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Perceptions of Juvenile Justice Professionals Regarding the Effectiveness of Juvenile Reentry Programs and Recidivism in the Southwest Region

Lei Anne Johnson
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Walden University

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Lei Anne Johnson

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
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the review committee have been made.

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Walden University
2025

Abstract

Perceptions of Juvenile Justice Professionals Regarding the Effectiveness of Juvenile

Reentry Programs and Recidivism in the Southwest Region

by

Lei Anne Johnson

MS, Capella University, 2015

BS, Capella University, 2011

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Criminal Justice

Walden University

November 2025

Abstract

Juvenile recidivism persists in the U.S. justice system, highlighting the need for effective reentry programs. However, limited research exists on juvenile justice professionals' perceptions of program success. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore these professionals' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of juvenile reentry programs in reducing recidivism. Guided by Bandura's social learning theory, the study examined how observation and modeling influence youth behavior during reentry. The research questions focused on professionals' perceptions of program effectiveness and how these perceptions impact recidivism reduction efforts. A qualitative phenomenological design involved semi-structured interviews with 13 juvenile justice professionals in the southwest region of the United States. Thematic analysis of transcribed interviews, supported by NVivo, revealed seven themes: factors contributing to recidivism, role of the family, collaboration, effectiveness, challenges, implementation, and the future of reentry. Key findings indicate professionals perceive family involvement, stakeholder collaboration, and relationship-driven, holistic approaches to be crucial for success. However, conclusions highlight significant challenges, including funding shortages, staffing issues, poor interagency coordination, and negative environmental factors hindering program effectiveness. Recommendations include enhancing family support, improving collaboration, and addressing systemic barriers. This study's implications for positive social change involve informing the development of integrated, resource-rich reentry strategies and policies that support professionals, empower families, and equip youth for successful reintegration, thereby reducing recidivism.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of my beloved husband, my devoted parents, and my dear brother and sister.

To my husband, your love was my greatest gift, and your belief in me my steady foundation. You stood by me with quiet strength, unwavering encouragement, and a heart full of pride. Even in your absence, I feel your presence in every step forward. This achievement is as much yours as it is mine.

To my parents, thank you for your unconditional love, the values you instilled, and the sacrifices you made so I could pursue my dreams. Your legacy continues to live through me, and this work reflects the foundation you laid.

To my brother and sister, your steadfast support, encouragement, and love have meant more than words can express. Thank you for being a constant source of strength and grounding in my life. Each of you has shaped this journey in your own way, and I will always carry you in my heart.

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Table of Contents

List of Tables	v
List of Figures	vi
Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study.....	1
Introduction.....	1
Background	3
Problem Statement.....	5
Purpose of the Study	7
Research Question	9
Theoretical Framework for the Study.....	10
Nature of the Study	10
Definitions.....	11
Assumptions.....	12
Scope and Delimitations	12
Limitations	13
Significance.....	13
Summary	14
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	16
Introduction.....	16
Literature Search Strategy.....	17
Theoretical Foundation	17
Background of the Juvenile Probation Officer	22

Recidivism: Definition and Prevention.....	22
Prevention With Multisystemic Therapy	25
Prevention With Mentoring Programs	28
Prevention With Community Program	33
Summary and Conclusions	36
Chapter 3: Research Method.....	37
Introduction.....	37
Research Design and Rationale	37
Role of the Researcher	39
Methodology.....	40
Participant Selection Logic	41
Instrumentation	41
Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection.....	42
Dependability	43
Credibility	43
Transferability.....	44
Confirmability.....	44
Data Collection Plan	44
Data Analysis Plan.....	45
Issues of Trustworthiness.....	46
Recruitment.....	46
Consent Form.....	47

Safeguarding of Personal Identifying Information	47
Safeguarding and Proper Disposal of Collected Data.....	47
Incentives for Participants.....	48
Ethical Procedures	48
Summary	49
Chapter 4: Results	50
Introduction.....	50
Setting	51
Demographics	52
Data Collection	54
Data Analysis	54
Evidence of Trustworthiness.....	55
Results.....	57
Theme 1: Factors.....	61
Theme 2: Role of the Family	62
Theme 3: Collaboration	63
Theme 4: Effectiveness.....	64
Theme 5: Challenges.....	64
Theme 6: Implementation	65
Theme 7: Future of Reentry	66
Summary	67
Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations.....	68

Introduction.....	68
Interpretation of the Findings.....	69
Family Involvement.....	71
Factors That Lead to Recidivism.....	73
Collaboration Among Stakeholders.....	75
Effectiveness.....	77
Challenges.....	77
Implementation.....	78
Future of Reentry.....	78
Theoretical Framework.....	78
Limitations of the Study.....	79
Recommendations.....	80
Implications.....	82
Conclusion.....	83
References.....	85

List of Tables

Table 1. Demographics 53

List of Figures

Figure 1. Demographic Distribution of Participants (Individuals)	53
Figure 2. Perception Reentry	58
Figure 3. Perception on Juvenile Reentry Program	59
Figure 4. Perception on Recidivism.....	60
Figure 5. 7 Key Themes.....	61

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

This qualitative study examines juvenile justice professionals' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of juvenile reentry programs and recidivism in the Southwest Region of the United States. Research has indicated that community restraint alone has not been an effective outlet for reducing recidivism, yet some indicators suggest that supervision and treatment can reduce recidivism (Petersilia & Turner, 1993; Zettler, 2021). Reentry Programs offer partnerships, family involvement, and data sharing across agencies.

These are essential for creating a collaborative and effective juvenile reentry system and may also help reduce disproportionate minority contact (Cabaniss et al., 2007; Jain et al., 2018). Researchers have defined treatment programs as services to reintegrate a juvenile, designed to assist and equip the juvenile to enter the community. The long-range goal of reentry programs is to reduce the recidivism rate for juvenile offenders. In 2014, almost 1 million juveniles were arrested and processed by the U.S. justice system (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention [OJJDP], 2015, 2021). Most of these juveniles in detention facilities face problems such as overcrowding and unsafe conditions, such as residing with high-risk offenders (Coalition for Juvenile Justice, 2012).

