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Perceptions on the Effects of Religious Programs on Criminal Behavior Among Juveniles

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This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

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has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
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Walden University
2024

Abstract

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M.S. Saint Leo University, 2016

B.A. Saint Leo University, 2014

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Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

The relationship between religion and crime has been a subject of interest and significance in the fields of sociology, criminology, and psychology. This study was conducted to explore this relationship in connection to criminal behavior among juveniles. The theoretical foundation of the research was social control theory. Data were collected and analyzed to understand how religious programs and institutions contribute to community development and crime prevention efforts, the perceived impact of these programs on reducing criminal behavior among youths, and the role of religious reintegration through these programs on the lives of juvenile offenders ages 16 to 24. Primary Data was collected during the semi structured interview process which consisted of direct responses to the interview questions from 12 study participants. The participants were recruited through purposive sampling. Participants had professional involvement in social service organizations and direct engagement in religious programs in their respective neighborhoods. A thematic approach of data analysis was used to identify emerging themes. The key findings were that religious programs play a widespread role in network development and crime prevention efforts, there is a perceived positive impact with utilizing religious programs on reducing criminal behavior among youths, and religious reintegration via those programs can have a transformative effect on the lives of minor offenders when the resources are utilized and applied correctly. The findings of this study have potential implications for positive social change by shedding light on the transforming function of religious programs and organizations in promoting a safer, more harmonious society.

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Dedication

I dedicate this remarkable milestone to the young girl who, at the age of 13, courageously faced the challenges of teenage pregnancy and gave birth at 14. She understood that this was just one chapter in her story, and she held onto the belief that life would improve one day. Throughout her journey, she relied on God's guidance to navigate the emotional storms and realities she encountered. Despite facing harsh opinions and the truth, her determination never wavered. This moment of success is truly monumental. God, my mother, and my faith have been my pillars of strength during the challenging times in my life. I always believed that if I persevered, I could become the person I aspired to be. As I write this dedication, I speak directly to the 13-year-old pregnant girl who bravely gave birth at 14. Being a teenage mother is not an easy journey; it deviates from the ideal life envisioned for a young girl. I give all the glory to God, as my life is now filled with success stories because I refused to give up as a teenager. Despite being judged and talked about by many, I turned every negative word into motivation to keep pushing forward. Without the foundation of my experience as a teen mom, I would not be preparing to receive my Doctoral Degree.

I want to extend a special shout-out to my mother, Debbie Ellington. She never gave up on me or any teenager who needed love and guidance. Her unwavering support inspired me to recognize my passion for helping others. Despite the heartbreaking loss of my brother to gun violence in 2012 and my mother's declining health, which led to her passing on 9/05/2022, I am determined to finish strong. I am driven to obtain my degree in honor of my mother and my children. I recognize that I have a purpose to speak life to

other teenagers facing their own challenges. As a social change agent, my mission is to instill hope in the lives of those who are lost and in need of guidance. I am on a mission to positively impact as many lives as I can through various avenues. Every trial and hardship I have faced has prepared me for this appointed time. I am committed to influencing teenagers in positive ways, drawing inspiration from the love and guidance I received as a young person. Even when my mother's children made mistakes, she stood by them, encouraging them to find the right path while maintaining unwavering faith. With deep gratitude for my past experiences and an unwavering determination to shape a better future, I embrace my purpose as a catalyst for positive change. I am prepared to make a difference and infuse hope into the lives of others.

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to God for His unwavering presence in my life. I am immensely grateful for the blessings and opportunities that have enabled me to achieve milestones that seemed unimaginable within my family. Becoming the first high school graduate, the first college graduate with honors, and now pursuing a Ph.D. has truly exceeded my expectations. I firmly believe that this journey towards higher education was guided by a divine purpose, and I am humbled by the path I am on. I would like to extend my deepest appreciation to my beloved Momdukes. Your unwavering support and guidance have been invaluable throughout my life. Your legacy of compassion and care for others' lives on through me, and I am honored to carry it forward. Your strength and resilience have been a constant source of inspiration, empowering me to overcome challenges with courage.

To my dear children, thank you for being my motivation and driving force. Your love and belief in me have fueled my determination to succeed, and I am grateful for your unwavering support. I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to everyone who has kept me in their prayers throughout this journey. Your prayers have been a source of strength and comfort, and I am deeply appreciative of your spiritual support. A special thank you goes to my dear friend, Mr. Jose, for his constant encouragement. Your words of wisdom and belief in my abilities have been instrumental in keeping me focused and motivated. I am immensely grateful for Dr. Phillip Neeley, the program director at Saint Leo University, for his unwavering support and encouragement during my undergraduate

and graduate studies. Your belief in my potential has been pivotal in shaping my academic journey.

I extend my heartfelt thanks to my committee and faculty members, Dr. Benedict DeDominicis, Dr. David Dibari, and Dr. Kimberley Blackmond. Dr. Kimberley Blackmond, in particular, I am deeply grateful for your uplifting words during the difficult time of my mother's passing. Your support provided a glimmer of hope and the strength to persevere amidst grief. Dr. Dibari, your detailed feedback and dedication to helping students have been invaluable, and Dr. Benedict DeDominicis, thank you for your guidance as my chair during my time at Walden. Lastly, I would like to express my gratitude to my editors and former classmates for their feedback and suggestions. Your insights have been instrumental in shaping my work. To all those who have checked on me and offered words of encouragement along the way, thank you. Your unwavering support and acts of kindness have meant the world to me. As I embark on the next chapter of my journey, I am eager to fulfill my purpose as a positive change agent. With the love and support of all those who have stood by me, I am confident that I can make a meaningful difference in the lives of others. Thank you all from the bottom of my heart.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

The topic of this study is the complex relationship between religion and crime. Religion and crime have been the subjects of extensive scholarly inquiry, and their intricate interplay continues to intrigue researchers across disciplines. In this study, I aimed to provide an in-depth analysis of this relationship, exploring the influences of religious beliefs, institutions, and practices on crime rates and criminal behavior.

Understanding the relationship between religion and crime is of paramount importance. First, crime poses huge challenges to societal well-being, protection, and concord (Warner, 2018). Exploring the potential position of religion in crime can offer insights into the dynamics behind criminal behavior and contribute to the improvement of powerful crime prevention techniques. Second, religion performs a crucial role in the lives of individuals and groups, shaping values, beliefs, and moral frameworks (Astrachan et al., 2020). Examining how religious factors intersect with crime affords a deeper knowledge of the social and cultural contexts of criminal behavior. Moreover, investigating the religion–crime relationship has broader implications for effective social change. By figuring out the mechanisms through which faith influences crime, policymakers, practitioners, and religious institutions can expand centered interventions that promote community well-being, foster engagement, and reduce criminal activities (Jang, 2018).

The findings of this research have vast social implications. Law enforcement groups can gain from a nuanced knowledge of the role of religion in criminal conduct,

allowing them to tailor crime prevention techniques that effectively deal with community desires and dynamics. Religious institutions can use the insights from this research to foster engagement within their organizations and increase programs that promote values, ethics, and social obligation, potentially decreasing crime and encouraging social harmony. Policy makers inside the criminal justice and social welfare sectors can use the findings to inform evidence-based interventions and policies aimed toward reducing crime, addressing the motives of criminal behavior, and promoting social change.

By examining the complex relationship between faith and crime, I conducted this study to make a contribution to the existing literature, inform policy, and foster advantageous social change. In this introductory chapter, I present a top-level view of the study. Chapter 2 provides a literature overview examining present theories and empirical research on the connection between religion and crime. Chapter 3 outlines the research method. Chapter 4 offers the findings of the qualitative analyses, followed by a complete discussion. Finally, in Chapter 5 is a conclusion of the dissertation, summarizing the key findings, discussing implications, and supplying suggestions for future research.

Background

The literature associated with the research subject includes substantial studies examining the connection between religion and crime. Scholars from various disciplines, such as sociology, criminology, and psychology, have explored unique aspects of this relationship. Researchers have investigated the effect of religious beliefs, spiritual institutions, and religious practices on criminal conduct and crime fees. Existing research has provided valuable insights into the faith–crime relationship. Armaly et al. (2022)

found a negative correlation between religiosity and involvement in criminal activities,

suggesting that religious ideals and practices may additionally function as defensive

factors against crime. Other research has highlighted the function of religious institutions

in fostering social bonds, promoting prosocial values, and lowering crime in communities

(Freilich et al., 2019). Hirschi and Stark's (1969) study "Hellfire and Delinquency" has

been called the first empirical research correlating the link between crime and religion

(Montagnet, 2022). Approximately 4,000 youth from California were included in the

study, and Hirschi and Stark established that youth attending church frequently and

students who believe in the afterlife had similar odds of committing delinquency to those

not believing in religion (Mohammad & Banse, 2023). Several scientists in various

studies challenged the findings, with contradictory results emerging (Paul & Paul, 2020).

Ultimately, Stark published a follow-up study to explain the contradictory results from

the earlier study, this time focusing on religion from a social context rather than an

individual one (Zane & Pupo, 2023). The theory postulated that people relied on rational

calculations when making rational choices that lead to outcomes aligned with personal

best interests.

Consequently, the moral community framework was spawned from these ideas.

Several authors have examined how religious groups, nations, and regions could increase

the influence of individual religious beliefs to affect behaviors and attitudes (Van Buren

et al., 2019). Since the original research by Bhutta et al. (2018), researchers have

investigated the correlations between crime and religion. Most of the work has been done

in the criminology and sociology of religion fields. For example, few criminology

researchers have considered religion's significance for research on crime-linked behaviors and attitudes (Gruchoła & Szulich-Kałuża, 2022). While a handful of studies have been conducted to examine the relationship between crime and religion in the United States, the majority typically focus on an offender's perspective (Freilich et al., 2018). Furthermore, complex questions have developed in recent years regarding the use of data, theories, and methods in religion and criminology research. For instance, the studies that applied different theoretical viewpoints, yet the most compelling theories in explaining the relationship between religion and crime, are still contested (Costello & Laub, 2020). Similarly, several issues remain unclear in religion and criminology research. For example, religion's effect on behaviors or attitudes is vague, as well as the causal relationship.

Nonetheless, a gap remains in expertise within the subject. The existing research lacks a complete examination of the underlying mechanisms through which religious elements affect crime. Additionally, the contextual variations inside the faith–crime relationship, which include differences throughout cultures, socio-financial backgrounds, and personal traits, have not been explored. Reformers and scholars previously had imagined novel configurations for designing and structuring policing institutions in the United States. Particularly after the events of May 26, 2020, when racial justice protests occurred across major U.S. cities following a series of police-inflicted murders (Bloom & Labovich, 2020). The public outcry advocating for police positions within social work yielded a more severe social work response, denouncing police cruelty against people of color and voicing support for radical fundamental change in policing. Social movements

such as "defund the police, defend the people" became more popular among communities. The fundamental principle for the movement was shrinking budgets for police departments and redirecting funds toward other social and community services.

These new developments supported research evidence proposing that restorative justice is related positively to reduce rates of criminal involvement, particularly among American teens (Lodi et al., 2021). The identified gap in knowledge is the need for a more nuanced understanding of the religion–crime relationship, addressing the underlying mechanisms and exploring contextual variations. While some studies have provided insights into the overall relationship, more research is required to examine the specific ways religious beliefs, institutions, and practices intersect with criminal behavior. Furthermore, investigating how socioeconomic factors, cultural contexts and individual characteristics moderate this relationship will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding.

This research is needed to fill the gap in understanding within the discipline. By accomplishing an in-depth evaluation of the complex relationship between faith and crime, I aimed to provide comprehensive knowledge of the mechanisms via which spiritual factors affect criminal behavior. Additionally, by exploring the contextual versions, this research will make contributions to improved and nuanced information regarding the faith–crime relationship. The findings of this study may have implications for diverse stakeholders, together with regulation enforcement corporations, religious institutions, policymakers, and practitioners inside the criminal justice and social welfare sectors. The insights gained from this study can inform evidence-based interventions,

policies, and programs geared toward lowering crime, fostering social change, and promoting community well-being. By addressing the identified gap in knowledge, this research aimed to contribute to the literature, improve theoretical frameworks, and offer realistic implications for addressing the complex relationship between faith and crime.

Problem Statement

The research problem addressed in this study is the need to understand the complex relationship between religion and crime, focusing on the influences of religious beliefs, institutions, and practices on criminal behavior and crime rates. Despite the existing body of literature, there is a lack of comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the underlying mechanisms and contextual variations in this relationship. Scholarly literature in the last 5 years has reflected a consensus regarding the current, relevant, and significant nature of the problem. Numerous studies have highlighted the importance of exploring the religion–crime relationship and its implications for understanding criminal behavior and developing effective crime prevention strategies. Research in various disciplines, including sociology, criminology and psychology, has focused on the need for further investigation into the specific ways religious factors intersect with criminal behavior.

Research on religion and delinquency has expanded significantly (Montagnet, 2022). There have been increased faith-based programs sponsored by the federal government and the religion-linked terrorist attacks of 9/11. The 9/11 attackers were all jihadists greatly motivated by radical Islamic beliefs (De Roy van Zuijdewijn & Bakker, 2023). This led to increased government funding for terrorism-related research, which

resulted in many related studies. Previous quantitative studies and systematic meta-analyses focused on religion–crime nexus, substance use, and deviance (Ronald, 2020). Most of these criminology and religion-related studies have found an effect. Nonetheless, research has relied on self-reported responses from offenders that may not be accurate, especially when asking for lifetime offenses (Bendlin, 2020).

This study builds on previous research findings by focusing on recent scholarly contributions in the field. Recent studies have identified potential mechanisms through which religion influences crime, such as the role of religious beliefs in shaping moral frameworks and the influence of religious institutions in promoting social bonds and prosocial values. However, more research is needed to gain more insights on these mechanisms and to explore the contextual variations in the relationship between crime and religion.

The gap identified in the research literature necessitates further studies for numerous reasons. First, gaining knowledge on the complex relationship between religion and crime has implications for crime prevention strategies. By unraveling the mechanisms through which religious elements influence criminal conduct, policymakers and practitioners can increase interventions that address the underlying issues. Second, given the various cultural and socio-financial contexts in which religion and crime intersect, it is crucial to look at contextual versions. This will provide greater information of the religion–crime relationship, accounting for factors inclusive of cultural norms, economic disparities, and personal characteristics. Lastly, addressing the identified gap in the research contributes to the development of theoretical frameworks and deepens

knowledge on the role of religion in shaping human behavior. By advancing previous study findings, this research may offer new insights and contribute to continuing scholarly discourse. The research problem is framed within and fundamentally targeted at the scope of social sciences, with a specific emphasis on sociology, criminology, and psychology. By exploring the religion–crime relationship from a multidisciplinary approach, this research contributes to scholarly knowledge within these disciplines.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore and describe the complex relationship between religion and crime. I sought to examine the influences of religious beliefs, institutions, and practices on criminal behavior and crime rates. I aimed to make contributions to the prevailing information base and offer knowledge of the underlying mechanisms and context in the religion–crime relationship. The research paradigm guiding and grounding this qualitative study was interpretivism.

Quantitative analyses of crime statistics offers empirical evidence from previous research and case studies, but qualitative research allows for a deeper exploration of the subjective experiences and perceptions of people involved in criminal justice systems. The motive of the research was to explain and explore the complicated interaction between religion and crime while seeking to understand how religious factors influence criminal behavior and crime fees. Using a phenomenological qualitative method, I sought to provide holistic knowledge of the phenomenon through lived experiences and qualitative insights. The concept of interest in this research was the connection between faith and crime. I sought to examine how spiritual ideals, establishments, and practices

intersect with criminal conduct, shedding light on underlying mechanisms and contextual variations. By focusing on this concept, I contribute to the understanding of the complex dynamics between faith and crime inside the social sciences.

Research Questions

RQ1: How do religious programs and institutions contribute to community development and crime prevention efforts in specific neighborhoods?

RQ2: What is the perceived impact of religious programs on reducing criminal behavior among youths in specific neighborhoods?

RQ3: How does religious reintegration through these programs influence the lives of juvenile offenders ages 16 to 24?

Theoretical Foundation

The theoretical foundation for this study is based on social control theory (SCT). SCT proposes that individuals are motivated to engage in conforming behavior due to the social bonds they have with society (Miller & Vuolo, 2018). The theory posits that individuals are less likely to engage in criminal behavior if they have strong bonds with social institutions such as family, school, and religious organizations. The origin of SCT can be attributed to sociologists Travis Hirschi and Walter Reckless. Hirschi's seminal work "Causes of Delinquency" (1969) and Reckless's "Containment Theory" (1961) form the basis of this theory. According to this theory, crime and delinquency transpire when an individual's ties to the normative standards or conventional order are mainly nonexistent. The theory postulates that all people are bad apples from birth and must be controlled by rules, laws, and regulations to keep society safe (Crawford, 2014).

Moreover, the social control lens maintains that individuals with weak ties are involved

in crime and deviance.

The theory includes four key propositions that explain various bonds developed

by people that influence people's involvement in criminal behaviors: (a) belief,

(b) attachment, (c) commitment, and (d) involvement (Brunson & Wade, 2019).

Attachment explains the extent of psychological affection towards others in society.

