from professionals who have experience with African American criminals or delinquents.

### Demographics

The sample selected for this study comprised both males and females. Other demographics besides gender considered in this study include the participant's age and the individual profession. Five mental health professionals and five social workers between 21 and 40 years old were selected for this study. Table 1 provides a summary of the demographics of the sample.

**Table 1**

*Demographics Table*

Demographics	Number	Percentage
Gender		
Male	5	50%
Female	5	50%
Age		
21-40 years	8	100%
Profession		
QMHP	5	50%
Social Workers	5	50%

### Data Collection

Structured interview questions were administered in a for each participant. Structured questions are fundamental for qualitative studies as they reduce bias. Structured questions are also simple to organize and efficient, with fewer preparation

requirements for the interviewees. The structured nature of interviews the data collection method allowed an opportunity to compare responses from different interviewees, heightening the validity and reliability (Hughes et al., 2020). The questions and their order were fixed, meaning there was no option for asking the additional question. The audio was recorded during the session, and the transcript was typed for reference. Studies acknowledge that interviews are fundamental in data collection for qualitative studies and crucial to providing in-depth insights on the subject (McGrath et al., 2018).

### **Data Analysis**

I used content analysis approach to analyze the collected data by translating the interview responses to abstract findings based on individual participants' viewpoints, knowledge, or experiences with African American male juveniles who have had a history of delinquent behaviors. The content analysis approach for this research entailed collecting the data, noting the findings based on the respondents' responses, and reviewing and evaluating those findings per the research questions (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). The analysis began with the data collected from the interviewees, which were recorded and transcribed into text. After that, I identified the emergent themes, concepts, or the aspects of the study. The analysis of this study was assessed for consistency, from which the most persistent themes will form the basis for the conclusion on the research topic.

## **Evidence of Trustworthiness**

### **Credibility**

The credibility of research relates to the confidence in the study findings as true and reliable (Korstjens & Moser, 2017). Member checks enhanced the study's credibility. Member checks entail seeking respondent validation such that the findings of the study are sent to the participants to confirm for accuracy and resonance with their insights or experiences. Therefore, the findings of this study were sent to the sample members for their feedback on whether the inferences or conclusions drawn from the results resonate with their experiences.

### **Transferability**

The transferability of the research indicates that its findings apply to similar situations and populations (Korstjens & Moser, 2017). To enhance the transferability of the research findings to other populations and contexts, a sample of professionals with in-depth experience with the African American juvenile settings and advanced knowledge of the encounters of African American criminals provided subject-specific information. Furthermore, the sample of participants, comprised of persons with direct experience with African American criminals, provided justifiable information applicable to other related settings. Therefore, the research findings can be transferred to similar settings to reveal the disproportional experiences of delinquent African American males in jails and rehabilitation facilities.

**Dependability**

Dependability constitutes the extent to which other researchers can repeat the study and obtain consistent findings (Korstjens & Moser, 2017). It represents the stability of the study findings, including its assessments, inferences, interpretations, and recommendations. For this study, I used the inquiry audit with licensed mental health professionals and licensed social workers, with experience with the jail and rehabilitation settings and familiar with African Americans' experiences. In this inquiry audit, the researcher asks the professional to review and reevaluate the research implementation and confirm the truthfulness of the findings drawn as an indicator of study dependability.

**Confirmability**

Confirmability of the study represents the level of neutrality of its findings, so other researchers can confirm the trustworthiness of the findings (Korstjens & Moser, 2017). To affirm the confirmability of the research findings, all inferences in this study are based on the participants' responses rather than individual or personal preconceptions and fabrications by me. Therefore, an audit trail demonstrating that inferences for this study were systematically achieved through data collection, analysis, and afterward, research-based conclusions affirm the confirmability of the findings. Additionally, to ensure the findings are not due to researcher bias, the findings were verified for consistency using secondary sources and afterward reviewed by peers to offer insights on the correctness of the interpretations.

## Study Results

The findings for this study are organized per the research questions, representing the participants' responses.

### **RQ 1: What are the Disparities Between Jail and Youth Rehabilitation for African American Offenders?**

Most responses confirmed the ongoing disparities in incarceration versus rehabilitation, specifically for African American juveniles and criminals. The results confirm that African American offenders' likelihood or the possibility of going to jail is higher than admitting them into rehabilitation facilities. Therefore, the proportion of African Americans in jails or incarcerated is relatively high compared to the White majority. For example, Participant 1 stated, "African Americans will be imprisoned more than their White counterparts who will be given rehabilitation." This participant confirmed the existence of institutionalized prejudice on a racial basis, stating, "institutional racism exists, and the system will spend more man hours and time dealing with White offenders than Black offenders."