While no specific case study focuses on juvenile recidivism, some cases bring to bear necessary research while analyzing the cause and effect of juvenile recidivism. The juvenile justice system was designed to rehabilitate juvenile offenders, yet the numbers

have increased, and their crimes have become more violent (Coalition for Juvenile Justice, 2012). The violence of these crimes has led to criminal prosecution due to the failure of rehabilitation. To stop the cycle of recidivism, youth need to be supported in their reentry transition with programs, services, and community assistance. As multi-systems are identified with family-focused, community programs and mentoring systems, these will encourage positive behavior of the youth and reduce further involvement of the youth with the juvenile justice system.

Altschuler and Armstrong (1994; Vidal et al., 2019) reported that intervention should start when a youth becomes incarcerated to promote reintegration into the community and reduce repeat offending. When there is no effective intervention, reentry success will be delayed. Still, successful reentry programs must have components that entail family, community resources, and programs that lower the probability of recidivism, according to Carney and Buttell (2003; OJJDP, 2020).

This study addresses the gap in the literature regarding how Juvenile Justice Professionals perceive the effectiveness of reentry programs and recidivism. This study can provide several components that can be used by Juvenile probation officers and other Juvenile Justice Professionals to help reduce recidivism and best practices of effective reentry programs. Chapter 1 includes the background of the study, problem statement, purpose statement, nature of the study, significance, theoretical foundation, and definitions of terms.

Background

On any given day, more than 43,500 juvenile offenders are in residential placement nationwide. Most of these youth will eventually return home and need assistance to do so successfully. The OJJDP's reentry programs help ensure that youth have the tools to be productive, law-abiding members of society upon their return. Successful reentry reduces recidivism and increases public safety. The Second Chance Act authorizes federal grants for reentry services such as employment, housing assistance, substance treatment, family programming, and mentoring that address common barriers to successful reentry. OJJDP's (2020) Second Chance Act programs provide specialized services to youth and promote family engagement between incarcerated parents and their children when it is in the child's best interest. The programs are part of the Office's comprehensive approach to enhancing public safety, holding youth accountable when they offend, and empowering all youth to live up to their potential. In 2016, more than 45,000 juvenile offenders were held in residential placement facilities nationwide, with an additional 3,500 juveniles held in adult jails and nearly 1,000 held in adult prisons. Although the youth incarceration rate has declined over the past 10 years, developing comprehensive approaches for reducing recidivism remains challenging for most state and local agencies. They require access to data, changes to service delivery, and coordination with multiple systems and organizations. One example of a successful reentry program is operating in Oakland, California, with the Alameda County Juvenile Justice Center, where they are implementing the juvenile reentry program with the Second Chance Initiative (OJJDP, 2018).

The Alameda County Juvenile Justice System has rapidly moved towards positive reforms over the last 10 years. The primary focus of their transformation required a realignment of Youth development principles and evidence-based best practices with a common goal of unifying both under the banner of a community and stakeholder-based cooperation (Jain et al., 2018).

This fundamental collaboration of California's Juvenile Justice Center (JJC) and the Second Chance Initiative provided services and support for youth under Oakland post-detention, case management, strategies for interagency coordination, conferencing, and legal assistance for creative data sharing across multiple disciplines. This super collaboration offered viable, evidence-based results for a more cohesive integration between the community, stakeholders, and the Alameda County Juvenile Justice system. Before the Second Chance Initiative, Alameda County had a 75% recidivism rate, which dropped to a meager 6% for nonviolent offenders and 1% from 25% for violent offenses, with an overall 60% decline in recidivism rate for the youth who participated in the program (Jain et al., 2013, 2018). Alameda County provided a template of best practices that they believe will be effective in the prevention and mitigation of juvenile recidivism through a robust partnership between the community, governmental agencies, and family engagement, which may also indirectly subvert disproportionate minority contact (Cabaniss et al., 2007; Singh, J. 2020). Many others, including the stakeholders, realize the family support unit's importance in preventing juvenile reentry (OJJDP, 2020; Panuccio, E.A. et al., 2012). This is just one example of a successful reentry program integrating other resources to prevent juveniles from returning to the system.

These programs are examples of reentry programs that Juvenile Justice Professionals have deemed as effective according to their perception of effective reentry programs. These programs address the need for services for reentry, such as employment, case management, mentoring, and education.

Problem Statement

The juvenile justice system was designed to rehabilitate juvenile offenders, yet recidivism numbers continue to increase. To stop the cycle of recidivism, youth need to be supported in the reentry transition with the assistance of programs, services, and family, along with a mentoring system that will not only encourage positive behavior of the youth but also reduce any further involvement of the youth with the juvenile justice system. The OJJDP (2017) recognized that when youth are supported with community programs that promote their development and have good diversity in their structure, the focus and the size will assist in socialization. The reentry programs that include mentoring, sports, peer counseling, workforce preparation, and entrepreneurship have positively impacted the youth.

Early intervention for juvenile delinquency starts with the first interaction with law enforcement. From this, specific problems can be identified to prevent, assist, and guide the youth, their family, and the juvenile justice system into providing successful community resources to avoid the continuous recidivism rate experienced in the Southwest Region of the United States. According to the Arizona Department of Juvenile Corrections (2023), researchers have claimed that one-time or short-term programs are

not addressing the critical social or personal problems that contribute to juvenile delinquency behavior.

The Arizona Department of Juvenile Corrections states that juvenile detention centers in Arizona must start using community-oriented work programs and partnering with community mentors so that this becomes a more practical approach (Arizona Department of Juvenile Corrections, 2023). The combination of services and resources allows a lower probability of juveniles not recidivating in the Southwest Region of the United States. Although juvenile justice programs may sustain young offenders during their incarceration, there is minimal research on juvenile justice professionals' perceptions regarding the success of juvenile reentry programs (Abrams & Aguilar, 2005; Dawes, 2011).

In the Southwest Region of the United States, there is currently no research literature regarding how juvenile justice professionals perceive juvenile reentry programs and their perceptions of roles in the reintegration into society process and success. Farn and Adams (2019) noted that young offenders often struggle with transitional issues upon release into society. Studies have shown that 55% of the juveniles have been rearrested within one year of their release, and during the same time, 24% of the juveniles have been reincarcerated and confined (Snyder & Sickmund, 2006; OJJDP, 2020). These statistics demonstrate the need for effective juvenile reentry programs.