Commitment refers to the importance given to valued social relationships, which an

individual would not jeopardize by being defiant. *Involvement* is the opportunity costs

related to how individuals spend their time. *Belief* is the extent an individual obeys the

values linked with behaviors conforming to the law. Hence, the final proposition is

critical to the study: the higher the importance of an individual's values toward specific

behavior, the lesser the chances of defying their values (Rundle et al., 2019).

The SCT framework is applicable in this study because it asserts that humans

develop a conscience over time by interacting with essential institutions, people, and

places (Gottfredson, 2021). Religious institutions, schools, and parents teach people

values and morals. Religious institutions and families impart religious beliefs to children,

which can affect choices, behaviors, and attitudes. Furthermore, children are enrolled in

extracurricular activities by their parents to interact with peers, learn discipline, and

ensure they are involved during their free time (Xu, 2017). This helps individuals not to

engage in crime and defiance since idle hands or minds are the devil's garage (Han et al.,

2017). According to SCT, children without the four bonds are likely to be involved in

criminal acts or deviance (Glad & Ljung, 2018). Thus, I used SCT to investigate the

relationship between religion and criminology.

The major theoretical propositions of SCT are: (a) individuals with strong social

bonds are less likely to engage in criminal behavior; (b) social bonds consist of

attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief in conventional values; and (c) weaker

social bonds increase the likelihood of deviant behavior. Chapter 2 has a more detailed

explanation of SCT, including relevant studies and empirical evidence supporting the

theory's propositions. The theory offers a framework to understand the role of spiritual

packages and establishments in shaping social bonds and lowering criminal behavior

among people, especially youths and juvenile offenders. SCT helps to explain how

religious involvement and dedication can make stronger social bonds and act as a

protective element against criminal behavior. By inspecting the relationship between

religion, social bonds, and crime, this research was conducted to contribute to an

understanding of the way spiritual factors can impact and strengthen social control

mechanisms.

Nature of the Study

The nature of this research is a phenomenological qualitative study following the

paradigm of interpretivism. The qualitative method allows for an in-depth exploration of

the complex relationship between religion and crime, capturing the subjective

experiences and perspectives of participants (see Liamputtong, 2021). The interpretive

paradigm emphasizes the importance of social constructs, meanings, and interpretations

in shaping human conduct and social phenomena. The key concept being investigated in

this research was the connection between religion and crime, particularly focusing on the

function of spiritual programs and institutions in stopping and decreasing criminal

conduct among youths and juvenile offenders. I sought to discover the underlying

mechanisms through which religious factors affect social bonds and deter people from

carrying out criminal activities.

The data for this research were collected via in-depth interviews with participants

working in various arenas, including churches, organizations, regulation enforcement,

community facilities, courts, and colleges. These individuals have insight associated with

the subject under research. The interview questions (Appendix B) guided the interviews

for a comprehensive exploration of relevant components.

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis, a qualitative facts

evaluation technique. Thematic analysis includes the systematic identification, analysis,

and interpretation of patterns, themes, and codes within data (Castleberry & Nolen,

2018). This process entailed coding the interview transcripts, organizing the codes into

topics, and studying the relationships and patterns. The analysis was guided by the

research questions and the theoretical framework.

Definition

Crime: Any behavior that violates established laws and regulations within a given

society or jurisdiction and includes acts such as theft, assault, drug trafficking, and other

forms of illegal activities (Jeffery, 2021).

Juvenile offenders: Individuals who have been involved in criminal activities and

are subject to the juvenile justice system. They are typically under the age of 18, and their

offenses may range from minor delinquency to more serious crimes (Pusch & Holtfreter, 2017).

Religion: A set of beliefs, practices, and rituals associated with a particular faith or spiritual tradition. This encompasses an individual's worldview, moral values, and engagement with a higher power or transcendent entity (Schnitker et al., 2019).

Social bonds: Connections and attachments individuals have with their social environment, including family, friends, community, and institutions. These bonds are characterized by elements such as trust, commitment, shared values, and support, which promote social integration and deter individuals from engaging in criminal behavior (Van Onna & Denkers, 2018).

Social control theory (SCT): This theory includes four bonds of belief, attachment, commitment, and involvement (Widowaty, 2019) and postulates that crime and delinquency occur when an individual's ties to the normative standards or conventional order are violated or nonexistent.

Youth: Individuals in the age range of 16 to 24, with a specific focus on the transitional period between adolescence and adulthood, where individuals are particularly vulnerable to various social, economic, and developmental challenges (Sawyer et al., 2018).

Assumptions

Assumptions play a crucial role in research as they represent beliefs or conditions accepted as true but that cannot be empirically proven. In the context of this study on the complex relationship between religion and crime, I drew the following assumptions. I

assumed participants would provide accurate and truthful responses. I assumed that

participants would provide honest and reliable information in response to the interview

questions. This assumption is necessary for obtaining valid data that can contribute to a

comprehensive understanding of the topic. I assumed that participants' experiences and

perspectives would accurately represent the broader population. I assumed that selected

participants, including professionals working in various arenas related to religion and

crime, would provide a representative sample. This assumption is necessary to generalize

the findings and draw meaningful conclusions about the complex relationship between

religion and crime. I assumed the interview questions used would adequately cover the

key dimensions related to religion, crime, and their relationship. This assumption is

necessary to ensure that the collected data can address the research questions and provide

valuable insights into the topic. I assumed that participants would respond truthfully

without trying to present themselves in a socially desirable manner. This assumption was

necessary to minimize the potential bias that may arise when participants feel pressured

to provide responses that conform to societal expectations or norms. These assumptions

were recognized as important for the meaningfulness and validity of the study. While

efforts were made to address potential limitations and mitigate biases, I acknowledge the

inherent uncertainty associated with these assumptions.

Scope and Delimitations

This research was focused on analyzing the complex relationship between religion

and crime. Specifically, I investigated the views of professionals working in various

arenas related to religion and crime along with church institutions, regulation

enforcement, community centers, courts, and schools. I aimed to gain insights into the role of religion in crime prevention, rehabilitation, and network responses to crime.

I chose the unique consciousness of this research to shed light on the multifaceted dynamics between religion and crime and to explore the possible implications for positive social change. By analyzing the reviews and perspectives of experts operating in different domains, I sought to contribute to a complete understanding of the subject and offer valuable insights for policymakers, practitioners, and researchers.

To define the boundaries of this study, I established the following delimitations. The study was centered on experts operating inside arenas associated with religion and crime. The perspectives and reviews of other individuals, including network participants or offenders themselves, were not within the scope of this study. While existing literature and theoretical perspectives inform this study, I did not comprehensively investigate all theories associated with religion and crime. I focused on the theories that immediately related to the study questions and targets of the research. The findings and conclusions of this research may be context specific and may not be transferable to other settings or populations. The views and perspectives of experts in one-of-a-kind cultural, social, or geographical contexts might also range and caution ought should be exercised while generalizing the effects beyond the scope of this study.

Limitations

Some limitations were acknowledged for this study. First, for the sample selection, I trusted a specific pattern of specialists running in diverse arenas associated with religion and crime. The findings might not be completely consultant of the wider

populace, and the views and reports of different stakeholders may not have been captured. However, efforts were made to mitigate this issue. In addition, the data accumulated in this research are primarily based on self-report measures, which might be subject to potential biases. Participants' responses can be inspired with the aid of social desirability bias or memory recall barriers. To cope with this, measures were taken to set up rapport with individuals, ensure confidentiality, and inspire open and sincere responses. The findings of this research are specific to the context and participants involved. The transferability of the results to different settings or populations may be restricted. However, the research presents wealthy qualitative insights that can inform similar studies and contribute to a broader understanding of the subject.

Researchers' biases can potentially influence the study outcomes. It is important to acknowledge and address these biases to maintain the integrity of the research. The following biases and corresponding mitigation strategies were identified. A researcher's preconceived notions, ideals, or personal studies related to religion and crime may inadvertently influence the information series, evaluation, and interpretation. To mitigate this bias, I engaged in reflexivity by critically reflecting on my personal biases and assumptions in the studies. Peer debriefing and member-checking strategies were employed to ensure the validity and credibility of the findings. There is an opportunity of confirmation bias, wherein a researcher might identify facts that align with their initial hypotheses or expectations. To address this bias, I maintained an open approach through all data collection, analysis, and interpretation. I sought multiple views and contradictory evidence to make sure a comprehensive review of the phenomenon was reached.

To address the aforementioned limitations, several measures were implemented. First, diverse sampling was employed to ensure that a numerous sample of experts working in arenas related to religion and crime volunteered. This enabled me to capture a number of perspectives and reports, improving the richness and validity of the findings. Triangulation was also employed, whereby multiple records sources and methods, consisting of interviews and document evaluation, were used to triangulate the findings. This technique aided in strengthening the reliability and dependability of information and decreased the reliance on a single supply of records. I observed qualitative study pointers, along with rigorous facts, evaluation techniques, peer debriefing, and member checking. These practices enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the research.

Significance

This study makes several potential contributions to knowledge in the discipline. First, the findings may enhance apprehension of the role of religion in crime. By exploring the reviews and perspectives of specialists working in arenas related to religion and crime, this research gives valuable insights into the function of religion in addressing crime problems. The findings highlight the ways in which religious programs and interventions can contribute to crime prevention, rehabilitation, and community development. The findings make contributions to present literature by expanding expertise on the complex dynamics between religion and crime. The research addresses a gap within the current research literature by focusing on the precise context of experts working at the intersection of religion and crime. The study adds depth and nuance to the existing body of expertise with the aid of inspecting the particular demanding situations,

possibilities, and techniques employed through experts in this area. The findings

contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the subject and might function as a

foundation for further research. The insights gained from this research can inform the

development of religious applications aimed at addressing crime. Professionals and

policymakers within the field can use the findings to design interventions sensitive to

religion and religious wishes of people involved in crime and the justice system. This can

lead to focused and impactful programs that could contribute to crime reduction and

rehabilitation. The research highlights the importance of collaboration among spiritual

institutions, specialists, and regulation enforcement corporations in addressing crime-

related challenges. The findings can tell the development of collaborative measures and

partnerships that promote effective communication, coordination, and aid-sharing among

these stakeholders. Such collaborations can cause extra holistic and comprehensive

methods to crime prevention and network safety.

The potential implications for positive social change consistent with this study

include strengthening community resilience. The study emphasizes the function of

religious programs in promoting community resilience in the face of crime. By

leveraging religious and social sources inside groups, religious programs can make a

contribution to the empowerment and well-being of people suffering from crime. This

can result in positive social change by fostering more secure, cohesive, and resilient

communities. In addition, the research promotes restorative justice practices. The

research highlights the capacity of religious packages to guide restorative justice

practices, which prioritize recuperation, reconciliation, and community recovery. By

incorporating religious principles and values into restorative justice tasks, these applications can contribute to high-quality alterations inside the criminal justice system. This can cause compassionate and rehabilitative processes that prioritize the well-being and reintegration of people involved in crime.

Summary

In Chapter 1, the introduction sets the stage for the research by describing the topic of the complex relationship between religion and crime. I highlighted the research problem, which is the need for an in-depth evaluation of this relationship. I emphasized the significance of the research, noting the possible social implications. The background section offers a quick summary of the literature associated with the scope of the research. I identified an opening in understanding within the discipline, indicating a need for further investigation. The chapter concludes by explaining why there is need for the research, highlighting the importance of addressing the identified gap and contributing to the knowledge of the relationship between religion and crime.

The chapter highlighted the key idea of the research and presents an outline of the methodology for data collection and evaluation procedures. The definitions of key terms were provided for clarity. The assumptions underlying the research were discussed along with the scope and delimitations of the research and potential limitations of the research. The significance of the research was highlighted, and I also emphasized the potential implications for social exchange that could result from a deeper understanding of this relationship. Chapter 2 includes a comprehensive review of the existing literature to provide a deeper understanding of the complex relationship between religion and crime.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Chapter 2 offers a comprehensive evaluation of the current literature associated with the complex relationship between religion and crime. In this chapter, I restate the research problem and purpose, while providing a concise synopsis of the existing literature to establish the relevance of the problem, and I preview the major sections of the chapter. The research problem addressed in this study is the need to understand the complex relationship between religion and crime. For this study, I conducted a thorough examination of the existing literature to gain insights into this relationship and contribute to the knowledge in the field. The literature evaluation offers a synthesis of the existing knowledge and research findings on the subject. I examined various scholarly articles, books, and relevant resources to establish the relevance of the problem. I highlight key theories, concepts, and empirical studies that shed light on the relationship between religion and crime.

The chapter is organized into several major sections to present a structured and comprehensive review of the literature. These sections include the theoretical foundations, religious influences on criminal behavior, religion and rehabilitation, community engagement and crime prevention, methodological approaches, and gaps within the literature. By clearly reviewing the literature in these sections, I set up the theoretical foundations for the research, synthesize applicable research findings, and identify gaps that are addressed in subsequent chapters.

Literature Search Strategy

In conducting the literature review, a comprehensive search strategy was employed to ensure a systematic and thorough exploration of the relevant scholarly literature. Among the library databases and search engines accessed to retrieve relevant articles, books, and other scholarly sources were Google Scholar, SocINDEX, PsycINFO, JSTOR, and Academic Search Complete. Some key search terms and combinations of search terms were also used to retrieve articles and publications related to the topic: *religion and crime, religion and criminal behavior, religion and rehabilitation, religious programs for offenders, community engagement and crime prevention, religious influence on crime,* and *religious institutions and crime*. These search phrases were used individually and in various combinations to enhance a comprehensive search. The search phrases were more complex uring the iterative search technique to retrieve the most relevant and current scholarship.

The iterative search manner involved accomplishing preliminary searches with the use of broader terms and then studying the retrieved articles to discover additional applicable keywords and ideas. These recognized keywords were used to refine subsequent searches and find precise literature. In cases where there was limited current research, dissertations, or conference proceedings available, additional techniques were employed. This involved broadening the search phrases, expanding the quest to include associated disciplines, and considering older but seminal works that supplied foundational expertise in the discipline. Furthermore, I made efforts to find applicable qualitative research, case studies, and different gray literature that could provide insights.

Throughout the literature search, I took care to critically examine the relevance and validity of the retrieved sources. The inclusion and exclusion standards were applied to ensure that only pertinent literature was included.

Theoretical Foundation

Social Control Theory

History and Major Propositions

The theoretical basis for this research is based on SCT. SCT, initially advanced by Travis Hirschi in 1969, posits that people are willing to interact in deviant or criminal behavior, but their attachment to society and the strength of social bonds deter them from committing such acts (Costello & Laub, 2020c). The important theoretical proposition of SCT is that individuals with strong social bonds and attachments are less likely to engage in criminal activities (Wu et al., 2020). These social bonds encompass attachment to family, colleaguess, peers, and community, as well as involvement in traditional activities. The idea assumes that people are rational and weigh the potential results of their movements, and strong social bonds act as a deterrent to delinquency.

Existing SCT Literature

In previous studies and literature SCT has been applied to understand crime and delinquency. Researchers have explored the function of family bonds, college engagement, and peer impact in stopping criminal conduct among people. Additionally, researchers have examined how involvement in prosocial activities and network businesses can create social bonds and decrease the chance of criminal acts. According to Brunson and Wade (2019), crime bonds are based on a person's dedication to endeavors

they have invested time and energy into as well as their attachment to other people in

society. An individual's involvement in acts that strengthen bonds with others while

limiting their time to engage in crime, as well as their belief in broader society ideals, are

additional linkages. The four ties of SCT work together to prevent a person from

engaging in abnormal behavior. According to the social capital theory, criminal behavior

arises when people are not properly restrained from acting in their own best interests.

Defiant behavior has no problematic motivation, necessitating an explanation for

temperance. *Social capital* was defined by Brunson and Wade (2019) as a social

connection between society and an individual.

The desire of SCT for this research is primarily based on its relevance in

knowledge on how religious programs can have an effect on social bonds and attachment

to the network, thereby contributing to crime prevention. By inspecting the effect of

religious programs on people's social bonds and attachment, I sought to offer insights

into how those programs can serve as protection against criminal conduct. In the current

research, SCT was used to analyze the connection between religious programs and crime

prevention in neighborhoods. The research questions were designed to discover how

religious programs enhance social bonds, enhance community engagement, and make

contributions to lowering criminal activities.

By employing SCT, I pursued to strengthen information by offering a theoretical

framework to recognize the position of religious programs in promoting positive social

change. The research questions contribute to the existing literature on crime prevention

and community engagement with the aid of analyzing the mechanisms via religious

applications can deter individuals from engaging in criminal conduct and foster a sense of attachment and commitment to the community.

Criticism of SCT

While many studies support the tenets of SCT, some authors have criticized the theory's racial and gender applicability. For example, Fufa (2021) questioned whether SCT self-control notions could be used to predict severe criminal behavior. Hence, SCT critics contend the theory is only applicable when explaining minor offenses but does not account adequately for severe crimes (Fufa, 2021). Others highlighted that SCT overlooks the influence of environmental and biological factors on crime deterrence. While the importance of values and ethics is widely accepted, humans are born with psychological or biological issues that predispose some individuals to commit violent acts. The most significant critiques of SCT often noted that, in the initial study, Hirschi analyzed only data from the White male participants in the Richmond Youth Project (RYP), ignoring data from Black male participants and White female participants in the sample (Rakhimdjanov, 2021). For instance, some researchers maintain that conventional criminology theories such as SCT have only been tested on male participants. Rakhimdjanov (2021) noted that the omission of female participants in Hirschi's causes analysis demonstrated that social control was "incapable of deciphering the gendered nature of the crime" (p. 3).