Furthermore, Participant 3 stated, "The youth aren't getting the proper guidance, mental healthcare, and attentiveness in jail. They are already 'written off' which leads to them believing what they're being taught and increasing the likelihood of them becoming repeat offenders." Therefore, according to these findings, African American youth are less likely to have access to rehabilitative services and support services to avoid recidivism than their white counterparts. As a result, African American youth are more likely to experience incarceration than undergo rehabilitation services.

**RQ 2: What are the Problems in Terms of Rehabilitation and Incarceration Useful for Creating Justifying Strategies of the Social Issue of African American Juveniles?**

The participants confirm the dominance of social issues facing African American juveniles, creating disparities in terms of rehabilitation and incarceration. A major social issue facing this group relates to the racial prejudice and profiling of law enforcement agencies and the criminal justice system and being under-resourced for educational purposes. For example, Participant 2 stated, “African American male juveniles are faced with a predetermined perception of being criminals as well as a lack of resources in their communities to educate them on the different career paths & trades that exist.” Therefore, racial profiling, where African American youth are more likely to be perceived as criminals, is a leading social issue to incarceration than rehabilitation. Similar to the affirmation by Participant 2, Participant 3 stated, “prejudice; African Americans are seen as thugs, no good, etc., and don’t have proper resources to get them back on their feet. Difficulty getting jobs, getting into school once released.” As per the assertions by Participant 1, stigmas, poor role models, and an inadequate educational system represent other social issues leading to the differences between incarceration and rehabilitation for African Americans. Therefore, racial profiling, prejudice, stigma, and scarcity of resources are contributing factors to the disparities in incarceration versus rehabilitation for African Americans juveniles.

### **RQ 3: Why are African American Male Juveniles not Offered Other Means of Rehabilitative Punishments?**

Participant 3 confirmed that race is a major impediment in the current criminal justice system, attributed to the failure to offer rehabilitative punishments to African American males in the place of incarceration. According to this inference, denying the opportunities for rehabilitation punishment appears as a racial control strategy, especially in the New Jim Crow era, characterized by the mass incarceration of people of color. One of the participants stated that “The New Jim Crow is our correctional system, which seeks to fill jail cells by incarcerating more Black and Latino people who are then utilized as enslaved people in the system for huge corporations and the US Government.” Another participant stated, “The funding doesn’t exist to provide other rehabilitative opportunities in African American communities.” The scarcity of resources to fund rehab services and models in the African American communities and the issue of race are impediments to mass incarceration.

### **RQ 4: What Effects Does Existing Jail and Punishment System Have on This Population?**

The study findings also confirm that the effects of incarceration in the place of rehabilitation are far-reaching. Recidivism is a recurring effect due to the dominance of jail options rather than implementing rehab services. The African American youth are at high risk of reoffending since they have no access to services that prepare their reunion with the community. One of the participants in the focus group stated, “Jail becomes so familiar that you may subconsciously do things to go back. You are not taught life skills,



so if/when you get out, you start from ground zero.” Most offenders released to the community are not adequately prepared for a reunion. Another respondent stated,

The existing punishment system allows offenders to be separated from the public, but it does not provide them with any resources to be successful once their time is complete. Not addressing the underlying issues of how they entered the system as well as how they can live a successful life after now being labeled as a criminal normally results in repeat offenders.

Therefore, per these findings, the jail punishment is demeaning and heightens vulnerability to mental health challenges, mainly due to the limited access to support services.

### **Summary**

This chapter provides an in-depth account of the study findings to answer the research questions. The results confirmed that African Americans are more likely to be jailed than receive rehabilitative services, which are associated with most social issues like prejudice, racial profiling, and being under-resourced. The aspects of racial control via the new Jim Crow era and scarcity of resources appear as major hindrances to providing rehab punishments for African Americans. As a result, these disparities are associated with increased recidivism, failed reunion with the community, and vulnerability to mental health challenges. The findings are trustworthy, confirming their credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

## Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations

### **Interpretation of Findings**

African American juveniles and criminals are more likely to be incarcerated in jails than receiving rehabilitative services. This disparity is evident in this study's findings, consistent with the results of other secondary resources integrated into this research. For example, González (2017) confirmed that African American juveniles experience high risks of incarceration and harsh conditions in those facilities with no services to prepare them to integrate with society after release. Other studies also confirm that African American youths are more likely to be targets of jails than rehabilitation facilities (Augustyn, 2015; Baglivio & Wolff, 2017; Feld, 2017; Fine et al., 2016). Offenders serving in detention facilities are at high risk of reoffending, 2.12 times higher than those in rehabilitation services like probation and in-home arrests (Ryan et al., 2021). African Americans are vulnerable to rearrests, re-convictions, and a return to solitary prison, or relapse into incarceration, mainly as an outcome of unpreparedness to connect and incorporate themselves into the community (Baglivio & Wolff, 2017; Fine et al., 2016; Field, 2017; Western, 2006). Therefore, these findings confirm the challenges of the New Jim Crow, where incarceration is used for racial control.

This study confirms the racial profiling and race-based prejudice of African Americans (Baglivio et al., 2016; Boggs & Worthy, 2016; Sawyer & Wagner, 2020), contributing to the high risk of incarceration compared to receiving rehabilitation services. Racial basis is a major hindrance to accessing rehab services. Additionally, economic challenges or inadequate resources and lack of support contribute to

inaccessibility to rehabilitation services. These findings are consistent with other studies that confirm that poverty and inadequate support by the government as contributing factors to inadequate access to rehab services (Nuo & Katz, 2018; Sanei & Mir-Khalili, 2015). Other factors like high unemployment rates and inadequate support services (Upadhyayula et al., 2015), are consistent with these findings, confirming higher differences in incarceration and rehabilitation services among African American juveniles.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The sample size for this study is relatively small (10 participants), which affects the overall reliability of results, increasing the variability and risk of bias. Therefore, the small sample size of 10 respondents makes it difficult to confirm whether these findings are true or the results of participant bias. The sampling method (i.e., snowball sampling) adopted in this research also limited my control over the study and was likely to lead to selection bias, impeding the objectivity of the research findings. Additionally, the non-random nature of the sampling method makes it difficult to generalize findings beyond the study sample selected. Time constraint was also a major limitation in this study, required to be completed within a strict timeframe.

### **Recommendations**

Recommendations for future research or studies include improving the reliability of the findings on this topic or related subject matter. A primary recommendation is that future studies use probabilistic techniques like the random sampling method to enhance the generalizability of the findings and their objectivity and increase the chances of each

subject being selected in the sample, alleviating selection bias. Additionally, a larger sample above the current one (i.e., at least 30 participants or at least three focus groups) could increase the reliability of the findings by decreasing variability and the risk of participant bias. Future researchers should establish a clear timeline for conducting the study with clear milestones and a timeframe for completing the research.

### **Implications**

The findings support subsequent research and can encourage effective policymaking. The study findings fill a gap in the previous literature by acknowledging the absence of therapeutic interventions for African American juveniles. The findings provide an account of the disparities between African Americans accessing rehabilitation services and those facing a jail term. This study also fills the gap in the impediments to accessing rehabilitation services. In practice, the study findings for this research are fundamental guidelines for the policymakers in the criminal justice system to blend the penal systems with the rehabilitation facilities to reduce the risks of recidivism by addressing the influential factors such as inadequate allocations, racial profiling, etc., impeding access to rehabilitation services.

### **Conclusions**

The influx of African American juveniles in the criminal justice system and the increase in mass incarceration require intervention. According to the primary and secondary evidence, African American juveniles are at the highest risk of recidivism or reoffending due to the lack of access to rehab services that prepare them to function as important members of society. Consistent evidence from secondary and primary sources

confirms incarceration as the core punishment mode at the expense of rehabilitation, aimed at correcting the offenders to be dependable societal members. Race is a central factor in the increased incidents of mass incarceration and limited rehabilitation for African American juveniles. They are vulnerable to racial profiling, system-level prejudice, and limited access to support services like a reliable educational system. Therefore, understanding these challenges and the differences between imprisonment versus rehabilitation will enhance policymaking by acknowledging such communities as underserved and putting efforts into reducing the risk of recidivism.

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### Appendix: Interview Questions

1. What are the disparities between jail and youth rehabilitation for African American offenders?
2. What are some social issues that African American juveniles are faced with?
3. Why are African American male juveniles not offered other means of rehabilitative punishments?
4. What effects does existing jail and punishment system have on this population?