To optimize reintegration success for recently released juvenile offenders, it is essential to examine the perceptions of juvenile justice professionals regarding juvenile reentry programs in the juvenile criminal justice system. Such an examination is critical

in providing policymakers with the accurate information needed to create effective reintegration programs and to allow them to implement required changes to policies and laws to ensure successful outcomes for juvenile offenders returning to society after institutionalized periods.

Transitioning from incarceration to reentry seems to be a difficult hurdle for most juveniles. However, Juvenile Justice Professionals can make this transition much smoother with effective reentry programs and readily available resources once the youth depart from the detention center. This will provide a seamless and successful transition back into the community. It is imperative that the examination and understanding of the effectiveness of reentry programs be explored thoroughly by Juvenile Justice Professionals.

The United States continues to have a significant youth delinquency problem. According to Aizer & Doyle (2015) and Sawyer (2019), juvenile rates have increased faster over the last 20 years than for adults. The confinement rate for juveniles is five times higher than in the highest country, and taxpayers are the ones who have this financial burden of housing and treating the juveniles (Aizer & Doyle, 2015; Sawyer, 2019). The Justice Policy Institute (2014) stated that each year, the United States shells out between 8 and 21 billion dollars for long-term costs for the confinement or housing of youth. This is the reason the rate is five times higher.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study is to examine and understand the perceptions of juvenile justice professionals regarding the effectiveness of reentry programs and how

reentry programs can create positive change in a juvenile's life so that, after a period of incarceration, they can function effectively in society.

The study will allow Juvenile Justice Professionals to perceive the suitable reentry programs that they feel are the most effective programs and have resources that may include family-focused and community-based programs designed to improve youth and family engagement. The appropriate reentry planning can help arrange the services many re-entering youth need, such as stable housing for those youth who are homeless when released, the continuation of education, employment, or vocational training, re-enrollment into health insurance coverage, and continued mental health or substance use treatment. Studies have shown that a youth who is part of community-based supervision and aftercare services has been found to reduce recidivism and increase the likelihood of the youth attending school and going to work. The reentry process is focused on ensuring that young people making this return home have access to the supervision, services, and support they may need to succeed. A court journal (Jain et al., 2018; Roush et al., 2009) stated that Juvenile Offender Reentry encourages citizens, government agencies, social services organizations, and community-based organizations, such as faith-based organizations, to make reentry a priority in programs and services to youths in juvenile confinement facilities.

The authors (Jain et al., 2018; Roush et al., 2009) said that systematically involving community-based programs throughout incarceration enhances the likelihood of successful community reintegration. They know that the public trusts these community-based programs, and their involvement with the juvenile confinement facility

enhances their cooperation with reentry programs. The reentry planning should continue to be a part of the overall intervention planning for youth in confinement and, as such, should begin at the point of placement in any confinement facility. Planning alone does not ensure the successful reentry of youth into those communities because the goal of all reentry planning, and service delivery is the total reintegration of the youth into their families, schools, and workplaces. Successful reintegration includes positive youth outcomes, including educational achievements, employment, civic involvement, and increased public safety.

Research Question

According to the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (2019), the high recidivism rates have significantly impacted public safety and the victims affected by new crimes. There is a cycle of repeat offending that offenders have been unable to break out of, so the need for reentry programs to reduce recidivism will improve public safety and examine the success of other reentry strategies, programs, and practices to evaluate effectiveness.

The purpose of the current qualitative study was to better understand the Southwest Region of the United States juvenile justice officers' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of reentry programs in reducing recidivism. The study will answer the following questions:

How does a Juvenile Justice Professional perceive reentry programs' effectiveness?

Theoretical Framework for the Study

Albert Bandura's (1977) social learning theory is the theoretical foundation of this study. Bandura stated that social learning theory is based on behaviors learned by watching and imitating others. Observation and modeling are primary roles in how and why people know (Green et al., 2021). The strong connection between the framework presented and the nature of this study includes Bandura's critical concepts of observation, imitation, and modeling, which, according to Bandura, involves learning from interacting with others in a social context. People also observe, assimilate, and imitate other people's behavior when they witness positive or negative behavior (Nabavi, 2020).

Based on Bandura's (1977) social learning theory, many juvenile justice professionals examine the juvenile imitating negative behaviors and needing constant approval from negative peers, which would lead the juvenile back into the detention setting. This theory would relate and be applied to the juvenile justice professional because their perception of an effective reentry program would have to incorporate mentoring, mental health, and family counseling to mitigate this deviant behavior. These juvenile justice professionals would target the needed areas, and social learning theory would be the road map for juvenile justice professionals to assess the youth and mitigate any further or future negative behavior.

Nature of the Study

In this study, the qualitative phenomenological approach was used. An in-depth analysis of the perceptions of juvenile justice professionals who are currently working with juveniles to identify effective reentry programs so that they may lead productive

lives in the community will be used. Juvenile Justice Professionals must consider factors such as family, school, and peer influences to perceive an effective reentry program. These three factors mentioned above should be incorporated in identifying effective reentry programs. These are all relevant influences that may positively or negatively affect the juvenile during the transitional stage. Interviews will be used for data collection, focusing on effective reentry programs and the perspective of the professionals working with juveniles in detention.

Definitions

For a better understanding of this study, the following terms are defined in the context of this research. The purpose is to provide the readers with crucial information about the contextual meaning of different terms.

Adjudication: a formal judgment on a disputed matter (OJJDP.gov, 2019).

Delinquency: Minor crimes, especially those committed by young people (OJJDP.gov, 2019).

Detention: the action of detaining someone or the state of being confined in official custody, especially as a political prisoner (OJJDP.gov, 2017)

Juvenile: A person who has not reached the age of 18 (Thornberry et al., 2018).

Juvenile delinquent: A young person whose antisocial behavior leads to violent or criminal acts (Smith, 2019).

Juvenile Justice Professionals: Juvenile Justice professionals work closely with juvenile offenders, including juvenile probation officers, caseworkers, judges, and prosecutors (Bernuz-Beneitez & Dumortier, 2018).

Probation: The release of an offender from detention, subject to a period of good behavior under supervision (OJJDP.gov 2019).

Juvenile probation officer: A person appointed to supervise offenders who are on probation.

Reentry: The action or process of re-entering something (OJJDP, 2022).