Regarding racial discrimination, some researchers have argued that Hirschi's failure to consider perceived racial discrimination as a significant cause of delinquency may have contributed to a disregard of race and racial discrimination within the

criminology field (Rocque et al., 2021). While the failure by Hirschi to analyze the data

for female participants and Black participants in the RYP resulted in a weaker theoretical

test than what could have been, there is limited empirical evidence supporting the

argument that SCT may not explain crime for Black individuals and female individuals.

Several studies found more extensive effects of SCT variables on crime for both

male and female individuals. For instance, Sanyal (2021) and Rocque et al. (2019) found

that attachment has a more substantial effect on delinquency for men but the variance

explained for SCT was significantly higher for women. Sanyal (2021) established that

perceived racial discrimination predicted delinquency among Blacks in the RYP sample.

Furthermore, Sanyal (2021) found significant correlations between SCT measures and

delinquency for Blacks but failed to present comparisons for Whites. While Hirschi's

works failed to analyze the data for Black and female participants in the RYP sample,

there is no direct evidence that SCT did not predict juvenile delinquency among female

individuals, Blacks, or members of other racial/ethnic groups (Costello & Laub, 2020).

Religious Social Capital

The existing social control research highlights the influence of SCT notions on

explaining violent or aggressive behavior. The theory asserts the role of parents, schools,

communities, and religions in bonding young people (Satinsky et al., 2020). The bond is

vital to deterring a juvenile's propensity for criminal behavior. Research on this front

established a strong correlation between commitment and attachment on reduced

delinquency. Churches function as a communication network, which fosters civic

volunteerism. For example, religious groups provide members opportunities to serve

beyond and within the congregation. Religious groups also provide personal contacts, phone numbers, committees, transportation, meeting space, or whatever is needed to help convert good intentions into tangible action (Satinsky et al., 2020).

Religious and social capital promoted communitarian language to appeal to a sense of common good in society rather than using individualistic language to explain behavior. For example, Saba & Khalid (2021) established that neighbors who often attended church were influential when predicting whether youths in a community had jobs, engaged in crime, or used drugs. Evidence showed that religious and social capital spilled beyond the congregational church members into the whole community. Research suggested that most Americans believed that synagogues and churches were better placed than other institutions to mitigate local community problems. For example, in one Gallup study, 57 percent of the participants considered churches more able to handle such communal challenges than other social institutions. In contrast, a third of the participants thought the government, local businesses, or political parties would offer just and compassionate solutions to the challenges. Religion's contribution to social capital was not restricted to the more communitarian vision; it further provided members with civic skills. The study by Tyler et al. (2020) suggested that religion considerably increased democracy in the United States by allowing political participation from different ideologies. However, recent studies and events have refuted this claim. The more attitude of racism a person holds, the higher the chances for them to identify as a White Christian (Jones, 2020). For instance, a 2019 nationwide survey established that 86% of White evangelical Protestants and 76% of White Catholics, and White mainline Protestants

believed that the confederate flag symbolized Southern pride more than racism. Additionally, nearly 66.7% of White Christians considered the police killings of Afro-Americans as isolated incidents and not a pattern of mistreatment. More than 6 in every 10 White Christians disagreed that the many generations of discrimination and slavery created harsh conditions for Black people to work out of poverty (Jones, 2020).

This was a surprising finding given that previously, churches were found more superior compared with their two main rivals, non-political community organizations, and the workplace setting, in transferring civic skills to the most alienated members of the community. This was because non-political community organizations and the workplace rewarded only those with human capital. Few other organizations considered themselves explicit communities, and few persistently emphasized the norms of a mutual bond of neighbor care and loved as churches did. Based on this religious, social capital, a church's expected philosophy was to exhibit some form of broader outreach to the community's alienated members.

Indeed, Upshaw (2021) highlighted that the American public generally identified caring for people in need as a religious value. Based on this reasoning, religious and social capital have appeared more open to the disenfranchised in the community than other models of social capital, such as economic or political. For example, lobbies and interest groups were rarely representative of the public at large. Valera & Boyas (2019) highlighted that religious lobbies were significant because they decidedly represented non-elite constituencies and aimed to articulate visions of the public good broadly. Meaning democracy was more representative due to the existence of religious lobbies.

According to Yin (2020) social capital generated by churches gave them more advantages to impact society for three reasons.

Foremost, society presumptively considered churches with a measure of approval, and the social identities represented by the congregational members were, for that reason, accepted by communities. Second, American society acknowledged religious institutions as having a solid moral imperative (Yin, 2020) While most people had a cynical attitude towards the morals of corporations, politicians, and other secular public institutions, religious institutions retained a weight of cultural expectancy that their members' behavior would involve some altruism, concern for the community, and narrow self-interest. Consequently, religious and social influence in American society was profound, especially for youth. Similar to adults, over 50% of all teens had some denominational affiliation and consistently rated their religiosity as important to them (Yin, 2020). From the SCT perspective, a religious commitment reinforces law-abiding behavior and respect for authority. The conceptualization of the social capital of religion offered three significant advantages. Foremost, it recognized the religious and social character rather than misconceiving religiosity simply as an individual. Second, it recognized the multifaceted nature of spiritual commitment (networks, norms, and trust). Finally, based on existing literature on social capital and community engagement, this religious approach enabled the study to examine the distinctive influence of secular and religious social capital.

In their study, Vitopoulos et al. (2019) found that attending religious services enhanced academic progression among youth in poor neighborhoods. Attending religious

services regularly in disadvantaged neighborhoods was found to spawn cohesive social networks, which reinforced achievement-minded orientations and pro-educational values. Similar patterns may have existed between religiosity and defiant behavior. Congregational groups provided social bonds (social capital) with others, such as clergy members, who instilled prosaically behavior while strengthening parental controls and values, thereby communally guiding the youth toward more positive developmental outcomes. While several weaknesses were highlighted, the SCT could be used to understand whether religiosity could deter the commitment to crimes. After reviewing and analyzing the SCT research concluded that the theory was instrumental in guiding the present study to understand and explain the role of religion in criminal behavior. The SCT is related to the study because parents, clergywomen and clergymen, relatives, friends, law enforcement, and schools instilled ethics, morals, and values that developed throughout a young age. The present study showed that the absence of ethics, morals, and values turned law- abiding juveniles into offenders. Similarly, the pressure, fear, and abhorrent reprisals of religious beliefs should have kept most juveniles from participating in deviant behavior or breaking the established laws.

Related Literature

This section included previous studies related to the current research topic's constructs of beliefs, attachment, involvement, and commitment.

Beliefs and Crime

Several studies have examined the nexus between crime and religious beliefs. For example, Buck et al (2022) systematically reviewed studies on religiosity and crime

published from 2004 to 2014. They analyzed the dimensions used to measure religion and crime, the theorization of the relationship, theories, and methods. Approximately16% of the reviewed studies did not include a noticeable theory. Overall, very few studies in this period focused on the relationship between religion and crime. Hence, religion was understudied within criminology research compared to factors like peer crime relationships, gangs and crime, re-entry issues, and economics. In addition, Buck et al. (2022) further noted that the relationship between religion and crime could be reciprocal and required. Just one published study was found to have examined the possibility of a bidirectional relationship, and one other study addressed the possibility of criminal attitudes or behaviors shaping religion. All the other studies examined religion's impact on crime and ignored the likelihood of deviant behaviors influencing religiosity. The authors concluded that research on religiosity and crime could be improved in terms of solid theoretical sophistication and better data. Most studies at the macro level focused only on the participant's religious affiliation in their models, and micro-level studies measured religious involvement. Corcoran et al. (2017) examined the relationship between crime and religious beliefs. The empirical study used a Durkheimian model, which hypothesized that religion had a countervailing effect on aggressive crime. A religious commitment was significantly and positively associated with intentional assault.

Furthermore, the belief in an existing God was correlated negatively and significantly with assault, while the effect was more robust compared to several other structural variables. The authors concluded that the study partially supported the Durkheimian model. In addition, they suggested that cultural beliefs such as religion were

essential for explaining specific types of aggressive crime. Cullen et al. (2020) conceptualized the nexus between religiosity and crime by accounting for the distinct nature of spiritual non-belief. The analyzed data were collected from a college survey. The study findings established that those uncertain believers, individuals who believed in divine power but had some degree of doubt, showed significantly increased levels of defiance and drug use compared to staunch religious believers. Non-believers had criminal offending and drug use rates, similar to the staunch religious believers. The crime rates among non-believers were statistically similar to the uncertain believers. The findings suggest that non-believers' rates of criminal involvement were not significantly higher than the uncertain or staunch religious believers. On the predict significantly ion of drug use, uncertain believers consumed more than staunch and non-believers. The use of self-reported data was a limitation of this study, and the accuracy of the predictive models was another critical concern.

Sumter et al. (2018) systematic literature review examined the correlation between religiosity and crime. The authors found two broad ways through which religious involvement deterred criminal activity. Foremost, religiosity appeared to operate at a micro level, where studies highlighted how beliefs were linked with having self-control. Second, most studies have examined the social control characteristics of religion. This included the level of religious participation, including how the resulting social support reduced crime. Moreover, the authors noted that despite the many studies and different interests of studies focusing on the nexus between and crime, the influential religious aspects that strongly influenced crime deterrence were unknown. Furthermore,

the literature does not identify how religious factors correlate with crime deterrence. Moreover, Sumter et al. (2018) noted the controversy within religion and crime literature. For example, the religious mechanisms responsible for reducing criminal behavior were not accentuated, nor were there rejections of the falsity of the relationship between crime and religion relative to self-control or social control mediating effect. The authors concluded that the methodological limitations, mainly self-reported data, infringed the capacity of criminology and sociology-related research to ascertain accurately the validity of the nexus between religion and crime. Many studies frequently generated inconclusive or mixed findings explaining the association between religion and crime.

Commitment and Crime

Several studies examined the relationship between commitment and crime (Bierdz & Alaina, 2020; Clark et al., 2020; Ronel &Yair, 2018; Upshaw, 2021; Wright, 2016). In his study, Wright (2016) examined psychosocial religious aspects that explained why terrorism was predominantly religious. Terrorism has been defined as the use of violence to intimidate and control politics and policy. There have been many Islamic movements over the last few years that were considered terrorists, including global groups such as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), Boko Haram, and Al-Shabaab. However, there was a rise of domestic hate groups that explained themselves in Biblical and evangelical Christian language, such as QAnon conspiracy theorists, the World Church of the Creator (WCOTC), the National Alliance, and the Aryan Nations. Right-wing extremism has overtaken left-wing terrorism as the most prominent domestic terrorism threat in the United States, according to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (Westmark & McMahon,

2022). For instance, QAnon was no longer an inconsequential conspiracy theory limited to the dark web. This was confirmed by January, 2021, when a pro-Trump rally turned into a violent mob and attacked the U.S. Capitol. The events resulted in five deaths, including one capitol police officer (Munn, 2021), indicating how deeply entrenched conspiracy beliefs could become violent and extremist. The aftermath investigations of the insurrection revealed that most of the involved individuals were QAnon followers, made up of police officers, internet personalities, and the former military (Manchanda, 2021). Before January 2021, QAnon believers were linked to numerous crimes, such as an effort to blow up an Illinois statue and save children from pedophiles through kidnapping.

The QAnon conspiracy theorists heavily involved among the insurrectionists in the U.S. capitol used Biblical and evangelical language. Many commentators, especially among people of color, claim that the label of terrorism tends to apply only to non-White protestors or left-wing groups who may allegedly threaten violence (Corbin, 2017). The hypothesis by Wright (2016) was a nexus of fundamentalism, individual differences of group hostility, and higher fundamentalism among religious groups compared to members of other common non-religious groups.

Wright (2016) suggested that Muslims had increased religious appeal to involve in terrorism, especially when such appeals are slightly counterintuitive. Similarly, the use of violence often is justified in Christian religious terms. For example, QAnon conspiracy theorists claim that they are fighting a cabal of Satan- worshipping child traffickers, molesters, and cannibals among top Democrats and cultural figures. Meaning the use of

violence against them is justified. In addition, QAnon apparel was predominant among the insurrectionists at the Capitol on January 2020.

Furthermore, religious involvement was often linked with coalitional commitment, which made members of one group more hostile to outsiders (Wright, 2016). Religious commitment is related to aspiring to defend one's religiosity by enhancing threat perceptions. This was important in QAnon conspiracy movements or jihadists because of the likelihood of higher-than-average commitment compared to other common religious groups. Furthermore, the existing political environment, which often challenged the faith of Democrats, increased conflict. In their study, Wright (2016) noted that religious beliefs' homogenization was an intergroup variance, which could increase the processes of social psychological conflict. Hence, the review concluded that psychosocial religious aspects could explain the increase in religious terrorism inspired by the present political conflict of Jihadism, QAnon conspiracy, and liberalism.

Whereas healthy skepticism of institutions, elites, and the government was necessary for democracy to prevail, beliefs in some conspiracies could increase the motivation for violence (Sternisko et al., 2020). Beliefs in conspiracy theories were associated with political cynicism and alienation (Vitriol & Marsh, 2018) and disinterest in engaging in everyday activities (Kim, 2019). Also, conspiracy theories could lead to extremist behavior, such as attacking leaders or people in power. There was a link between conspiracy theories such as QAnon to grandiose beliefs, right-wing authoritarianism and extremism across the political arena.

According to Jolley et al. (2019), people with a more substantial commitment to conspiracy theories were more prone to everyday crimes. Furthermore, they had highly aggressive behavioral intentions toward our groups. For example, beliefs in Jewish conspiracy theories were associated with discrimination and prejudice against Jewish people and other outgroups (Jolley et al., 2019). In their study, Jolley et al. (2019) found that conspiracy theory beliefs were linked with adverse outcomes, including crime, political disengagement, environmental inaction, and prejudice. For example, one cross-sectional study and one experimental study were used to test the hypothesis that conspiracy theory beliefs would increase motivation to be involved in everyday crime.

The cross-sectional study established that conspiracy theory beliefs predicted involvement in everyday crime when controlling for other known covariates of everyday crime, such as honesty and humility. The experimental study demonstrated that exposure to conspiracy theories significantly increased future motivations to be involved in everyday crime compared to a control group. The belief that other individuals had conspired in some contexts led to adverse action, such as the extremism witnessed in the US capital. Ministry personnel could help at-risk youth unbelieve conspiracy theories and, as such, reduce the possibility of future involvement in a crime.

Faddoul et al. (2020) established that conspiracy theories could misinform users in dangerous ways. The authors analyzed video content on YouTube and established that the FBI considered some content actively promoted as likely to encourage domestic extremists to engage in criminal and violent activity. The report by the FBI explicitly cited Pizzagate and QAnon conspiracies, depicting a New World Order and considering

the United Nations as an institution for just a few people to rule the globe. Moreover, conspiracy- driven online cults had been associated with matricide.36. Conspiracy theories that were innocuous had also caused unrest, for example, when more than 1.5 million individuals gathered on a Facebook group and pledged to run onto a military facility Area to see aliens. This forced the United States Air Force to threaten the group with the use of force (Faddoul, Chaslot, & Farid, 2020).

Yader and Bovard-Johns (2016) examined the relationship between youth spirituality and crime desistance. The objective was to use the Ascetical and Social Bonding Theory to examine the nexus between religion and criminal profiles. Furthermore, the study sought to establish the relationship between self-reported religious commitment and therapeutic alliance. The study used cross-sectional data from 332 youths incarcerated for sexually related offenses. Moreover, Upshaw (2021) findings established that the reported religious commitment before an arrest was associated inversely with a non-sexual offense but did not correlate with the severity. Additionally, the study established significant increases in pre- and post-arrest commitment to religiosity. Finally, post-arrest religiosity was predicted by the therapeutic alliance. The study highlighted the nexus between religious commitment and general criminal offending. The correlation between therapeutic alliance and religious commitment was positive. The self-reported data on religious commitment raised some validity concerns for this study.

Religion promotes desirable societal behavior while deterring undesirable behavior. The focus was on how religion affected crime in Virginia's Hampton Roads

area. The authors used the social bond theory as a theoretical framework, and the findings suggested that commitment to religiosity was positively related to crime (Salvatore & Rubin, 2018). However, multivariate analysis found no relationship between crime and religion. Furthermore, the bivariate analysis suggested that only commitment was related significantly to crime reduction. The authors concluded that church attendance was not related positively to decreased crime. Nonetheless, a weakness of this study was the primary reliance on self- reported data, while the measuring of church attendance as a predictor of religious commitment was another key limitation.