Assumptions

Leedy and Ormrod (2010; Sage Publications, 2018) noted that the term assumptions within the context of a research study refers to the foundation that the researcher takes to be assumed. In this research study, certain assumptions were applied. I believed that the participants are experts in their field. Second, the participants would give honest feedback regarding the subject matter. I also assumed that the data collection method was appropriate for the study. The reason why these assumptions are necessary is to have a better understanding of juvenile justice professionals' perception of the effectiveness of juvenile programs and recidivism in the southwest region of the United States. These assumptions are also necessary because they can affect the conclusion drawn from the study.

Scope and Delimitations

Delimitations in a research study are characteristics that are needed to limit the study's scope to manage the study's spectrum to guide further research (Thomas et al., 2005; Theofanidis, 2019). This study was participants working in the Southwest region of the United States. Due to the small sample size, the final research findings may not be

transferable to other juvenile justice professionals in the southwest region of Arizona or other areas in the United States.

Limitations

Limitations are always present in a study. One of the possible limitations is that the study was conducted toward juvenile justice professionals, a specific group of individuals in the juvenile justice system. Also, these participants must have at least five years of experience working with the juveniles in this setting. Another limitation the researcher may encounter was that there may not be enough juvenile justice professionals to interview due to retirement, busy schedules, or just not interested in the subject matter.

Significance

The research was planned to fill a gap in understanding and identifying effective reentry programs significantly affecting juvenile recidivism. The National Council on Crime and Delinquency (NCCD, 2010, 2019) recommends using risk assessments, screening instruments, and other tools to assist systems to shift youth to the lowest form of supervision needed to meet their needs and sometimes divert them from going into the system.

NCCD (2010) stated how other experts recommend that youth are periodically assessed throughout their contact with the system, from intake through placement and community supervision, and services. These types of recommendations are part of social change in criminal justice. Communities are partnering with schools and workforces to give the youth work and provide a positive mentor. According to Schwalbe (2009), agencies rely on one another to share information regarding youth and some of their

essential needs. This phenomenological study describes juvenile justice professionals' perceptions of their experiences working with juveniles and the risk factors that caused the failure and, ultimately, the return to detention.

Summary

This study had limited research, which persuaded me to focus on the perceptions of juvenile justice professionals concerning the effectiveness of reentry programs, along with exploring and documenting strategies that can be used to reduce the recidivism rate among the youth. To address the gap in the literature, I used the phenomenological approach in the study to examine research participants' perceptions of juvenile justice professionals concerning the reentry programs and their perceived effectiveness.

Chapter 1 identified the literature gap and the need for the gap to be addressed. The background section briefly explained the Second Chance Act and how the grants are used for reentry. The background also gave a tiny peek into California's Alameda County Juvenile Justice System and how the Second Chance Act collaborates with their detention center.

Chapter 2 consists of a review of the literature on examples of reentry programs that were promoted to reduce recidivism and have several prevention components in their program. Chapter 2 introduces the study's theoretical foundation, Bandura's (1977) social learning theory, and discusses its core concepts, such as modeling. As part of the literature review, it also explores other foundational theories, like Sutherland and Cressey's (1947) theory of differential association.

The research study comprises juvenile justice professionals associated with the juvenile justice system in the Southwest Region of the United States. I explored and identified commonalities among the participants through open-ended questions and developed themes and patterns. This research has implications for social change because it can help guide favorable policies while amending antiquated and ineffective ones. The research will also allow juvenile probation officers additional resources to assist them in their search for reentry components and programs for the youth.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Youths need to be supported in the reentry transition with the assistance of Juvenile Justice Professionals, who can provide effective programs that include mentoring, counseling, workforce preparation, and family services that will encourage positive behavior of the youth but reduce any further involvement with the juvenile justice system.

This approach coincides with Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory. The observation and modeling with reentry programs can have a positive outcome with youth when youth are supported by community programs that encourage their development and have good diversity in their structure. This study aimed to identify the juvenile justice professionals' perceptions of the effectiveness of reentry programs and recidivism. Data from this study were obtained from Juvenile Justice professionals such as juvenile probation officers, detention officers, case managers, and social workers. The perceptions were collected via over-the-phone interviews, data retrieved from the probation database, and discussions of agency collaboration with the division director.

In this study chapter, I will discuss the literature search strategies, followed by the theoretical framework, which includes Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory. I then combined social learning with juvenile recidivism, reentry programs involving school, mentoring, community involvement, family therapy, and other resources. In addition, the theoretical framework and qualitative methodologies are discussed in more detail.

Literature Search Strategy

The literature presented in this study primarily derives from SAGE, ProQuest, Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC), ProQuest Criminal Justice, and the EBSCO database as Academic Search Premier. Furthermore, other literature was expanded to online scholarly journals that were focused on juvenile recidivism and reentry; these articles were from the Arizona Department of Education, Arizona Department of Juvenile Corrections, Texas Juvenile Justice Department, OJJDP, and the Juvenile Justice Geography, Policy, Practice, and Statistics. The keywords used to search the database were *juvenile reentry, juvenile reentry programs for juveniles, detention programs, community reentry, juvenile delinquency, and recidivism. Second Chance Act, stakeholders, Office of Juvenile Justice, treatment programs, placement services, group homes, educational programs, evidence-based programs, family support programs, protective class, cross-system collaboration, case workers, juvenile probation officers, and the School to Prison Pipeline.*

Theoretical Foundation

Albert Bandura's (1977) social learning theory is a significant part of the framework in this study. The social learning theory is based on behaviors learned by watching and imitating others. When there are positive role models in the home, youth tend to emulate these behaviors; however, when such positive influences are absent, youth may act out in an attempt to seek attention (Hoeve et al., 2012). Studies have shown that when there are a lack of a parent household and solid foundations, youth will seek approval from among their peers, being able to achieve a form of gratification by

successfully entering or reentering into the juvenile justice system. While they are in this system, they start to get the much-needed structure, haven, and attention they needed often through non-parent figures who serve as role models (Barnert et al., 2015). Social learning theories suggest that children learn to exhibit aggressive behaviors because they observe others acting aggressively and can see how these behaviors are reinforced over time (Bandura, 1973). Zimmerman (2011) and Telzer (2018) believed that social learning theory emerges from a child's learning experiences embedded within the social environment of their family, peers, gender, and culture. It has been explained that social learning theory continues to define a child's socialization, emphasizing the social learning experiences, such as reinforcement, tuition, modeling, and the emotions that develop from these formative experiences. During 1934 and 1947, the first social learning theory was developed and published.

This social learning theory is known as the differential association. Sutherland and Cressey's (1947) theory of differential association is that criminal behavior is learned to the point that a person becomes delinquent because of the excess of definitions favorable to law violations over those unfavorable to law violations. The simplest way to understand is by stating that a person becomes a criminal when most of the ideas they are exposed to are crime related.

Sutherland and Cressey (1947) further explained that the theory of criminal behavior is learned from other peers and that to become a criminal themselves, they must learn three critical things from criminals to become a criminal: motive, attitude (a rationalization for breaking the law), and technique (skills for certain crimes).

Though there are several aspects of social learning theory, another subset of social learning theory is the observing of the behaviors of others, which is considered modeling. The theorist has observed that many adolescents will follow a role model using substances with positive consequences, and they are more likely to develop positive expectations of the substance use; this will, however, increase the likelihood that the adolescent will begin to use that substance (Hahlbeck & Vito, 2022).

Modeling the behavior of a parent or peer can influence adolescents during their early years, specifically when they feel as if that parent or peer is a trusted individual with whom they have received advice or counsel. Modeling occurs as observing others' behavior and attitude, and how this behavior continues to influence the observer to begin engaging in this behavior.

Akers, R. L., and Sellers, C. (2004) and Sullivan and Roane (2018) believed that differential reinforcement was a process of a social learning theory that individuals experience and anticipate the consequences of their behavior. The actions of an individual can be determined by what that person believes the consequences of that particular action or lack of action will be. This action will also determine whether the person will continue to commit or refrain from committing any further or future crimes, which depends on the past, present, and future rewards and punishments for those actions (Akers & Sellers, 2004; Sullivan & Roane, 2018).

The reinforcement is the attitudes, beliefs, and values that occur throughout several social learning theories, either positive or negative. Positive reinforcement occurs

when positive behavior and positive outcomes are rewarded, just as negative reinforcement can involve the removal of adverse responses or negative consequences.

The level at which differential reinforcement occurs depends upon its degree, frequency, and probability, which means that reinforcement will likely happen and contribute to the repetition of the behavior when it occurs more frequently and with a consequence to the behavior. Reinforcement can arise directly and indirectly. The most critical reinforcements are social, resulting from interactions with peer groups and family members (Akers, 2004; Sullivan, 2018).

The association of family and friends contributes to learning and acceptance of deviant conduct, which is the suggested idea of social learning theory. However, it has also been recommended that youth develop these destructive attitudes and values without prior exposure and obtain with others similar attitudes and behaviors. Siegel and McCormick (2006) and Fraser (2018) mentioned that a general theory of crime is that one's propensity to crime is stable throughout life. Yet, the opportunities for crime change throughout the same life course.

Many studies have applied the Bandura (1977) social learning theory and its theoretical value, supported by the relationships between social learning concepts and criminal behaviors. These studies included behaviors on childhood and adolescent aggression, intimate partner violence, drug and alcohol use, terrorism, and other violent and non-violent criminal behavior (Akers & Sellers, 2004; Bandura, 1977; Hahlbeck & Vito, 2022; Sullivan & Roane, 2018).

Nevertheless, the two most exciting areas the study should focus on are how associations with family and friends impact behavior. Social learning theory explains the onset of deviant and criminal behavior but can also explain the transition into conforming behaviors (Clingempeel & Henggeler, 2003). Clingempeel & Henggeler (2003) conducted a study on 80 youth in South Carolina over 5 years. After the study, it was concluded that as young adults, their criminal behavior can be linked to their prior relationship with their peers.

The association of family and peers is the agreed-upon source of deviant and criminal conduct from the social learning perspective. According to Akers and Sellers (2004), these behaviors can be modified and manipulated through positive direction and programs guided by social learning principles, including mentoring, peer counseling, gang intervention, delinquency prevention, career development, and community engagement.

The premise behind this program is to provide positive experiences and role models for youth that will expose them to conventional norms and values that will decrease the attraction to future delinquent or criminal behavior. Social learning theory has been applied in numerous studies, and the strong relationships between social learning concepts and criminal behaviors have supported its theoretical value. Juvenile Justice Professionals can use the social learning theory by targeting effective programs that show a mitigation pattern.

Background of the Juvenile Probation Officer

While the public considers juvenile probation officers as just individuals who supervise offenders, the fundamental role of juvenile probation officers is much more complex. Most juvenile probation officers are involved not only in the sentencing process of youth but also in the input of judges, attorneys, and court officials. Juvenile probation officers work at several levels and have legal and sociological training in rehabilitation and the powers to arrest and detain. Juvenile probation officers have the authority to carry firearms and execute arrests like correctional or law enforcement officers. Juvenile probation officers must have at least a bachelor's degree, and relevant employment history is helpful. Education and experience are proper concerning the juvenile's supervision and guidance duties, risk assessment interviews, evaluations, investigation, self-defense, and restraint procedures.

Recidivism: Definition and Prevention

Researchers express that recidivism is the act of an individual repeating an unacceptable behavior even after having consequences for that behavior. The definition of juvenile recidivism is also said to be those juveniles who have continued to break the law and are re-arrested. According to Maruna (2021), the definition of prevention is resistance, which is to abstain from crime by those with a previous history of offending. Maruna also stated several positive examples of encouraging desistance, including mentors, counseling, jobs, and continued education. These agencies and individuals play a vital role in the desistance process and in reducing recidivism (NIJ.gov, 2022). The National Institute of Justice (NIJ.gov, 2022) stated that recidivism is measured by

criminal acts resulting in rearrest, reconviction, or return to detention or prison. The state of Arizona describes recidivism as the return to custody within the Arizona Department of Juvenile Corrections (ADJC), which consists of parole revocations and recommitments or the Arizona Department of Corrections (ADC, n.d.) following the release from a first-time commitment.

Another definition of recidivism, given by California (2021), states that recidivism is the return to the Division of Juvenile Justice or Adult custody within a three-year release. Each state in the United States has its own definition of recidivism, but they all provide the exact definition. According to Schueneman (2021), the recidivism rates for juveniles have continued to be at such a high rate, which means that when it comes to preventing recidivism, this will require an effective intervention program that would be based upon several factors that have significant components that include family, school, job, and treatment. When the idea of exploring intervention for preventing future bad behavior is considered, a clear and concise discussion regarding recidivism and prevention is needed, yet the focus should be set on early intervention to prevent the continuing circle of recidivism (Burt et al., 1998; Cohen, 1998; Jeffrey, 1998; Shumaker, 1997; NIJ, 2022).