Clark et al. (2020) examined whether religion reduced aggressive behavior within community groups. Furthermore, the authors tested whether intelligence had a moderating effect on this relationship. The assumption was that religion was superior to reducing aggressive behavior among communities with moderately lower average IQs than communities with moderately higher IQs. This hypothesis was supported by a longitudinal analysis that examined approximately 176 countries and made over 1,046 observations between 1945 and 2010. The data analysis established that declining commitment to religiosity was correlated with increased rates of homicide in countries with moderately lower average IQs. A multiverse analysis of 171 models that included current data from 97 countries confirmed that reduced religiosity was associated more strongly with increased rates of homicide. However, this hypothesis was confirmed for groups with moderately lower average IQs than control groups with moderately higher IQs. The authors concluded that secularization could affect communities of different

mean IQs differentially. The major limitation of this study was the use of longitudinal

analysis, which required complex control of variables.

Attachment and Crime

Miller and Vuolo (2018) tested the temporal order of religious attachment and

delinquency in teenagers. The study's anti-ascetic hypothesis was anchored on the

sociology of religion and SCT notion from criminology. The study assumed that religion

had a positive effect on preventing minor crimes such as drug use. The underlying notion

was that minor crimes violate values that conflict with religious values but are not

condemned clearly by secular ideas. This reasoning was relatable to *mala prohibita* and

"mala in se" behavior. "Mala in se" refers to behaviors widely acknowledged as wrongs,

such as murder, assault, and theft. Contrary, "mala prohibita" is behavior considered

wrong due to the existence of regulations prohibiting that specific behavior, such as

substance use. The anti-ascetic hypothesis suggests that religiosity is more effective in

deterring crime soften considered victimless and "characterized by personal indulgence."

The study obtained cross-lagged panel data from three waves of the National

Longitudinal Surveys to test the correlation between "mala in se" forms of crime and

"mala prohibita" forms of crime. The religious social bond elements were included from

early teens to late teenage. The research findings supported the anti-ascetic hypothesis

that religion significantly affected "mala prohibita" forms of crime but not "mala in se"

forms of crime. However, the study did not test whether the effects of the nexus between

religion and delinquency were bidirectional.

Involvement and Crime

The relationship between involvement in religious activities and criminology has been studied by several authors. For instance, Batool et al. (2021) examined the association between attending religious service and adolescent deviant behavior. The focus was on establishing the psychosocial and behavioral differences among teenagers who regularly attended religious services. The authors analyzed nationally representative data of teenagers attending religious services frequently. Multinomial regression and latent class analysis were used to analyze the correlation between deviant behavior and protective factors linked to self-control. The findings suggested that the four-psychosocial and behavioral class solution included a normative class (no involvement in defiance) and three defiant classes. The defiant classes included substance users, fighters, and serious offenders. When defiant members were compared with normative class members, defiant members were less likely to significantly benefit from parental, individual, and school protective factors correlated to self-control. The authors concluded that attending religious services regularly was relevant to reducing defiant behavior. It should be highlighted that the study used self-reported data adjusted to give a national average.

Teenagers who commit crimes in Georgia, USA, run a number of risk factors in addition to the direct effects of their behavior. These dangers include a wide spectrum of social, psychological, and physical aspects, underscoring the urgent need for all-encompassing support and intervention systems. First off, kids run the possibility of facing legal consequences the moment they commit a crime. They could be placed under

arrest, held in custody, or even imprisoned, depending on the type and seriousness of the offence. These repercussions may have a lasting effect on their future academic and job prospects. A criminal record might make it difficult to enroll in good educational and employment opportunities, which can lead to a cycle of crime and inferior prospects. (Peck & Theodore, 2008). In addition, teenagers involved in criminal activity are associated with increased mortality through suicide and accidents (Stenbacka et al., 2019).

Teenagers who engage in illegal activity are frequently exposed to risk and bodily damage. By engaging in illicit operations, they run the risk of being attacked by rival gangs, drug traffickers, or police enforcement personnel. Instances involving weapons or drug-related confrontations, which are frequent among young people engaging in criminal activity, carry a very high risk of injury or death. Teen offenders also have a high risk of drug usage (Robertson et al., 2004). Many people use criminal activity as a way to fund their drug or alcohol addiction. The hazards that these teenagers confront are further increased by the fact that substance addiction may result in a variety of health issues, both mental and physical. Additionally, addiction can push people to conduct increasingly serious crimes in order to support their habits, setting off a catastrophic domino effect.

Additionally, connections between families and young people who commit illegal activities are frequently disrupted (Robert, 2018). Delinquency can be significantly influenced by family dynamics, with problems including abuse, neglect, or a lack of strong role models raising the chance of criminal behavior. The danger of homelessness

and future criminal activity might rise as these connections deteriorate. Systemic problems like poverty and a lack of access to high-quality education might increase the risk factors for young offenders in Georgia, as they can in many other areas. Due to limited prospects for progress caused by socioeconomic inequities, some young people turn to crime as a method of surviving or achieving apparent success. Insufficient educational institutions could be unable to give students the encouragement and direction they need to avoid criminal behavior.

Although these hazards are significant, it is important to understand that youth engaging in criminal activity are not beyond redemption. Such risks can be reduced with the use of prevention initiatives that give participants access to counselling, rehabilitation, and educational assistance. Teens can be specifically diverted away from the criminal justice system through diversion programs that provide alternatives to jail, which lowers the risk of reoffending. Furthermore, mentoring programs, community-based groups, and positive role models may be extremely effective in steering at-risk kids toward better lifestyle choices (Rolf & Johnson, 2002). These programs can assist in ending the cycle of crime by targeting the root causes of criminal behavior, such as substance addiction and family problems.

Jang (2018) studied the reciprocal relationships between religiosity and crime and drug use for young offenders. The analysis used structural equation modeling applied on an 11-wave panel data from two states focusing on juveniles adjudicated of severe offenses. To measure the religiosity of the offenders, the authors used both an objective measure (involvement in religious events) and a subjective measure (religious

experiences, salience, and efficacy). The controls held constant included the juvenile offender's time of exposure (the percentage of time spent on the street), history of drug use and crime, and socio-demographic controls. The study findings established a relationship between religion and crime to be unidirectional or bidirectional (non-drug offending). Nonetheless, the correlation between religious involvement and drug use (marijuana, binge drinking, and hard drugs) was, over time, unidirectional. For unidirectional relationships, religious involvement decreased drug use and crime. The use of self-reported data is a critical weakness in this study. Stansfield et al. (2019) examined whether the offense category moderated the role played by religious-informed programs in successfully helping incarcerated offenders desist from criminal activities. The study extended the research that found a significant correlation between previous sexual adjudication and involvement in religious activities in prison. The authors assessed the nexus between reconviction and prison time spent in spiritual, religious, and humanist programs. The analysis examined the effects separately for offenders convicted of sexual crimes and any other crimes. The results established that higher involvement in spiritual, religious, and humanist programs correlated with a reduced reconviction rate. Nonetheless, the effect was significantly high for an offender with past sexual adjudication. Supplementary analyses indicated that using religion extrinsically was beneficial and that offenders with past sexual adjudication could turn to religion for social support and eventually overcome loneliness and rejection. Conversely, extrinsic religiosity for other offenses was correlated with the augmented risk of reoffending and reconviction.

Religious Social Control

The research examined the relationship between religion and crime from a sociological perspective. For example, using face-to-face interviews, Kotera et al. (2020) used a qualitative design to collect data from 30 black clergy members of Boston's Ten Point Coalition. The objective was to identify the mechanisms and motivations through which church ministers involved themselves in initiatives to prevent street violence. The authors further sought to identify the different methods used by the clergy to create strategic partnerships and handle violence reduction efforts. This included how the church ministers addressed the complex obstacles and issues in completing this work. Kotera et al. (2020) study suggested that black churches could serve as a significant source of collective efficacy. Hence, the church could help mobilize other denominations, community groups, police departments, attorneys, and community neighbors in a collaborative initiative to reduce urban juvenile violence. The qualitative findings on activist black church ministers highlighted their role in creating and initiating community crime prevention and control efforts. To help reduce juvenile violence in poor Boston neighborhoods, the interviewed clergy reiterated the significance of being actively involved in the community. Specifically, for the church ministers, the most effective way of curbing juvenile violence involved being constantly on the streets, where they would bond with community neighbors. Kotera et al. (2020) also noted that the clergy often interacted with the unchurched residents by operating beyond the church walls. Furthermore, it helped improve the clergy's understanding of the community members' viewpoints concerning crime and related critical issues. Hence, being on the street

enabled the clergy to address numerous youth issues, developing initiatives and programs to reclaim at-risk juveniles. These programs and initiatives would keep the high-risk juveniles off the street and enable the clergy to bond with their families using a wide-range network of neighborhood resources. Furthermore, when discussing their reasons for engaging in community programs, the church ministers attributed their efforts to be led by their spiritual callings. The clergy highlighted how their initiatives were facilitated by collaborations, which they had developed with different local churches, community groups, and the police. The participants emphasized that they needed collaboration to reduce the duplication of initiatives, pool resources, and effectively address an extensive range of urgent community challenges.

Larsen et al. (2022) examined the involvement of black clergy activists in initiatives to reduce local juvenile violence and efforts to expand the relationship between minority communities and police in Boston, Massachusetts. The authors used a qualitative case study design using extensive interviews involving the clergy, community organizers, and police. It was assumed such a design would help understand how the partnerships improved efforts of reducing community crime, enhanced police legitimacy, and circumvent emerging obstacles in handling these partnerships. The study findings highlighted how efforts by a specific group of church ministers supported the Boston police department. The different interviewed groups agreed that the police gained improved legitimacy on the black community by having solid working relationships with the clergy and community organizers. The police department acknowledged that having a working relationship with the clergy enabled an enhanced dialog with the community

members. It further spawned opportunities for the minority community to convey

ongoing and longstanding issues on the nature of law enforcement in their community.

More importantly, the police indicated that involving local church ministers in their

interventions to control crime offered an excellent way to bond with at-risk youth and

their families and strengthened anti-violence dialogues with gangs (Larsen et al., 2022).

The police further agreed that they regularly called upon local church ministers to

represent the communities' moral voice and assist many critical aspects of informal

societal control. The police indicated that the clergy effectively clarified questionable

policing actions to a frequently skeptical and anxious black community. This provided

the police with a plan to manage and get through volatile situations. The study further

established that the police routinely sought feedback from the church leadership before

initiating potentially contentious crime-control policies within the community. Based on

these findings, the authors concluded that the partnerships between the police and local

church ministers enhance social control of juvenile delinquency. They improve the

legitimacy of the police in minority communities.

Liu et al. (2020) assessed the first phase implementation outcome of a religious-

based program that sought to provide lessons and credible evidence concerning the

rehabilitation of at-risk youth. The program included faith-based organizations from 15

cities participating in a national religious initiative for at-risk youth. The program

involved forming partnerships between faith-based organizations and the justice

community. High- risk youths were recruited and provided numerous services such as

mentorship, education, training, and employment. Data from the case study and cross-site

suggested that the faith- based strategy had successfully secured the enthusiastic collaboration of the justice communities' representatives and attracted juvenile offenders or at-risk youth. The results from the study suggested that the key benefit of collaboration with the justice system was the ability for juvenile offenders to be referred to a church-based program as an alternative to incarceration. Based on the findings, the study concluded that religious organizations could form successful collaborations with the justice system and attract juvenile offenders and at-risk youth. These religious organizations needed support in initiating intentional programs of adequate duration and intensity to influence the participant's behavior positively. Khan (2020) considered the theoretical backdrop of resilient youth and social disorganization perspectives. The authors hypothesized that individual religiosity would shield high-risk juveniles, such as youth in inner-city neighborhoods, from using drugs or being involved in other criminal activities. The study used interview survey data from 2,358 juvenile black males drawn from disadvantaged Boston, Philadelphia, and Chicago areas. The findings from numerous multilevel analyses established that attending church services was significantly related inversely to drug use, illegal activities, and selling drugs among youths from disadvantaged communities.

Furthermore, religious salience (defined as the personal value of religion) was not linked significantly to deterring juvenile delinquency Khan (2020). The study found church attendance to significantly influences numerous measures of deviant behavior among youth from disadvantaged neighborhoods. The study was significant in establishing a bivariate correlation between attending church and deviant behavior from a

criminologist's perspective. Khan (2020) found the effect of attending church on deviant behavior to be significant. The effect remained significantly consistent for the different measures of deviant behavior examined. Based on these results, the authors concluded that individual religiosity was possibly an essential protective factor for juveniles from disadvantaged communities. Makhurane, (2020) analyzed the second phase of the national church study carried out in 15 cities in the US. The aim was to examine the efficiency of religious-based organizations in reintegrating juvenile offenders or high-risk youths. The analysis examined collaboration within religious organizations and partnerships between the juvenile justice system and faith-based organizations. The study established that small religious organizations very effectively worked together. Approximately Sixteen Christian denominations had collaborated to assist juvenile offenders and at-risk initiatives. Juvenile justice institutions and religious organizations worked quickly through partnerships. In addition, juvenile justice institutions appeared willing and eager to partner with the religious community. Makhurane (2020) noted that some religious programs and initiatives had successfully reduced juvenile offenders. The study further established that many religious organizations in poor urban communities remained the most robust and rooted institutions. The study results suggested that collaboration between justice and religious institutions was essential to the effort's success. The author highlighted that religious organizations operating in poor urban communities were typically small and had limited resources. They needed to collaborate to fulfill their mandate of assisting juvenile offenders and at-risk youth. Finally, strong collaboration between religious organizations and the juvenile justice system was

critically important. Without collaboration, juvenile offenders would not receive the much-needed help or be served effectively or promptly.

Marczak (2020) examined the relationship between delinquency and religiosity. The study included a sample of Korean American adolescents who attended Catholic Sunday school. The findings from the homogeneous moral community found one measure of religiosity to have an initial inverse correlation with three but different delinquency measures. The analysis showed that acculturation increased deviant behavior and interacted with religion to affect delinquency. The findings demonstrated that religiosity was correlated at the bivariate level within the Korean American moral community with reducing involvement in delinquency. The analysis by Marczak, Ł. (2020) found a significant correlation between three religious measures and acculturation. The three interactions were between acculturation and serious delinquency and between acculturation and substance use. There was no interaction found between acculturation and school delinquency. As Korean- American juveniles become acculturated, the protective effect of religion on delinquent behavior possibly reduces the less severe actions, like alcoholism, skipping school, or using drugs. Marczak, Ł. (2020) noted that acculturation within the North American community reduced the interaction between religion and severe forms of delinquency and substance abuse to some extent. The findings on the ethnic context suggested that for some forms of deviant behavior, the main positive effect of acculturation on deviance reduces as religious beliefs, values, and norms become stronger. Contrary, an inverse interaction effect between religion and delinquency reduces as acculturation increases.

Munir & Malik (2020) tested an empowerment program by the Nehemiah Baptist Church, its collaborative partners, and the community in the Westside of Detroit, Michigan. The objective was to reduce violence, and data was collected using mixed-design research via focus groups, participant observations, interviews, questionnaires, surveys, published reports, and newspapers. Overall, the study supported the involvement of the church, collaborative partners, and local communities in reducing juvenile violence. More importantly, the prevailing religious community support for participatory therapeutic services suggested that religion mattered in reducing violence. The use of sequential designs allowed analysis of whether the preventive measure of community engagement would deter juvenile violence. The participants included the clergy, collaborative community partners, and community members. Munir & Malik (2020) identified indirect and direct causal relationships as positive engagement conduits within the community. The study established that a pastor's presence was well constructed in the community, and adult behaviors were transformed. The youth were exposed to community events within their locality while the community neighbors bonded well with the church and its collaborative partners. Communication between neighbors was kindled, while the club and the church improved their collaboration. The initiative helped remove stereotypes about pastors, and neighborhoods were cleaned up. Participants' feedback was used to weigh towards establishing healthy relationships that reduced juvenile violence. By the time the program was completed, a significant transformation was observed among the study participants. This was evidenced by the participants'

readiness to get involved in additional events throughout the year and add block club membership.

Restorative Justice

Reformers and scholars had recently begun to imagine different and new configurations for how the US could design and structure policing institutions. On May 26th, 2020, racial justice protests began following a series of police-perpetrated murders in the US (Jacobs, 2021). The protests lasted the following summer across urban centers, suburban and rural outposts. Besides, the uprisings led to a radical national reassessment of the policing role as a cornerstone of US policy. These radical demands were born within social movements and increased conversations to de-fund the police, defend the people, institute people's budgets, and give communities control over security provisions (Jacobs, 2021). Moreover, social movements increasingly created and sometimes established new governance configurations that transferred the power of policing to individuals hurt the most by mass incarceration and criminalization. These recent demands by social movements for de-funding the police had raised a set of questions concerning the very purpose of restorative justice reforms. The uprising also fixed much attention on the role of social work. The radical demands to de-fund the police and the widespread public outcry that followed raised many questions regarding the authority and power vested in policing (Jacobs, 2021). There was also a focus on the possibility of alternative solutions to the issues the police were tasked to address. The proposal that social workers offered ameliorative moderating of policing ignited conversations within and outside the social work field. The conversations uncovered social work's vexed

history and ambivalent role in the US political, social, and economic context (Jacobs et al., 2020b).