This means it is important to determine what is happening with the juvenile and how this behavior started. It would then be possible to take the proper steps to prevent this behavior from continuing, and with this comes a prevention plan. When a juvenile is kept busy, their mind is occupied with positive interactions rather than negative, uninvited thoughts. There are various definitions for the word recidivism, but the

meaning is the same regardless of the definitions. Recidivism is the inclination to relapse into bad behavior or criminal behavior.

The United States has focused on making the punishment as harsh as possible to prevent the illegal behavior from continuing. Still, the reality is that no matter how severe the punishment is, someone is willing to continue coming back into the criminal justice system. Yoon (2019) believed that one of the ways a program or system is shown to be effective is through the recidivism rate of that program or system. Yoon also stated that recidivism is also known as the commission of a repeat offense, and most juvenile programs aim to prevent recidivism. There are two essential elements to recidivism: the first is the commission of the offense, and the second is the individual who has already committed one other offense (Blumstein & Larson, 1971; NIJ, 2022); both parts must be clarified to receive a clear and concise definition of recidivism. What is considered a “commission of an offense,” and do these offenses include status offenses? Do parole violations fall under the definition of recidivism? While assuming the phrase “commission of an offense” refers to a criminal act and thus excludes status offenses and parole violations (OJJDP, 2022). The definition of recidivism can shed a different light when the youth has already committed at least one offense and has been found guilty of the offense. Once a juvenile has been arrested but diverted, this is sometimes included in the definition of recidivism. The United States continues to spend thousands of dollars to lock up juveniles and then have them return to the same place where they offended.

There are no national figures for juvenile recidivism rates, unlike those for adults. States individually choose how they track recidivism, and this causes a significant

limitation of accessible information. It also makes it strenuous for advocates to determine the full extent of juvenile recidivism in the United States. According to MST Services (2018), 11 states do not track the recidivism rate, and those states that continue to follow the recidivism rate are only focused on a limited scale of how juveniles are introduced into the justice system.

The Council State Government (CSG) Justice Center compared the reported state statistics in 2015, and the study revealed how juveniles are more likely to re-offend than adults after release. The study also revealed how juveniles are more likely to re-offend than adults across all states. For 3 years, the highest reported rate for juvenile recidivism was 76%, and 84% within 5 years. These numbers became as high once the juvenile came into adulthood. When looking into the historical background of recidivism, we know that recidivism has always been a severe problem in the United States, which has the highest incarceration rate compared to other countries (OJJDP, 2022).

Throughout the years, the United States penal codes have focused on punishment. Still, the focus is on harsh punishment, so it would only make common sense that one would stay clear of criminal behavior, knowing the outcome (OJJDP, 2022).

Prevention With Multisystemic Therapy

Multisystemic therapy (MST) is a multifaceted therapy to assist at-risk youth and juvenile offenders in reducing criminal behavior. MST was developed in the United States in the late 1970s because there were insufficient successes in treating severe juvenile offenders. All existing efforts to treat offenders were considered a failure and did not address many delinquency problems. Henggeler (1998, 2017) stated that the

counseling programs were one-on-one sessions, only focused on small subjects, and the counseling delivered in the settings was inappropriate for addressing the problems.

Henggeler continued to stress that antisocial behavior is complex, and treatment becomes ineffective when factors such as individual, family, peers, school, and neighborhood are not addressed. MST is considered one of the evidence-based interventions for recidivism used today; this therapy assists at-risk youth and juvenile offenders in reducing criminal behavior. One of the primary goals of the Juvenile Justice System is to reduce recidivism and protect the safety of the public. With the introduction of MST, the juvenile can safely stay at home and still receive the treatment necessary to become a productive citizen in their community. MST is a realistic view regarding intervention strategies for juveniles. Henggeler et al. mentioned how the MST program is a process over a 4-to-6-month period, and therapists are available to the family 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

MST focuses on improving the family function, enhancing the peer relationship, school function, and community relationship. One of the ways that MST is reducing the dropout rate is by visiting the family at their homes and in their communities. This treatment provides the family comfort and increases treatment where and when needed.

The therapist is not only available twenty-four hours a day but also seven days a week, and most sessions are every day. Nine core principles are the design and implementation of the MST intervention Program (Schoenwald et al., 2000). MST's primary purpose is an assessment to interpret and understand how to identify problems and their context. Most therapists assigned to the families will gather information from teachers, referral sources, family members, and other essential sources to determine the

cause of the delinquency. Afterward, some treatment goals are put in place, which directly reflect the youth and come now from the assessment; this is the first principle.

The second principle is the interaction between the family and the youth and emphasizes employing systemic strengths to encourage change. The third principle is also designed to mitigate the family members' irresponsible behavior. The fourth principle goes through the here-and-now solutions, whose primary focus is on those goals that are clear, concise, and obtainable goals that are being worked on to achieve success in this area. The fifth principle pertains to the therapist exploring the areas of concern involving the youth and the family, peers, school, and community. During this principle, the area and type of interaction that is present between the youth and these four areas mentioned above must also be considered during the fifth principle (Conroy et al., 2023).

The focus of the sixth principle is on the youth's and the family's developmental maturity and capacity. At the same time, the therapist will be focused on the workings of the competencies of the youth and the parents. The last three principles are seven, eight, and nine. Principle seven involves the interaction with the therapists and family on a daily or weekly basis. In contrast, principle eight consists of the accountability of the therapist through the evaluation of the treatment goals and outcomes, which comes from multiple perspectives that hold the therapist accountable.

Lastly, the ninth principle is the empowering stage; the therapist empowers the family to solve their problems and gives them resources through a community support network. This process maintains their progress after treatment (Conroy et al., 2023).

Prevention With Mentoring Programs

It only takes one caring adult to change the life and attitude of youth. Juveniles are very unpredictable and have exhibited bad behavior within a second. Influential peer mentoring has become one of the most significant ways to grasp the juvenile's attention and receive the much-needed guidance to promote the well-being of the juvenile and reduce the risk of incarceration, according to the National Institute of Justice (2021). The United States holds approximately 5,000 mentoring organizations that serve more than 3 million youth daily. One nationally known mentoring program is My Brother's Keeper Initiative (Obama.org, 2018). Former President Obama introduced this program. This mentoring program allows young men to understand who they are and what they will become. These young men will now have a sense of belonging.