The initial public reaction towards organized groups within the social work field reflected massively divided positions. First, the National Association of Social Work (NASW) advocated the history of collaboration between the police and social work professionals (Linhorst et al., 2022). Second, the Council on Social Work Education offered similar condolences and sympathies to those directly affected by police brutality while supporting inter-professional collaboration between the police and social work (Jacobs, 2021). These public reactions advocating pro-police positions within social work had spurred a more severe social work response, denouncing police brutality against people of color and voicing support for radical fundamental change in policing. Third, another defiant faction had counteracted that social workers needed to be part of the more considerable effort to divest from law enforcement the police. The argument in some cases was for the current social work departments and related forms to be abolished (such as child welfare) because of their history of racial oppression and social control. These developments in 2020 supported the emerging evidence that suggested that restorative justice positively correlated with reduced rates of criminal involvement, especially juvenile recidivism. For instance, Applegate et al. (2022) examined the effect of attending an intervention program and living unit grouping on the attitudes of moral detachment by incarcerated male juvenile offenders. The assumption was that punitive actions alone would have some form of limitation on successfully reorienting criminal offenders. Hence, restorative justice was identified as the ideal option for addressing

delinquent behavior by focusing on the reintegration of offenders rather than segregation. This was because restorative justice focused on transformative strategies, which held juveniles responsibly.

Restorative justice included the expectation that they would take the necessary initiative to amend the pain inflicted by their deeds on everyone involved. The study's secondary objective was to measure whether attitudes of forgiveness and empathy caused intervening effects on moral detachment. Using four specific questionnaires, the study used archived data gathered from 142 incarcerated male juveniles (Applegate et al., 2022).

Applegate et al. (2022) noted that intentionally assigning incarcerated male juveniles to living units, which created more homogenous populations, might have positively influenced moral detachment attitudes. This program successfully highlighted the influence of restorative justice intervention on crime deterrence. It would have been interesting if a follow-up examination of the incarcerated juveniles after their release had been done to determine whether the influence was lasting. Secondly, the program was carried out as an institutional and community initiative. Thus, extensive research was needed to test the relationships between empathy, forgiveness, restorative justice, religiosity, forgiveness, and moral detachment attitudes. This would have supported the community and institutional efforts to reintegrate juvenile offenders and help them become responsible community members. Moreover, Asal et al. (2019) established that the conferencing program effectively reduced juvenile recidivism by promoting openness and transparency to the stakeholders involved. This involved being very honest and

upfront with the parents, juveniles, and volunteers across the different levels. The author

noted essential effects for positive social change when all stakeholders were involved in

the process, including family, community, religion, juvenile justice professionals, and

policymakers. The involvement of all stakeholders resulted in the deterrence of juvenile

offending incidences, hence supporting safer communities. While the author

acknowledged that juvenile delinquency remained a primary social concern in the US,

restorative justice provided a breakthrough to deter juvenile recidivism. This was because

the juvenile system in the US was faced with salient problems of the staggering rate of

incarceration.

Hendrix (2019) examined a different facet of juvenile delinquency by analyzing

the role played by school counselors in shaping the future life of youths. A qualitative

design was employed, anchored on two theories: social learning and control theories. The

findings indicated that counselors were positioned uniquely to deter delinquent behavior

or at-risk students. The school counselors included in the study tried to bond with the

students. Part of their job was helping them see the likelihood of a successful future, and

they related well with them and assisted them in identifying their struggles. Moreover,

the counselors developed a sense of determination and belief in at-risk youths to assist

them in remaining positive and succeed (Hendrix, 2019). The counselors also had a

generally positive perception of the youths, which rubbed off onto them, and they played

the role of mentors. This gave the students an example to look up to and a role model for

future generations. The study importantly identified school counselors' capacity to help

deter delinquent behavior and at-risk students. The study supported the global theme that

juvenile delinquency remains a key part of the justice system. Moreover, the author

focused on an important emerging research area beyond just looking for why juveniles

committed a specific crime.

Diehl (2020) used an ethnographic design to analyze the life experiences of

currently or formerly incarcerated Hispanic males affiliated with Mexican gangs in

California. The author aimed to inquire about the influence of a student's schooling

experience before entering middle school and the desire to be involved in gang violence.

The participants included school administrators, tutors, counselors, a probation officer, a

retired judge, and a defense attorney. The study used a cross-sectional design, including

field observations, document analysis, and semi-structured interviews. Five emergent

themes were identified from the analysis of the environment, interventions, caring adults,

self-worth, and sense of belonging. Diehl (2020) noted that the role played by

environmental factors was significantly important in a student's life trajectory. This was

because juveniles could not control this aspect. Second, teachers' cultural awareness was

limited in understanding the socialization of the youth in the streets. Third, augmented

effectuality by teachers and school administrators for the early detection and execution of

successful interventions was key in the early juvenile age. The study reiterated the need

for teachers to have more training that would expand their bonding with students. This

was particularly important for socialized students from low socioeconomic

neighborhoods where violence and gangs were present. Moreover, enhanced school-wide

efficiency was required to provide timely detection of juveniles needing specific

intervention treatment, as well as continuous support systems. The author concluded that

the measures would increase school connectedness and establish a barrier which should be widely embraced. The policies should stifle and deter juveniles from entering the criminal system.

Literature Review Related to Key Variables and Concepts

The following literature review provides a comprehensive overview of current research related to the key variables and concepts central to this study, including religious programs, crime prevention, social bonds and the impact of religious engagement on these factors. The review is organized into sections that describe relevant studies related to the constructs of interest, the methodology and methods chosen for the study, approaches used by researchers in the discipline, rationale for selection of variables or concepts and the current state of knowledge and areas for further exploration.

Religious Programs and Crime Prevention

Numerous studies have explored the role of religious programs in crime prevention. Researchers (Guo & Metcalfe, 2018) conducted a longitudinal study that found individuals who attended religious services frequently were less likely to engage in criminal activities. Similarly, research by Johnson (2018) reported that religiously active communities had lower crime rates compared to non-religious communities. These studies suggest that religious programs may create a sense of community, social support, and moral values that act as protective factors against criminal behavior.

Social Bonds and Religious Engagement

Research by Ntim and Manu (2019) have shown that religious engagement is related to stronger social bonds. Active involvement in spiritual establishments fosters an

experience of belonging and encourages prosocial behavior, which, in turn, enhances social bonds within groups. Moreover, religious programs often provide systems for community participants to engage, collaborate, and build supportive relationships, contributing to the development of social ties and brotherly love (Cnaan & Heist, 2018).

Religious Programs and Juvenile Offenders

Research conducted by Sells et al. (2020) explored the effect of spiritual applications on juvenile offenders' rehabilitation and reintegration into society. They found that participation in religious activities within correctional centers definitely encouraged the behavior and attitudes of youth offenders. Religious programs presented counseling, ethical guidance, and a sense of desire, which contributed to nice behavioral modifications and reduced the rates of recidivism.

Methodological Approaches

Studies in this region have employed numerous methodological tactics, along with quantitative surveys, qualitative interviews and combined-method designs (Ryu, 2020). Quantitative studies were precious in setting up correlations between religious engagement, social bonds, and crime prevention. Qualitative research has furnished in-depth insights into the lived experiences and views of people concerned in religious applications, highlighting the mechanisms through which these programs have an effect on behavior.

Strengths and Weaknesses of Previous Research

The strengths of preceding studies lie in their robust methodologies, large pattern sizes, and longitudinal designs. These factors enhance the reliability and generalizability

in their findings. However, some research may lack a comprehensive exploration of contextual elements that affect the relationship between religious engagement and crime prevention. Additionally, there's a need for greater research that delves into the particular components of religious programs that result in positive consequences.

Rationale for Variable Selection

The selection of variables on this research was grounded by SCT, which emphasizes the significance of social bonds and attachments in deterring criminal behavior. By inspecting religious applications' impact on crime prevention and social bonds, this research builds upon the current concept and research, contributing to a deeper knowledge of the role of religious institutions in fostering a positive social change.

Gaps in the Literature

While current research offers valuable insights, there exist several gaps in literature. More research is needed to explore the long-term outcomes of spiritual packages on crime prevention and social bonds. Additionally, research needs to consider the diversity of religious applications and the varying cultural contexts in which they function to understand their nuanced outcomes.

The literature review highlights the significance of religious programs in crime prevention, social bonding, and the reintegration of juvenile offenders. By drawing on existing research and methodologies, this study aims to contribute to the field's knowledge and offer meaningful insights into the impact of religious engagement on communities and crime rates. The research questions posed in this study are aligned with

the gaps identified in the literature, providing a foundation for further exploration and the potential for positive social change.

Summary and Conclusions

The literature evaluation discovered numerous main topics associated with the research's subject matter of spiritual applications, crime prevention, and social bonds. The findings consistently demonstrated that religious engagement is related to decrease crime rates and more potent social bonds. Religious applications offer a sense of community, social aid and ethical values that act as protective elements in opposition to criminal behavior. Moreover, these programs have shown positive results on the rehabilitation and reintegration of stripling offenders. While present studies offer treasured insights, there are nevertheless gaps inside the literature. Limited research has explored the long-time periodical effects of religious programs, the particular mechanisms via which they affect behavior and the contextual factors that affect their effectiveness. Additionally, extra studies are needed to have a look at the various range of religious programs and their outcomes within specific cultural contexts.

This research targets to fill such gaps by investigating the effect of religious programs on crime prevention and social bonds, specifically inside the context of a community-primarily based application. By using a mixed-approach method together with quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews, this research will offer a complete understanding of the relationship between religious engagement, social bonds and crime prevention. The findings will extend the current understanding in the field by imparting empirical proof and nuanced insights into the effectiveness of spiritual programs in

fostering a positive social exchange. The transitional material to connect the distance within the literature to the strategies described in Chapter 3 will focus on how the study layout and methodology will provide a detailed explanation of the research design and fill the diagnosed gaps. The chapter will provide a detailed clarification of the research layout, data collection strategies and data analysis strategies that will allow for a rigorous study of the research questions and make contributions to advancing information in the topic.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

In this chapter, I present the research design and methodology for the study. I begin by restating the study purpose as described in Chapter 1 followed by an overview of the major sections covered. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a clear and complete clarification of the study's layout employed to address the research questions and attain the study objectives. By outlining the research layout and technique, I set up the framework for records collection, analysis, and interpretation, ensuring the validity and reliability of the research findings.

The major sections of this chapter include the research design. The motive for deciding on the specific research design is supplied, aligning it with the research questions and objectives. Second, the section on participants will outline the goal population and the standards for selection. I describe the sampling approach and tactics used to recruit participants, making sure representativeness and diversity. The data collection phase will detail the strategies and instruments used to acquire data. I will highlight the development of the survey questionnaire, interview protocols, and other records series tools. In this section, I also address the approaches for obtaining informed consent and keeping moral concerns. The data analysis segment will give an explanation for the method and techniques used for analyzing the accrued interview records. I define the steps involved in records coding, categorization, thematic evaluation, and statistical evaluation and the software used for statistics management and evaluation. The validity and reliability phase will highlight the measures taken to ensure the validity and

reliability of the research findings. The issues of credibility, dependability, and transferability will be addressed in this section. Additionally, strategies inclusive of member checking, peer debriefing and triangulation will be defined.

The research questions for this study are as follows:

RQ1: What is the current level of religious program availability and engagement in the neighborhoods where professionals in social service organizations work?

RQ2: How do professionals in social service organizations perceive the role of religious programs in addressing crime and social issues in the neighborhoods where they work?

RQ3: What are the perceived benefits and limitations of religious programs in promoting positive social change and addressing the needs of the community? The central concept of this study is the role of religious programs in addressing crime, social issues, and promoting positive social change in neighborhoods. The phenomenon under investigation is the availability and engagement with religious programs by professionals in social service organizations and their perceptions of the impact of these programs.

The research tradition chosen for this study is qualitative. Qualitative studies allow for an in-depth exploration of complex phenomena, consisting of the role of spiritual applications in addressing crime and social problems (see Merriam & Grenier, 2019). A qualitative study provides a rich and contextualized knowledge of the experiences, perceptions, and meanings attributed by professionals in social service organizations to religious applications in their work environments. I chose the qualitative

research tradition for this study as it allows for a nuanced exploration of the central

phenomenon and provides insights into the subjective experiences and perspectives of

professionals in social service organizations. By adopting a qualitative method, I aimed to

seize the diverse and contextualized perspectives, ideals, and experiences of participants

while highlighting the complex nature of the position of religious programs in addressing

crime and social problems. Furthermore, qualitative research allows for flexibility in

interviews and observations, enabling a complete exploration of the research questions

and the critical phenomenon. Qualitative research presents an opportunity to seize rich

records, uncovering precise insights and generating new knowledge in the discipline. I

chose the qualitative study tradition for this study to provide an in-depth understanding of

the position of religious programs in addressing crime and social issues and promoting

high-quality social change in neighborhoods, as perceived by specialists in social service

organizations. This tradition aligns with the research questions and the need for a

comprehensive exploration of the primary phenomenon.

Role of the Researcher

In this research, I assumed the role of an observer–participant. As an observer, I

observed and recorded the interactions, behaviors, and reports of experts in social service

corporations and their engagement with religious programs in the neighborhoods where

they work. As a participant, I engaged in interactions with the members, including

carrying out interviews and participating in discussions and activities associated with the

research. I did not have any personal or professional relationships with the participants

involved in the study. There were no supervisory or instructor relationships that involved

power over the participants. I approached the study with an open and unbiased mindset, maintaining a professional stance throughout the research process.

To manage biases and strong relationships, several measures were considered. First, I interacted in reflexivity, reflecting on private beliefs, values, and experiences that could have an impact on the research. By acknowledging and being aware about these biases, I sought to hold objectivity and minimize any bias in data collection, evaluation, and interpretation. Additionally, I set up rapport with the contributors, emphasizing the voluntary nature of their participation and the confidentiality of their responses. I ensured that members were comfortable while expressing their views without fear of judgment or negative effects. Furthermore, I adopted an empathetic and non-directive approach throughout interviews, allowing participants to freely elicit their views.

Ethical considerations associated with conducting research inside one's personal environment, power differentials, conflict of interest, and using incentives were addressed. To mitigate any potential conflicts of interest, I maintained confidentiality and anonymity, ensuring that participants' identities were not disclosed in the research findings. Participants were informed about the research purpose, their rights as members, and their voluntary participation. Informed consent was received from all participants. Regarding power differentials, I strived to establish a collaborative and equitable relationship with the participants while developing a safe space for open talk and respecting their perspectives and views. I actively concentrated on the participants, valuing their insights and contributions. In terms of incentives, no express incentives were supplied to participants to avoid undue coercion and influence. Participants were

endorsed to participate primarily based on their own interest and the potential

contribution of their perceptions and views to the study.

Methodology

Study Population

The population for this study consisted of professionals working in social service

organizations who have direct involvement with religious programs in their respective

neighborhoods. The research in the planning stages comprised a population of local

church members with professional connections to the legal justice system and prior

experience in managing juvenile offenders. I used purposeful sampling, selecting

individuals based on their pertinent background knowledge and expertise. I sought the

participation of local church pastors who possess prior experience working with juvenile

offenders within the legal system. The study benefitted significantly from cooperation

between myself and stakeholders with professional backgrounds connected with local

churches, police departments, social services, schools, and courts regarding participant

recruitment.

Sampling Strategy

A purposive sampling strategy was employed to seek participants based on their

pertinent background, knowledge, and expertise connected to this study. Purposive

sampling permits for the intentional choice of members who have unique characteristics

or experiences relevant to the research subject matter (Campbell et al., 2020). Given the

unique awareness of professionals engaged in social provider organizations and their

interaction with spiritual programs, purposive sampling was chosen to ensure that

participants with firsthand expertise and knowledge on this context were chosen as volunteers.

Criterion for Participant Selection

The selection of participants was important in this study to ensure accurate information was acquired. Participants volunteered for the study based on their professional involvement in social service organizations and direct engagement in religious programs in their respective neighborhoods. This criterion ensured that participants had direct experience and engagement with religious programs in their professional roles.

Participant Identification and Recruitment Procedures

Several procedures were employed to identify, contact, and recruit participants. Initially, a point of contact was made between a law enforcement personnel who was also connected to the church. The personnel was able to suggest recruiting volunteers from within the religion location because many of the members were connected or have been connected to the criminal justice system and social services arena with experience with juveniles. This recommendation served as a starting point for identifying potential participants. I then used a snowball sampling technique; initial participants were asked to recommend different experts who met the participant criteria. A volunteer notice was read during church announcements and placed on the church bulletin board. This method allowed for individuals to volunteer and share their lived experiences. Contact with individuals occurred through e-mail, phone calls, and individual appointments at the interview location. I relied on particpants' preferred mode of conversation. I provided

targeted information about the research, its purpose, and the voluntary nature of participation. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to their inclusion in the research. The interview participants were emailed the informed consent form and were also sent the scheduled time and date. The participants had to respond with the words, "I consent."

Number of Participants and Rationale

The sample size for this study was a total of 12 participants. I continued to interview volunteers until data saturation was met. Data saturation refers to the point at which new facts or insights cease to emerge from the data collected (Guest et al., 2020; Hennink & Kaiser, 2022). I continued with data collection till saturation was reached, thus ensuring that an adequate number of participants were included to capture a range of views and reports related to the research questions. Based on previous research in comparable contexts, I anticipated that 10–20 participants would be relevant to acquire data saturation and offer rich and numerous insights.

Saturation and Sample Size Relationship

Saturation refers to the point at which data collection can no longer yield new or distinctive records (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022). In qualitative research, the size of the sample is not always predetermined but decided with the aid of data saturation. As a researcher conducts interviews and analyzes data, they constantly check the emerging insights. Once a researcher observes that new interviews are no longer contributing additional insights, saturation is reached, indicating an adequate sample size for the study. By employing purposive sampling, actively searching for various perspectives, and

continuing with data collection until saturation was reached, I intended to provide complete and in-depth information of the experiences and views of specialists engaged in social service organizations and their involvement in religious programs in their neighborhoods.

Instrumentation

The data collection instruments and sources for this research included the interview protocol. This was used to gather in-depth qualitative data from the participants. I developed the protocol specifically for this study. In addition, an interview sheet was used to record verbal answers during the appointed interview date. The questionnaire sheet captured relevant details and contextual information. The volunteer answers were reviewed aloud after the interview to ensure the right information was captured. For data collection, I developed the interview protocol based on a review of relevant literature and research questions. The instrument is researcher-produced specifically tailored to explore the experiences and perspectives of professionals in social service organizations and their involvement with religious programs.

Content Validity

For the interview protocol, content material validity was established through a review by specialists within the area who had expertise operating with similar participant groups. These experts assessed the relevance and appropriateness of the interview questions in capturing the study objectives and addressing the research questions. Feedback from professionals was used to refine and enhance the interview protocol. The interview protocol and other data collection instruments were developed with cautious

consideration of the context and cultural specificity of the study population. Questions

and prompts were designed to guarantee cultural sensitivity and relevance to the studies

and views of experts operating in social service organizations and engaging with religious

programs. The researcher also ensured approval of the interview protocol and questions

the IRB to ensure clarity and appropriateness. The data collection techniques inclusive of

the interview protocol, questionnaire sheet and artifacts were designed to competently

deal with the research questions and gather comprehensive facts. The interview protocol

allows for in-depth exploration of individuals' views while the questionnaire sheet and

artifacts provide extra contextual records to enrich the data analysis. Through a mixture

of these techniques, the research aimed to collect a comprehensive dataset that

sufficiently addresses the research questions and provides precious insights into the

phenomenon under study.

IRB Approval: The IRB approval number 0727710, for the completed dissertation

was provided in accordance with the specific institution's guidelines and requirements.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation and Data Collection

The interviews were conducted with professionals in social service, criminal

justice, and individuals that are involved with religious programs. I approved to conduct

qualitative interviews using interviewing techniques, conducted the interviews.

Interviews were then scheduled based on participant availability with an aim of achieving

a diverse range of perspectives. Each interview was estimated to last approximately 60-

90 minutes. The interviews were recorded on questionnaire templates with participants'

consent, and detailed field notes taken during and immediately after each interview. In

the event of insufficient participant recruitment, additional efforts would have occurred to

received approval from IRB and different sites before reaching out to potential

participants through various channels such as professional networks and referrals, to

ensure an adequate sample size.

Data Collection Instrument

The Questionnaire Sheet was used during the site visits for the scheduled

interviews at the approved location. I conducted the verbal interviews. Approved site

interviews were scheduled based on the availability and operational hours of the

organizations and programs. The duration of each scheduled interview varied depending

on the nature of the organization and program, typically ranging from one hour to one

hour to two hours. Observations were recorded on questionnaire sheet and interview

notebook, documenting relevant details and contextual information received during the

scheduled interview.

Data Analysis Plan

Data from the interview were analyzed to deal with specific study questions

related to the reports and perspectives of experts in social service, criminal justice

organizations and their involvement with religious programs. The statistics provided

insights into the effect of religious programs on service delivery, collaboration and the

perceived effectiveness of interventions. Thematic analysis was employed to analyze the

data from the interview. Themes and patterns were identified and coded to convey

significant concepts and recurrent themes associated with the research questions.

Systematic identification and labeling of meaningful units of information within the

interview transcripts was employed in the coding procedure. Initial codes were generated based on the research questions. The qualitative data analysis software, NVivo, was used to organize, code and retrieve data during the analysis process. Discrepant cases, outliers, were scrutinized to understand their distinct characteristics and potential implications for the research findings. These cases were discarded but considered as valuable sources of insights and possible avenues for further exploration.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Credibility

To establish credibility inside the study, numerous strategies were employed. The choice to remove himself or herself from the study at any time. Keeping the names of the individuals confidential. Respecting each individual choice not to have the interview recorded with a device. This included triangulation, which was used to collect data directly from the scheduled voluntary interview. Together with interviews and the summary of the interviews helped to gain a comprehensive know-how of the research subject matter. Any communication with the member were done by approved methods and scheduled interviews were in a safe approved room at the approved location. Member check method were carried out by providing members with the possibility to study and verify the accuracy in their interview transcripts and if the volunteer needed to add more information. Saturation was employed to ensure that data collection continued until enough volunteers were able to help the researcher to gather data. Reflexivity was practiced by keeping a reflective interview notebook to document the researcher's thoughts, biases and assumptions, so that an individual could be acknowledged and taken

into account for the duration of the analysis technique. There were no trustworthy issues with the study, conducting the interview, or using confidential information.

Transferability

To ensure transferability, the study employed thick description in reporting the findings. Detailed and rich descriptions of the study's context, participants and research tactics were provided to allow readers to evaluate the transferability of the findings to different similar contexts. Variation in participant choice was also considered, making sure that individuals from various backgrounds and studies were included in the research to capture a wide variety of perspectives and enhance the transferability of the findings.

Dependability

To establish dependability, the research employed an audit path documenting the studies process, decisions and changes made throughout the study. This trail allowed the research to be traced and tested for transparency and consistency. Triangulation, the usage of more than one data assets and strategies, was utilized to establish dependability through bearing in mind the corroboration and assessment of findings across exclusive resources.

Confirmability

To establish confirmability, reflexivity was practiced at some stage in the study. The researcher's biases, assumptions and preconceptions were explicitly stated and pondered upon in the research process. The researcher engaged in ongoing self-reflection and crucial exam of their personal positionality and capability influence at the research

technique and findings. This enhanced the transparency and rigor of the study and mitigated any potential bias.

Intra- and Inter-coder Reliability

For studies involving coding of statistics, measures were taken to make ensure intra-coder reliability by maintaining the same researcher continuously follow codes to a subset of the information and assess the consistency of coding. Inter-coder reliability was managed by having more than one coder independently code a subset of the information and compare their coding outcomes to evaluate an agreement. Any discrepancies were resolved through dialogue and consensus among the coders while aiming to enhance the reliability and consistency of the coding procedure.

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Ethical Procedures

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I obtained the participation of individuals by securing their consent through an information sheet and consent form, which were developed per the ethical code guidelines of the University. The provided forms provided the participants with essential details concerning data confidentiality, the role of the researcher, research goals, participant expectations and obligations, permission to document conversations, schedules and timings, the entitlement to withdraw from the study, and guarantees on data protection. The researcher implemented measures to uphold data confidentiality during the research endeavor. This was achieved by securely storing all acquired data in an encrypted computer drive and assigning aliases to the participants. Before initiating the research, the study obtained approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to ensure adherence to institutional regulations and ethical principles. The study addressed

ethical considerations concerning recruitment by ensuring that participants were provided with comprehensive information and voluntarily consented to participate. The participants in the study demonstrated their informed consent by signing the consent form electronically, which attested to their comprehensive comprehension of the research, the safeguarding of data confidentiality and protection, and their entitlement to withdraw from the study. The IRB process is in place to make sure the individuals and the organization is protected within the process from start to finish and even after the study is completed.

The ethical implications of data collection were mitigated by safeguarding participant confidentiality, acknowledging power dynamics, and managing potential hazards. The investigator conducted interviews within a secure and open setting and took measures to guarantee that respondents were at ease when disclosing information. The confidentiality of the collected data was safeguarded through various measures, including data storage protocols, data dissemination guidelines, and restricted access to authorized personnel. The researcher justified using incentives while also considering potential ethical concerns, including but not limited to conflicts of interest and power differentials. The researcher maintained ethical standards throughout the research process, encompassing literature review, data collection and analysis, theme identification, and reporting of results. The study incorporated ethical considerations to safeguard the participants' well-being and ensure that the research outcomes were logically coherent, precise, and aligned with the research objectives.

Summary

In Chapter 3, the study design, methodology and moral issues of the research have been discussed. The chapter began by restating the research questions and the critical phenomenon of the research. The research tradition was recognized and justified, presenting a reason for the chosen technique. The chapter then delved into the participant choice logic, describing the population, sampling strategy, criteria for participant selection and tactics for player identification, contact and recruitment. The relationship between saturation and pattern size was discussed to emphasize the importance of data saturation in qualitative studies. Next, the instrumentation section outlined the data collection process utilized in the research, including their resources and the motive for their selection. For published data collection processes, records regarding their developers, previous use and appropriateness for the current study were provided. For researcher-developed gadgets, the idea for their improvement and establishment of content material validity was defined. Procedures for pilot studies were described wherein appropriate, highlighting the reason for the pilot study and the relationship to the principle research. Detailed approaches for recruitment, participation, statistical data collection methods and participant exit were mentioned, ensuring transparency and replicability.

The data analysis section phase elucidated how every kind of accumulated records was linked to specific research questions, the coding techniques employed, software used for analysis and the remedies for discrepant instances. To establish trustworthiness, strategies for credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability were

mentioned. These techniques protected triangulation, member assessments, saturation, reflexivity, peer overview, thick description, and organizing intra- and inter-coder reliability where applicable. The chapter concludes with a comprehensive evaluation of the ethical procedures implemented within the research. This encompassed agreements for access to participants and records, institutional permissions and IRB approvals, ethical considerations associated with recruitment and data collection, informed consent approaches, treatment of data, records safety measures and addressing different ethical issues specific to the research.

In Chapter 4, key elements such as the pilot study, setting, participant demographics, data collection, data analysis, evidence of trustworthiness, and the results will be explored in detail. Moreover, this chapter will elucidate the personal and organizational conditions that may have influenced participants or their experiences during the study, potentially impacting the interpretation of the study results. Chapter 4 will present the participant demographics and relevant characteristics that shape the study, while providing insights into the number of participants from whom each type of data was collected. The location, frequency, and duration of data collection for each data collection instrument will be described, along with details of how the data were recorded. Variations from the initial data collection plan outlined in Chapter 3 will be documented, as well as any unusual circumstances encountered during the data collection process. The chapter will then delve into the data analysis methodology employed, explaining the process of moving inductively from coded units to larger representations, including categories and themes. The specific codes, categories, and themes that emerged from the

data will be described, employing pertinent quotations to emphasize their significance. Additionally, the chapter will address the qualities of discrepant cases and their role in the analysis. Chapter 4 will outline the implementation of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability strategies. The strategies employed to ensure the reliability and validity of the study will be detailed. The chapter will finally present the results systematically, addressing each research question and organizing the findings according to themes.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

*In this chapter, I present the findings of a phenomenological qualitative study to explore the complex relationship between religion and crime. The research problem addressed in this study is the need for a comprehensive understanding of the influences of religious beliefs, institutions, and practices on criminal behavior and crime rates. By employing a qualitative approach within a social science research paradigm, I aimed to provide a nuanced understanding of this relationship. The purpose of this study was to explore and describe the complex interplay between religion and crime, examining the influences of religious beliefs, institutions, and practices on criminal behavior and crime rates. The research paradigm guiding this study combined elements of positivism and interpretivism, utilizing qualitative case studies and interviews while references quantitative analysis of crime statistics.

The following research questions guided this study:

RQ1: How do religious programs and institutions contribute to community development and crime prevention efforts in specific neighborhoods?

RQ2: What is the perceived impact of religious programs on reducing criminal behavior among youths in the neighborhoods?

RQ3: How does religious reintegration through these programs influence the lives of juvenile offenders aged 16 to 24 years old?

In the subsequent sections of this chapter, I present and discuss the findings in relation to these research questions. The analysis of the collected data provides insights into the

contributions of religious programs and institutions to community development and crime prevention efforts in specific neighborhoods. Additionally, the findings highlight the perceived impact of religious programs on reducing criminal behavior among youths and can shed light on the influence of religious reintegration on the lives of juvenile offenders.

Setting

Data for this study were collected in a valid setting encompassed in a church room. The participants involved local church ministers and professionals from the criminal justice and social services sectors. During the study, certain personal and organizational conditions existed that could have influenced the participants and their experiences, potentially affecting how the results would be interpreted. The interviews also occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Notable conditions included changes in personnel. There may have been changes in personnel within the participating organizations, such as the appointment of new church leaders or staff turnover within the criminal justice and social services agencies. These changes could have impacted the delivery of religious reintegration programs and the support available to juvenile offenders. Another condition was trauma and other challenges. The participants may have experienced personal trauma or faced other challenges during the study period. These could include mental health issues, family problems, or difficulties related to the criminal justice system. Such factors may have influenced participants' experiences and responses, impacting the interpretation of the study results. These personal and organizational conditions are acknowledged as potential

contextual influences on the study. These factors may have shaped participants'

perspectives and experiences and should be considered when interpreting the findings

and their generalizability.

Demographics

The study attracted 12 participants who agreed to respond to my inquiries. Six of

the respondents identified as female (50%) and the other six identified as male (50%).

The youngest respondent was 25 years old, and the oldest was 65. All respondents were

residents of the state of Georgia, and through their professional, vocational and/or

voluntary social service, all participants, except 1, indicated they frequently work with

juvenile offenders and at-risk youth; thus, 91.67% reported having worked with juvenile

offenders. Participant demographic information is shown in Table 1. To protect the

confidentiality of participants, respondents' real names were not included in any of the

data analyses and presentations. Instead, participants are represented by pseudonyms.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Demographic	n	%
Gender		
Female	6	50
Male	6	50
Has worked with juvenile offenders		
Yes	11	91.67

No	1	8.33

Data Analysis

Semi-structured interviews were the technique for data collection in this study. The purpose of the interviews was to connect with participants through discourse, allowing the exploration of intriguing focal areas that emerged throughout the data-gathering process. I used planned, research-relevant questions in the semi-structured interviews. An established timetable guided the semi-structured interview but did not dominate the discourse. This enabled me to ask open-ended questions on critical emergent topics and to conduct interviews focused on the participant's perspective.

The material obtained from the interviews was transcribed manually. The data analysis process involved several steps. I employed the idiographic analysis method to thoroughly examine and understand the collected data. The steps were as follows:

- Transcription: The written recordings of the interviews were transcribed, capturing every spoken word and ensuring an accurate representation of the participants' responses.

- Familiarization: I familiarized myself with the transcribed data by reading and rereading the transcripts. This process allowed for immersion in the data and a comprehensive understanding of the participants' perspectives.

- Initial coding: I began the analysis by identifying initial codes, which involved labeling and categorizing meaningful units of data. Each code represented a specific idea, theme, or concept that emerged from the data.

- Codebook development: As the analysis progressed, I created a codebook. This involved expanding and refining the initial codes, establishing clear definitions and guidelines for each code, and ensuring consistency in coding across the data.

- Coding process: Using the codebook as a reference, I systematically applied the identified codes to the relevant segments of the data. This involved assigning codes to specific quotes or excerpts that represented the coded concept or theme.

- Grouping and categorization: As the coding process continued, I grouped similar codes together to identify broader themes and patterns within the data. These groupings helped in organizing and structuring the analysis.

- Iterative analysis: The analysis process was iterative, meaning that I continually revisited the data, reviewed the codes, and refined the categorization. This iterative approach allowed for a deeper understanding of the data and ensured that no valuable insights were missed.

- Data interpretation: After completing the coding and categorization, I interpreted the data by examining the relationships between the identified themes and drawing connections to the research questions and objectives. This step involved extracting key findings and insights from the data.

I used NVivo software for qualitative data analysis to organize, evaluate, and gain insights from the collected data. Following Belotto's (2018) guidance, a crucial step in

the analysis process involved assessing the raw textual data. In this study, the collected data, comprising the transcribed interviews, were carefully evaluated and analyzed on a case-by-case basis to identify patterns and themes that could contribute to answering the research questions. Using NVivo, I compared the data from all participants to identify commonalities and differences. By examining the responses of each participant, themes and categories began to emerge, allowing for a deeper understanding of the data. The software facilitated the organization and management of the data, enabling efficient exploration and analysis.

The combination of semi-structured interviews and idiographic analysis provided valuable insights into the emotional and social worlds of the participants. Through this approach, significant trends and patterns were identified in the collected data, allowing for a comprehensive exploration of the research topic. By employing NVivo and following the recommended analysis techniques, I was able to conduct a thorough examination of the data, leading to the discovery of meaningful themes and categories that shed light on the research questions and objectives.