The program allows the youth to venture out of being uncomfortable and find the space and understanding to be comfortable with themselves and their peers, parents, teachers, and others. Numerous community-based organizations are investing their time and resources into operating the mentoring program. No one knows why mentoring works so well, just that it does, and the data that has been collected has proven it, time and time again. Judges in juvenile court are looking forward to promoting that each youth should be assigned a mentor with the assistance of their juvenile probation officer, and as a term of probation. Dubois (2021) stated how important the mentoring factor becomes to those individuals who are being mentored by men from their communities and who understand their circumstances. Dubois recalled how circumstances can change the thought process of many of these young men just by having a positive role model willing

to work with the youth to assist in stopping the trend of recidivism or just the involvement in the juvenile justice system. Bandura's (1977) social learning theory allows the youth to learn positive behavior in a positive setting with an adult, which assists in mitigating the deviant behavior toward a positive outcome. Mentoring programs continue to serve a diverse population with high-risk and need factors, such as poverty and disadvantaged neighborhoods. The approach for these programs differs according to the age of the mentor and mentee, whether the mentor is volunteering or a paid staff, and whether the mentor is a one-on-one or group mentor.

New Pathways for Youth is a mentoring program out of Phoenix, Arizona. New Pathways for Youth has developed a holistic approach with workshops, retreats, and case management, providing a life skills curriculum. Each youth will work toward their own tailored plan with their personal development goals set by that youth but will be achieved through the assistance and support of an adult mentor. New Pathways for Youth mentors have relationships with their mentees for at least 2 years.

During that time, the youth have developed life skills, the knowledge they acquire and effectively apply, and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), which they identify, address, and cope with. This unique one-on-one mentoring model includes other community mentors connected to the organization. These builds trust for the mentees and a sense of belonging with others in similar situations, whether at home, school or in their community. Research has indicated that the longer the mentor relationship lasts, the greater the value for the youth (New Pathways for Youth, 2022).

The relationship between the mentor and mentee can often continue, with the average relationship lasting over four years. Future for Kids is another Arizona mentoring program that supports the elementary and middle school youth in Maricopa County who have experienced ACEs, which consist of emotional or physical trauma that takes place before the age of 18. Future for Kids is designed for the youth to develop socially and emotionally, learning coping mechanisms and self-regulation. The mentors are in place to display healthy interactions, support the youth with their self-confidence in problem-solving, and assist them in engaging in hands-on learning.

One proven approach to reducing the risks associated with ACEs is mentorship, which provides youth with stable and nurturing relationships. There are three core pillars that the Future for Kids out-of-school-time program teaches: academics, athletics, and ethics. These core pillars for the out-of-school program address the needs of the youth ages 8-14 and create a brighter future for those who face adversity.

One of the most well-known mentoring programs is the Boys and Girls Club of America Youth Mentoring Program. The best part regarding the Boys and Girls Club is that this organization is located all over the United States (bgca.org, 2022) in every city, state, and county across the globe. The Boys and Girls Club mentors help the youth grow confidently into capable, productive adults. According to the Boys and Girls Club (bgca.org, 2022), those youth who have continued to meet regularly with the mentor are forty percent more likely to graduate on time and 55% more likely to enroll in college or trade school.

The Department of Justice acknowledges that mentoring positively impacts youth (bgca.org, 2022), and they support the Boys and Girls Club to provide positive adult mentors to help these young people have a brighter future. When youth encounter positive influences, this leads to increased confidence, self-esteem, and improved academic performance. Still, primarily, it allows the youth to realize their full potential. Mentors are there to encourage, assist, and help prevent early drug usage, dropping out of high school, and skipping school. Positive mentors are the ones who encourage a youth's dreams, promote positive outcomes, and provide guidance with the caring and support that is needed. More than 400,000 trained staff and volunteers strive to support millions of kids across America to help them grow into confident, capable adults. Boys and Girls Clubs of America say they fill the gap for youth with no one to encourage them, those who lack a positive role model, and even those who may need an encouraging word or just an ear to listen.

Lastly is the RED Project. RED (Rehabilitation Enables Dreams, 2023) is a program that shows the possibility of progress toward successful reentry that originated from the state of Georgia. RED engages in a classroom atmosphere inside the courtroom and treats program participants as students rather than criminals. RED's curriculum is structured so that each student will develop the social, civic, and financial literacy opportunities presented to them.

The 12-month modules engage the students with learning activities, task-oriented modules, and interactive educational workshops. Students are paired with appropriate mentors based on the individual need's intake assessment. Mentors are implemented to

help support the students as they navigate the modules and complete the program requirements. According to the RED Project (2023), once a student has shown competition and is ready for graduation, their record will be deleted and referred to a higher educational institution or an employment opportunity.

The opportunity for higher education and employment can be together based on the student's needs. RED's (2023) definition of recidivism is based on an individual's tendency to relapse into a previous condition or behavior. RED continues to recall how, in the United States, the penal codes are focused heavily on punishment, so one would think that a sensible individual would stay away from crime, knowing that the punishment of getting caught would be harsh. Mentoring programs have continued to be an essential strategy in the United States in preventing adverse consequences and encouraging strength among at-risk youth. Mentoring programs share a common goal of providing youth with a structured curriculum, support, and positive role-modeling that the youth can look up to. The OJJDP (2021) is the largest federal funder of mentoring programs and has awarded nearly one billion grants to mentoring programs from 2008 to 2019. During this time, 95,000 new mentors assisted more than 600,000 new mentees nationwide. Many studies have found that connecting youth to a mentoring program has become a positive outcome for preventing and reducing delinquent behavior and recidivism. This overviewed several reentry programs and how Bandura's social learning theory suggests that behaviors interact with individual and environmental factors. Personal characteristics, behavior itself, and ecological characteristics are determinants in shaping an adolescent's behavior (Bandura, 1998). According to the OJJDP, mentoring

reentry programs have improved self-esteem, academic achievement, and peer relationships

Prevention With Community Program

Operation New Hope (2020) is a curriculum-based aftercare treatment program designed to assist chronic, high-risk juvenile offenders in reintegrating into the community after they are released from secure confinement. The program is grounded as a “reality therapy” based on six programmatic principles believed to help with reintegration: To Improve the basic socialization skills necessary for successful reintegration into the community. Significantly reduce criminal activity in terms of amount and seriousness. Alleviate the need for or dependence on alcohol or illicit drugs. Improve overall lifestyle choices (social, education, job training, and employment). Reduce the individual’s need for gang participation and affiliation as a support mechanism. Reduce the high rate of short-term parole revocations.