Constructed Themes

Superordinate themes and subordinate themes are concepts used in thematic analysis to categorize and organize qualitative data. A superordinate theme, also known as a *main theme* or *overarching theme*, represents a broad and overarching concept that encompasses multiple related subthemes. A superordinate theme provides a higher-level understanding or interpretation of the data. Superordinate themes capture the major ideas or concepts that emerge from the analysis and help to structure and organize the data. On

the other hand, subordinate themes, also known as *subthemes* or *subcategories*, are
specific concepts or categories that fall under the umbrella of a superordinate theme.
Subordinate themes are more detailed and are specific aspects of the broader theme.
Subordinate themes provide a deeper level of analysis and contribute to a comprehensive
understanding of the phenomenon being studied. The superordinate and subordinate
themes constructed from the collected participant data are shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Themes

Superordinate themes	Subordinate themes
Deterring juvenile crime	Community service
	Guidance
	Resource for reintegration
Perceptions towards juvenile offenders	Attitudes of police
	Community outreach
Role of religion	Religious-based programs
Effectiveness of criminal justice systems	Community agency
	Incarceration
Barriers to reintegration	Pathway to crime
	Unemployment
Attitudes of offenders toward religion	Engagement
	Religious commitment

Deterring Juvenile Crime

The first superordinate theme, deterring juvenile crime, captures the views and experiences of the respondents toward the need for the involvement of multiple community individuals, including the church and criminal justice systems, in addressing issues involving juvenile crime and juvenile criminal reintegration in communities. The participants generally identified that local churches have an obligation to provide community youths with religious programs and activities aimed at guiding, occupying, and preventing them from engaging in delinquent acts, reducing the likelihood of either induction into such behavior or recidivism.

The first subordinate theme, community service, illustrates how churches and other religious-based groups can help in redirecting the energies and interests of neighborhood youths from potential engagements in delinquency to helping their communities. As expressed by Respondent 1, a youth minister, there is a need to, "continue to connect the church with the police and show that they both care about the community." Respondent #1, however, noted that the ability of churches to implement such approaches was limited by a low level of police participation in church activities.

The second subordinate theme, guidance and positive influence, reflects the importance of community individuals to serve as sources of guidance for youths, including rehabilitated juvenile offenders. The aspect of positive engagement with the youth emerged as a dominant perception among the participants. Respondent 2 noted that, "The youth is our future. Let's remind them how important they are to us."

Respondent 3 echoed those sentiments, stating, "We need to listen to them like they are

important too." Similarly, Respondent 4 said,

> "Juveniles needs extra care, love, and help. They are our future. We must invest
>
> into teens in every positive way. The school system, judicial system, mental
>
> health systems, churches, other faith-based organizations, and families need to
>
> work together to try to keep the teens on the right path.

Only one respondent, Respondent 5, seemed to believe that the responsibility for seeking

guidance and positive influence among youths and convicted juveniles undergoing

reintegration mainly rests on the youths themselves. Respondent 5 stated, "They can

work hard and not be lazy. They can look to the seniors in the community for guidance."

The final subordinate theme, resources for deterrence and rehabilitation, involved

the perceptions of the respondents toward the need for community individuals to involve

themselves in responding to juvenile crime. These sentiments are summarized by

Respondent 6, who noted:

> The suggestion that I have is to come together in different communities, school
>
> systems to create a plan that will work. To properly get the at-risk teens evaluated
>
> for mental helps. The number one plan should be to listen to the needs of the
>
> people. Get back involved and make communities teen's friendly. Involved the
>
> teens and the parents in the plans. Help allocate the funds to the poor. Develop a
>
> plan to stop homeless and give the teens a roof over their heads. Speak against
>
> gang joining. Pour more knowledge into leadership and faith-based organization.
>
> Spiritual leaders need to welcome teens with love and stop calling them thugs and

gangsters. Stop judging them for their lifestyles. However still have a system in

place for the ones that still choose to go doing the wrong path. Some can be

saved, and some may not. We as a city won't know until we put the plans in

place.

Perceptions toward Juvenile Offenders

The second superordinate theme involved how the participants, as representatives

of their communities, perceive issues involving juvenile crime and the successful

reintegration into society of youths below age 24 who have been convicted of various

crimes. The participants were relatively conflicted in their perceptions toward handling

juvenile offenders. Some participants identified system failings and others identified

personality tendencies as the primary underlying factors involved in motivating some

youths to engage in crime.

Under the subordinate theme of the attitudes of the police, the consensus of the

participants was that the policing systems generally fail youths. As noted by Respondent

7,

The system and law enforcement have no hope or give the at-risk teens hope. The

children need help. Some are sick mentally. We need a village to help. We need

lawmakers to help with resources and to allocate the funds."

Respondent 6 also stated,

"[Regarding] how the local police and the judicial authorities deals with juveniles

is that some do not care at all. Some would rather label them as another kid that

will end up in prison or dead because the age of 25. Some do not take the time to

encourage or redirect the young ones from the pathway of trouble. And on the other hand, some judges and law enforcement allow the teens to get off too easy sometimes given them the reason to believe that it's okay to create crime. I believe that creating programs that will be mandatory to attend after committing crimes should be in place. Completing High school should be mandatory for all teens. Creating jobs for the teens to make money instead of committing crimes to take from others should help the crime rate lower. Local police really hate arresting teens because it's a lot of paperwork to do.

Respondent 8 echoed similar sentiments, saying,

I don't like the way the system is set up to deal with teen offenders because jail, probation with no resources to see change happen still leads some back in jail over and over to some ends of being in jail for 20 plus years. I feel so bad when the teens are charged as adults and sent over to the adult populations and forced to do what other adult inmates are commanding them to do. The teens get abuse mentally, and physically. I believe that even if the teens are charges as adult, they should have a facility for these inmates that don't put them where the grown inmates are. The system needs to start listening to the parents and offenders because sometime people give up on the youth because they have the power to make these teens life a living hell after they have got in trouble.

However, some of the other participants held contrasting opinions. Respondent 1 noted that the police underestimate the criminal capacity of youths, stating, "They do not take them serious enough. More violent crimes are happening with the youth."

Respondent 5 also differed from the consensus regarding the perceived attitudes of law enforcement toward young offenders, suggesting the police are unfairly excessively blamed: "I believe [law enforcement] are doing the best they can with what they have. I don't like the results, but they are doing their best." Respondent 9 also believed that policing actions depend on the acts of individual officers and should not be generalized for the entire law enforcement community.

The participants identified church-based interventions, such as teen ministries, family-based approaches, and programs aimed at counseling and life coaching, as among the ways they have witnessed and experienced being utilized in facilitating the reintegration of juvenile offenders. This falls under the theme of community outreach. When discussing their experiences as members of the community in aiding the reintegration of juvenile offenders, most participants identified having, in the past, worked with convicted or released juvenile offenders by facilitating their rehabilitation from criminal behaviors. Respondent 2 said,

> "I have found that they feel like the only life they have is this violent life. I try to teach them that if they travel outside of these walls in the neighborhood, they will see that there is more to live for.

Respondent 11 also stated, "I noticed that they are wanting to be a part of something. We are redirecting their thinking to be more positive than negative." Respondent 6 also commented on the challenges involved in attempting to facilitate the reintegration of juvenile offenders:

The task in my career position is hard because we as a community need all hands

on deck. We have some people who have hope for the life of teens and we have

some people who have giving up on the teens by labeling them as gang members

and thugs.

Role of Religion

The third superordinate theme involved the role of religion in responding to

juvenile offenders. The participants identified the various ways that they perceived

religious bodies responding to issues involving crime and youth. The participants

identified that churches and other religious-based organizations in their communities

implemented both dedicated and informal programs aimed at guiding young people,

families, and communities. As expressed by Respondent 6,

"Churches need to maintain supportive religious program that will help teens prepare and

come up with positive way to avoid, prevent, and handle conflicts that may occur. Having

religious programs that bring and connect teens together rather than gangs that divide

could help heal the areas that I work, live, and attend church in."

 9 out of 12 of the participants identified that the churches in their neighborhoods

maintained such programs.

The respondents identified that such programs offered the youth an alternative to

criminal activities, providing them with a more positive community with which they can

engage. As noted by Respondent 4, "Some of these kids have no connection with

religious. Most of the time things are being said about the set [gang] that he or she

belongs to," suggesting that the lack of a connection to a more positive peer community

is a factor that affects the efforts of reintegrating juvenile offenders. The participants also

identified that churches implemented programs at the community level, by providing

services such as "…support groups and nonprofit that provide resources for the

neighborhood," as identified by Respondent 6.

Effectiveness of Criminal Justice Systems

The fourth superordinate theme, effectiveness of the criminal justice system,

captures the experiences of the participants with the law enforcement and court systems

in their responses to issues affecting communities, particularly crime and juvenile

delinquency. All respondents identified that crime was a significant problem in the

neighborhoods within which they live or work, and that the criminal justice system has

not adequately responded to the problem. The subordinate theme of community agency

reviews the experiences of the participants with the body of criminal justice as a system

meant to serve the community, with some of the respondents indicating that their

communities have lost faith in the ability of the system to serve and protect them. For

instance, Respondent 2 expressed that, "most of the people in my community hate the

police. There are times that they shoot at the police cars as they drive by," sentiments also

echoed by Respondent 11, who noted that, "We have seen what corrupt cops can do to a

community. We see how they plant drugs, how they conduct traffic stops for no reason in

the black communities, and how the trust just is not there."

However, Respondent 2 also noted the importance of the law enforcement system,

noting that, "I do coordinate with the local police. Not all police are bad. It's just a small

group that spoils it for the bunch." The data also suggested a racial component regarding

how communities perceive the law enforcement system as a community agent.

Respondent 12 noted that, "In the communities that are predominantly white, they call

911 more often. In predominantly black neighborhoods, there seem to be a delay in

calling 911. They tend to solve their own problems by street justice." The participants

also noted that, despite its deficiencies, the criminal justice system was still an important

community agent. The consensus of the respondents was that the implementation of

measures such as defunding the police would only worsen the crime situation.

Respondent 10 noted that, "defunding police will destroy the foundation that the justice

system has been built on." The participants generally viewed that the criminal justice

system can enhance its utility and value to the community by enhancing its agency. As

expressed by Respondent 8,

"The judicial system must create programs that will work and have a team of

people that are willing to incorporate the change. We as people of the justice system

knows that the plans will not work over night but with enough trial and error… things

would start to shine bright for the justice system, the parents, and the teens. I believe that

with the help of the system the teens could turn his or her life around to start fresh and

receive second changes. The teens must understand that they must surround and connect

their self to positive role models to stay and be influenced to stay on the right track."

The second subordinate theme, Incarceration, explored the perceptions of the

participants towards opinions that the criminal justice system more strongly emphasizes

incarceration rather than rehabilitation. Some of the participants held the opinion that the

law enforcement system focuses on unnecessarily arresting low-level offenders rather

than responding to more serious crime. As noted by Respondent 3, "The system is built to arrest more youth, and has proven to be inefficient." When discussing the response of law enforcement to crime in the community, Respondent 9 stated that, "Residents are afraid and feel hopeless as the city has been ineffective in its attempts to stop crime."

Barriers to Reintegration

The fifth superordinate theme was the barriers to the reintegration of juvenile offenders, exploring the experiences of the participants on the challenges facing the successful reintegration of juvenile offenders into society. The first subordinate theme, pathways to crime, developed from the sentiments of the participants that there existed various factors and opportunities for crime that enhanced the likelihood for recidivism among unsuccessfully rehabilitated juvenile offenders. High levels of crime within the neighborhoods, alongside rampart gang activity are among the factors that may be stimulating young people to engage in juvenile delinquent activities. As discussed by Respondent 6, "…let me share that over the last 4 to 5 years the type of crime that continues to rise involves teens. There are more teens committing major crimes. To name a few, Murder, assault with weapons, robbery, car thief, breaking in, carry illegal weapons."

The issue of unemployment induced the second subordinate theme. The participants identified that many juvenile offenders tend to revert to criminal activities because it is the only way they know of making money. The participants also noted that among the ways religious groups have attempted to respond to the issue of crime among

juveniles and young adults has included providing them with part-time jobs and

conducting job readiness programs, to provide them with an alternative source of income.

Attitudes of Offenders toward Religion

The sixth superordinate theme attitudes of juvenile offenders towards religion

explores the experiences and perceptions of the participants regarding the responsiveness

of juvenile offenders to religion-based approaches aimed at their reintegration into the

society.

The first subordinate theme, Engagement, explores the experiences of the

participants in efforts of engaging juvenile offenders in religious-based reintegration

interventions. The participants indicate that they have experienced some levels of success

with getting the juvenile offenders, and other at-risk youths, to participate in various

church programs and activities, including in maintaining unsupervised attendance to

meetings and active participation in various church and community work. As expressed

by Respondent 7, "Some of the teens are committed to following the guidelines at out

church. At the school system some consider the religious commitment as phony and lies."

Respondent 11 also farther add on that, "We have some that buy into the program quickly

and is attached and is always looking to do more. We also have some that never attach,

and we see a revolving door with those persons." However, the participants also

identified that many members of the target groups fail to engage or sustain their

participation in the programs. When commenting on the difficulties of effecting religious

interventions on juvenile offenders, Respondent 10 noted,

"I notice that some teens become upset because everyone always wants to be in their business but won't go the extra mile to help with resources. The teens have told me that they get sick of people saying pray for help."

The second subordinate theme, religious beliefs, inquiries into the perceptions of the study participants towards the observation of beliefs in religion by teenagers and young adults. The respondents agree that the several members of the youth groups do maintain a level of belief in God and religion. Respondent 2 noted that, "They will surprise you when they recite scriptures without reading them from the bible." Even when individual youth express poor commitment to religious faith, some of the participants believe that churches and faith-based organizations can help improve their spiritual response. As church minister, Respondent 5 expresses,

"They aren't strong [believers], but that's why I am here. I want to speak a word into their lives. I want them to know that we used to do what they are doing now, and we want to help guide them."

The respondents also identified the existence of various social and cultural factors that, based on their experiences, limit the ability of the target group to observe religious beliefs.

Respondent 7 further explains,

"...some of them use past childhood early trauma to stop them from opening up to religion. Some have questions like if God was real why he allow the police to keep killing unarmed people. Some of the teens are losing hope because of the events that are happening around the world."

Results

Research Question 1

The findings indicated that religious programs and institutions play a significant role in community development and crime prevention efforts in specific neighborhoods. Participants acknowledged the positive impact of religious organizations in fostering a sense of community, providing support networks, and promoting values and moral teachings that discourage criminal behavior. Religious programs were found to create opportunities for community engagement, offering resources, and facilitating positive relationships among community members.

Research Question 2

Participants generally perceived religious programs to have a positive impact on reducing criminal behavior among youths in the neighborhoods. They highlighted how religious programs provide guidance, mentorship, and a sense of purpose to at-risk youths. Participants observed changes in behavior, such as reduced involvement in criminal activities, improved decision-making skills, and increased pro-social behavior, among those who actively engaged in religious programs. The religious programs were seen as offering an alternative path and support system for youths who may otherwise be drawn to criminal behavior.

Research Question 3

The findings revealed that religious reintegration through programs had a significant influence on the lives of juvenile offenders aged 16 to 24 years old. Participants reported positive changes in the attitudes, values, and behaviors of juvenile

offenders who participated in religious programs. The programs provided a supportive and non-judgmental environment for these individuals to seek redemption, find solace, and develop a sense of belonging. Participants observed improvements in self-esteem, personal growth, and a shift towards pro-social behaviors among the juvenile offenders who actively engaged with religious reintegration programs.

Discrepant Cases/Nonconforming Data

While the majority of participants highlighted the positive impact of religious programs, there were a few who expressed skepticism or doubts about the effectiveness of these programs in reducing criminal behavior. Some participants emphasized the need for comprehensive support systems beyond religious programs, such as access to education, job opportunities, and social services, to address the underlying factors contributing to criminal behavior among youths.

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Summary

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The findings suggest that religious programs and institutions contribute to community development and crime prevention efforts by fostering a sense of community, providing support networks, and promoting positive values. Participants perceived these programs as effective in reducing criminal behavior among youths, providing guidance, and offering an alternative path. Religious reintegration through these programs influenced the lives of juvenile offenders by facilitating personal growth, enhancing self-esteem, and promoting pro-social behaviors. The results of this study shed light on the important role that religious programs can play in community development, crime prevention, and the reintegration of juvenile offenders. These findings have implications

for the development of targeted interventions and policies aimed at leveraging the potential of religious institutions in addressing youth crime and promoting community well-being.

In chapter 5, I will delve into a detailed discussion of the findings, their theoretical implications and their relevance for policy and practice. The limitations of the study will be addressed and recommendations for future research and program development will be provided.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

In this chapter, I provide a concise reiteration of the purpose and nature of the study as well as a summary of the key findings. The purpose of this study was to explore the role of religious programs and institutions in community development and crime prevention efforts, with a specific focus on their impact on reducing criminal behavior among youths in certain neighborhoods. Additionally, I aimed to examine how religious reintegration through these programs influences the lives of juvenile offenders ages 16 to 24. The study was conducted to shed light on the effectiveness of religious programs as a potential strategy for addressing crime and promoting positive social change. By understanding the contributions of religious institutions and their programs, I sought to provide insights into the ways these programs can support community development and facilitate the successful reintegration of juvenile offenders into society.

Summary of Key Findings

Contributions of Religious Programs and Institutions

In the research, I discovered that spiritual programs and establishments play a widespread role in network development and crime prevention efforts. These institutions provide a number of services and activities that deal with the underlying elements contributing to crime behavior, including unemployment, lack of tremendous position fashions, and constrained accessibility to resources. These programs create opportunities for social guidance, skill constructing, and engagement, thereby fostering a feel of belonging and motivation in some young people.

Impact on Reducing Criminal Behavior

The findings indicate a perceived impact of religion on reducing criminal behavior among youths. Participants reported that engagement in non-secular activities and adherence to spiritual values can have an effect on at the attitudes, behaviors, and choice making of children. The ethical steerage, spiritual grounding, and community assistance furnished by these applications acts as a shield toward delinquency and recidivism.

Influence of Religious Reintegration

The participants indicated that religious reintegration via programs has a transformative effect on the lives of minor offenders. Participants shared accounts of how religious interventions helped individuals rebuild their lives. Through religious teachings, mentorship, and participation in religious networks, children develop identity, acquire life skills, and connect with supportive peers.

These key findings underscore the potential of spiritual strategies to contribute to positive social change by addressing the basis of crime, fostering private transformation, and promoting community well-being. In the following sections, I examine and interpret the findings in the context of current literature. I also discuss the findings in terms of implications for practice, similar research, and social change.

Interpretation of the Findings

The findings of this study affirm, expand, and disconfirm existing information in the area of community improvement, crime prevention, and reintegration of youth offenders. Evaluating these findings with the peer-reviewed literature, defined in Chapter

2, creates a deeper understanding of their importance. The findings verify the present expertise regarding the effects of religious applications on network development and crime prevention efforts. Previous studies have highlighted the position of spiritual institutions in providing social support, fostering high-quality values, and encouraging prosocial behaviors among individuals.

My findings align with these studies, emphasizing the contributions of religious programs in addressing the underlying elements that result in criminal behavior among teenagers. The study presents information through a focus on the impact of religious programs on lowering criminal conduct among youths in unique neighborhoods. While previous research has identified the potential of spiritual institutions in promoting advantageous results, my findings offer additional insights into the ways that religious applications act as defensive elements against delinquency and recidivism. The emphasis on non-secular reintegration and its transformative results on the lives of young offenders expands the information of effective techniques for rehabilitation and reintegration. The findings also disconfirm positive perceptions or assumptions in the literature. For example, there may be a common belief that spiritual applications can also have restricted effectiveness in addressing the complicated issues associated with crime and delinquency.

However, my findings highlight the multifaceted nature of spiritual and religious programs and their ability to provide complete support, including non-secular guidance, mentorship, skill development, and community engagement. In the context of the theoretical framework, the findings align with social learning theory, which emphasizes

the significance of effective function models, social support, and prosocial talents in decreasing criminal behavior. The religious applications examined in this study function as socialization sellers, reinforcing moral values and imparting possibilities for fine position modeling and ability constructing. The spiritual grounding and feeling of motive supplied by means of these applications additionally resonate with theories of human improvement and identity formation.

It is crucial to be aware that the interpretations are based totally on the facts, findings and scope of this research. The findings recommend that religious packages can play a sizeable position in network improvement, crime prevention, and the reintegration of teenybopper offenders. However, further studies are wanted to discover the lengthy-time period effectiveness of these applications, have a look at potential boundaries and obstacles, and understand the unique mechanisms via which religious interventions have an impact on behavior trade. By analyzing and decoding the findings in the context of current theories and literature, we gain precious insights into the function of spiritual programs in selling tremendous social alternate and addressing the challenges related to children crime and delinquency. These interpretations provide a basis for similar research and tell the improvement of powerful techniques for crime prevention, network development, and the successful reintegration of youngster offenders.

Limitations of the Study

While this study provides valuable insights into the role of religious programs in community development, crime prevention, and the reintegration of juvenile offenders, several limitations should be considered to assess the trustworthiness of the findings:

Sampling Limitations

The research targeted specific neighborhoods and a restrained variety of participants, which might also restrict the generalizability of the findings to other communities or populations. Future research ought to include bigger and more numerous samples to enhance the representativeness of the findings.

Self-Reporting Bias

The data gathered via interviews and observations trusted self-reporting with the aid of the participants. This introduces the capability for social desirability bias and the misrepresentation of information. Researchers have to recollect the use of multiple techniques and facts resources to triangulate findings and enhance the validity of the consequences.

Lack of Longitudinal Data

The research commonly relied on move-sectional facts, which limits the capacity to set up causality and observe long-time period effects. Future studies should contain longitudinal designs to tune the consequences of non-secular programs over a prolonged duration and determine the sustainability in their impact.

Limited Perspectives

The study mainly focused on the perspectives of individuals involved in spiritual applications and establishments. It is critical to include the perspectives of other individuals, consisting of law enforcement organizations, community leaders, and non-religious groups, to acquire a comprehensive expertise of the topic.

Recommendations for Further Research

Based on the strengths and limitations of the current study, as well as the literature reviewed in Chapter 2, the following recommendations are proposed for further research:

Long-Term Effectiveness

Conducting longitudinal research to evaluate the long-term effectiveness of spiritual programs in decreasing crime behavior and promoting successful reintegration is recommended. This could offer insights into the sustainability of the located fantastic consequences and the elements that make a contribution to long-lasting trade.

Comparative Studies

Conduct comparative studies to take a look at the effectiveness of non-secular applications in comparison to other intervention methods, which include secular community applications or traditional justice structures. This could assist become aware of the particular contributions and capability synergies between exclusive procedures.

Factors Influencing Program Success

Investigate the contextual factors that affect the fulfillment of religious programs in special groups, which include neighborhood traits, social dynamics, and get right of entry to assets. Understanding those factors can inform the development of tailored interventions that address specific community needs.

Evaluation of Program Components

Conduct rigorous evaluations of particular application components within non secular interventions, such as mentoring, skill improvement, and community engagement,

to determine their person contributions to results. This would help refine program designs

and optimize resource allocation.

Comparative Analysis of Religious Denominations

Explore the versions in application effectiveness and consequences throughout

different non secular denominations. Comparative analyses can offer insights into the

capability effect of theological perspectives, organizational structures, and cultural

contexts on software achievement.

Implications

Positive Social Change

This groundbreaking study illuminates a path towards profound positive social

change, illuminating the transformative role of religious programs and institutions in

fostering a safer, more harmonious society. By addressing the pressing issues of juvenile

crime, community development, and juvenile offender reintegration, our research unveils

a canvas of hope for a brighter future.

Inspiring Individual Growth

The heart of our findings lies in the power of religious-based interventions to

inspire personal growth among at-risk youth and juvenile offenders. These programs

serve as beacons of hope, instilling a sense of purpose and resilience in young hearts. As

we nurture these individuals' potential, we set forth ripples of positive change that can

uplift entire communities.

Strengthening Family Bonds

Our research celebrates the pivotal role of families in guiding the rehabilitation and reintegration of juvenile offenders. By encouraging family involvement in religious initiatives and community outreach, we cultivate a nurturing environment that fosters understanding, forgiveness, and unconditional love. In this tapestry of unity, families become pillars of support, weaving tighter bonds that withstand the trials of life.

Empowering Religious Organizations and Community Agencies

Religious organizations and community agencies emerge as catalysts for change, transforming lives through evidence-based practices and compassionate care. Our research emboldens these institutions, inspiring them to take the lead in offering mentorship, counseling, and skill-building initiatives. As they embrace their pivotal role, they unleash a wave of positive impact that reaches far beyond their walls.

Upholding a Just and Compassionate Society

At the policy level, our research champions a call for balance and compassion within the criminal justice system. Armed with evidence, we advocate for policies that emphasize rehabilitation alongside deterrence. By embracing an enlightened approach, we pave the way for a more just society that nurtures second chances and embraces the promise of redemption.

Illuminating Methodological Brilliance

This study showcases the brilliance of qualitative research, as we unlock the intricate nuances of human experience through semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis. Our methodological journey opens doors to a deeper understanding of complex

social issues, inspiring fellow researchers to embark on their own quests for knowledge and enlightenment.

Empowering Future Endeavors

As we unveil our recommendations, we spark a movement that reverberates through academia, community work, and policymaking. Our research empowers religious organizations, community agencies, and policymakers to implement evidence-based programs that change lives. It serves as a compass, guiding future endeavors towards a more harmonious and compassionate world.

A Glimpse of Hope

In the heart of our conclusions, a glimmer of hope shines bright. We invite the world to witness the transformative potential of religious engagement and community collaboration. Let our findings serve as a beacon of hope, illuminating the path towards a future where every young soul is nurtured, every community thrives, and every heart embraces the promise of change.

Additional Implications

This study contributes methodologically, theoretically and empirically to the existing literature in several ways:

Methodological Implications

The research demonstrates the cost of employing the qualitative methods which include interviews and observations, to advantage a comprehensive knowledge of the stories and perspectives of participants. Future studies can construct upon this

methodological technique to offer a greater nuanced evaluation of the complex

interaction among spiritual programs, community improvement, and crime prevention.

Theoretical Implications

The findings make a contribution to the theoretical expertise of the position of

faith in addressing juvenile delinquency and network improvement. They have a look at

highlights the capability of non-secular packages to provide a supportive environment,

foster ethical improvement, and sell advantageous behavior exchange. These findings can

inform and increase present theoretical frameworks related to faith, crime prevention, and

rehabilitation.

Empirical Implications

The empirical findings of this study add to the body of evidence supporting the

effectiveness of religious applications in decreasing crook behavior and facilitating a hit

reintegration. They have a look at precise examples and stories that spotlight the impact

of these applications on the lives of adolescent offenders. These empirical insights can

manual destiny software layout, implementation, and evaluation efforts.

Positive Social change could help prevent teen school drop-out rates in Georgia

and across the world. This will give the teens a positive opportunity to be an asset to the

community and his or herself. Creating Programs and investing knowledge and values in

the teens lives will make a big difference for the generation of today and the generation

of tomorrow. As the researcher of the study, the future plans are to identify high risk

barriers in the teenage group and create or connect with resources and religious leaders to

address the concerns and risk to make the change of positive change birth new beginnings

for everyone involved. The researcher's interest is to birth change and advocate for betterment for the youth, society social change agents of tomorrow.

Recommendations for Practice

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations for practice can be considered:

Collaboration and Partnerships

Foster collaboration between spiritual institutions, network companies, law enforcement companies, educational establishments, and other individuals worried in crime prevention and network improvement. By working collectively, those entities can leverage their assets, know-how, and networks to create comprehensive and sustainable applications that cope with the multifaceted wishes of youngster offenders and at-risk kids.

Holistic Approaches

Develop and enforce holistic interventions that integrate religious teachings and practices with practical ability-constructing, mentorship, educational assist, and get right of entry to employment opportunities. By addressing the non-secular, emotional, and practical desires of participants, those interventions can sell holistic development and boom the probabilities of a success reintegration.

Training and Capacity Building

Provide training and capacity-constructing tasks for spiritual leaders, volunteers, and software facilitators involved in delivering spiritual interventions. These projects have to be conscious of best practices in mentoring, counseling, and running with

children at-threat children. Building the capabilities and information of these worried will decorate the exceptional and effectiveness of the programs.

Program Evaluation

Establish strong evaluation mechanisms to assess the outcomes and impact of non-secular programs. This includes growing appropriate metrics, accumulating information on program effectiveness, and monitoring the long-term consequences of individuals. Regular evaluation and feedback loops will facilitate evidence-based totally selection-making and aid non-stop software improvement.

Conclusion

This study highlights the vast function that religious applications and establishments can play in contributing to community improvement, crime prevention, and the rehabilitation of stripling offenders. The findings reveal that those packages have the capacity to have a fine effect on people, households, agencies, and society as an entire. By addressing the underlying factors that make a contribution to delinquency and supplying a supportive and transformative environment, non-secular interventions provide an alternative technique to standard justice systems. This observation emphasizes the significance of collaboration, holistic techniques, and software evaluation in maximizing the effectiveness of religious programs. Ultimately, the key take-home message is that spiritual applications can serve as powerful catalysts for wonderful social trade, offering hope, steering, and possibilities for private increase to those involved, at the same time as contributing to safer and more resilient communities.

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Appendix A: Consent Form

Dear participant,

You are invited to participate in a research study entitled "relationship between crime and religion". This research study aims to discover the relationship between religiosity and crime deterrence among juvenile offenders aged between 16 and 24 years old in the US. There are no risks, costs, or benefits for participating in this study. The researcher has taken reasonable precautions to protect your responses and most importantly, your identity. The questions in this interview do not require you in any way to reveal any identifying information such as an address, name, phone number, or phone number. Furthermore, the collected data will be encrypted and stored in a password-protected disk. Any information or views that you have will remain anonymous. Your anonymity is guarantee. Thank you for trusting me to collect information that could possibly make a difference in the world.

Participants Consent

You are participating in this interview voluntarily. You can also decline to respond to any question. You have the right to withdraw from this interview at any point without any consequences. If you desire to withdraw from contributing to the research or have any questions, contact the researcher using the contact listed below. If you desire not to receive any more notifications about this research, kindly email the researcher at Walden University.

The Walden University appraised and approved this research study. In case of additional concerns, discussions, or questions concerning your rights and obligation as a

participant, or you feel intimidated by any aspect of the research, you can anonymously contact the school: Walden University

If you have understood your rights and obligations, and you are willing to contribute, we will proceed with the interview.

Appendix B: Questionnaire

Part A

i.   Indicate your age

ii.   Indicate the participant's gender Male [ ]   Female [ ]

iii.   Indicate the arena you work in. For example of church/organizations/law

enforcement/community centers/courts /school

iv.   Select your highest level of education

High School [ ]   Undergraduate [ ]   Postgraduate [ ]

v.   Indicate current role

vi.   Indicate number of years in this role

Less than 1 year [ ]   1 to 3 years [ ]4 to 10 years [ ]   More than 10 years [ ]

Part B

1.   a) What are the names of the neighborhood(s) where you most recently worked?

        b)   How long have you worked there? Years   Months

2.   How much time in a typical month did/do you spend working in specific

neighborhoods? Days

3.   What are you usually doing while there?

4.   a) Are there any religious programs available for neighborhood residents? Yes [ ]

No [ ]

        b)   IF YES: What kind(s)?

5.   a) Are there any religious programs specifically available for youths? Yes [ ] No [

]

6.   IF YES: What Kind(s)?

b)   IF NO: What kind(s) of religious programs would you like to see in the neighborhood(s) where you work?

7.   a) In the neighborhood(s) where you work, is a crime a big problem, a small problem, or no problem at all?

Yes [ ] No [ ]

b)   IF YES: What kinds of crime?

c)   How serious of a problem is it?

d)   How are neighborhood residents dealing with crime problems?

e)   Are there any religious programs specifically available for juvenile offenders aged between 16 and 24 years? Yes [ ] No [ ]

f)   IF YES: What Kind(s)?

g)   IF NO: What kind(s) of religious programs would you like to see targeting juvenile offenders aged between 16 and 24 years?

h)   Have you specifically worked with juvenile offenders aged between 16 and 24 years? Yes [ ] No [ ]

i)   IF YES: how would you describe the experience of religious reintegration?

j)   How does religious reintegration change the lives of juvenile offenders aged 16 to 24 years old?

k)   How is their religious attachment?

l)   How would you describe their religious commitment?

m)   How is their religious involvement?

n)   How are their religious beliefs?

8.   a) When a crime such as a beating, drugs, or shooting occurs, do you think that

some people in the neighborhood would rather involve religious institutions, instead of

calling the police? Yes [ ] No [ ]

b)   IF YES: What makes you say that?

c)   Would this be the same for young and older people? Yes [ ] No [ ]

9.   a) Has anything ever happened in the community where you could have called the

police but decided against it? Yes [ ] No [ ]

b)   IF YES: What happened and what was your reason(s) for not involving the

police?

10.   a) Besides crime, are there other kinds of problems in the neighborhood(s) where

you work? Yes [ ] No [ ]

b)   IF YES: What kinds of problems are there?

c)   How often do these types of things occur?

11.   a) Where you work, how do you satisfy youths' needs for community

membership, friendship, and a sense of belonging?

b)   Do you work to provide male role models for these juvenile offenders and

at-risk youth?

c)   Do you coordinate efforts with local police departments formally when

working with juvenile offenders and at-risk youth, or unofficially with individual police

officers e.g. members of your congregation?

d)   What is your view particularly when you think about drug abuse, juvenile offenders, and criminal justice?

12.   a) Where you work, how has the community reacted to calls for defunding police departments?

b)   In your collaboration with police or police departments to help juvenile offenders, in what ways would de-funding the police affect the criminal justice system? And how would this affect juvenile offenders and at-risk youth?

c)   How would de-funding the police affect crimes such as beating, drugs, or shooting, especially among American teens?

d)   In what ways do you think increasing funding for community policing and social work influences your efforts when working with juvenile offenders?

e) What are your personal views on how the local police and judicial authorities deals with juveniles?

f) From your experience do you have any suggestions that could positively impact juveniles and his or her connection with the judicial system?

(THANK YOU, PARTICIPANT, FOR YOUR TIME)