This treatment is done over 13 consecutive meetings, concentrating on coping skills. There are 13 primary and 29 secondary program treatment topics. Another aspect of the youth that Operation New Hope does is a youth training program for at-risk youth from 17 to 21 years old. Before employment placement, staff conduct reemployment skills training and workshops, including interviewing, grooming, and educational/vocational requirements. The program partners with the County of San Bernardino (Calif.) Workforce Investment Board. Operation New Hope (2020), in partnership with John Muir Charter School, also provides academic services to help youths attain their high school diplomas or GEDs. At the end of the evaluation period,

Josi and Sechrest (1999) found that significantly more control group parolees were unsuccessful in their parole attempt than experimental group parolees who participated in Operation New Hope. Fifty-three percent of the control group (61 of the 115 parolees) was unsuccessful at parole, compared with 35 percent of the experimental group (37 of the 106 parolees).

The Hope program (Hawaii's Opportunity Probation, 2020) with Enforcement is a program that realized how the participants were less likely to fail a drug test or miss a court-ordered appearance because the program begins with a hearing where the Judge would outline the program and notify the participants of the repercussions of violating the program. The program requires a random drug test for incarcerated individuals for drug issues. These tests are necessary to ensure that the safe window for drug use is removed. The probationers then must call a hotline at the beginning of the day to see if their number has been chosen for urinalysis that day. If, for any reason, the probationer misses the drug test or does not pass the test, a warrant is issued immediately, and the individual will spend a brief time incarcerated. Each time the probationer violates the terms of the program, the result will be a progressively longer time confined. The Hope program was tested in several other states, yet Hawaii was the only state where the results were accurate to the model. Researchers found that if the probationer faced swift and immediate punishment, 80 percent usually stopped using drugs; this also applied to the most hardened drug users. This method of selective treatment is most efficient and effective due to the funding limitations of attempting to treat all probationers who are active in the program, thereby placing the resources where they are most needed and can

result in providing the highest results. As a result of this style of treatment, the HOPE program can easily target those who need it and offer intensive treatment to individuals in bad shape.

Project BUILD (Lurigio et al., 2000; 2021) is a violence prevention curriculum designed to help youth in detention overcome problems they may face in their communities, such as gangs, crime, and drugs. This project's mission is on four themes pertinent to the lives of the students enrolled in the alternative school: self-esteem enhancement, communication skills, problem-solving techniques, goal setting, along decision-making. The self-esteem enhancement theme teaches students what self-esteem is and what it means to have healthy self-esteem. Students learn how a variety of factors can influence their self-esteem as well as the self-esteem of others. This is also another way for students to learn about others with different ethnic and racial backgrounds.

The communication skills theme supports students in learning the differences between constructive ways of communication versus harmful ways of expressing themselves. Students learn how to identify their feelings and the feelings of others so that they may more effectively communicate with those around them. The problem-solving technique's theme focuses on violence and drug prevention by exploring students' personal experiences with those problems. Students also learn and use strategies to resolve conflicts constructively and manage their anger. The last theme, goal setting/decision-making, teaches students the value of setting goals while emphasizing personal responsibility for their past actions and movement toward future goals. Between

April 1998 and April 1999, researchers interviewed caseworkers, teachers, and participants, ran focus groups with participants, and used surveys to collect student data. The study conducted by Lurigio et al. (2000) found that youths who participated in Project BUILD (Lurigio et al., 2000; 2021) had significantly lower recidivism rates than non-Project BUILD youths. Among those students who participated in Project BUILD, 33% returned to detention within one year, compared with 57% of non-Project BUILD youths.

Summary and Conclusions

This qualitative study aimed to better understand the juvenile probation officer's perceptions regarding the effectiveness of juvenile reentry programs and recidivism. Chapter 2 included a review of the literature on reentry programs to reduce recidivism and several prevention components. This chapter introduced the theoretical foundation for the study, Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory. As part of the literature review, it also explored other foundational sociological theories, such as Sutherland and Cressey's (1947) theory of differential association and Siegel and McCormick's (2006) theory of crime. The chapter's primary focus was on how examples of different programs related to Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory could assist juvenile justice professionals in perceiving effective reentry programs in the Southwestern Region of the United States. In Chapter 3, will provide the research methods and procedures needed to collect and analyze the data.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

Limited research studies examine the effectiveness of juvenile reentry programs. The purpose of this qualitative research study is to explore juvenile justice professionals' perceptions of the effectiveness of reentry programs and how they can create positive change in a juvenile's life (so that after a period of incarceration, they can function effectively in society). Spooner et al. (2017) noted that the recidivism rate among juveniles and young adults under age 24 was approximately 85%. The research study provided valuable insight into juvenile justice professionals' perceptions of the effectiveness of reentry programs and help identify barriers that hinder effectiveness. Research study participants were recruited from juvenile correctional facilities in the United States Southwest Region. The research study was be conducted through qualitative interview sessions with each participant.

This chapter provides an overview of the data collection procedures and data analysis methods, including (a) methodology design and rationale, (b) role of the researcher, (c) participant selection, (d) research study instrument, (e) recruitment and participation, (f) data collection, (g) data analysis procedures, and (f) trustworthiness and ethical procedures.

Research Design and Rationale

The goal of this study was to answer the following question:
How do juvenile justice professionals perceive reentry programs' effectiveness in reducing recidivism? The chosen research design for this study was qualitative. Bansal et

al. (2018) noted that qualitative research has become more acceptable among researchers and is increasingly looked upon as solving complex societal problems.

Moser and Korstjens (2018) described qualitative research as an in-depth investigation of phenomena through collecting rich narratives. Qualitative research aims to gain more detailed insight into and understand real-world issues. Konecki (2019) believed qualitative research could help broaden traditional methodological research. Hardesty et al. (2019) advocated that qualitative inquiries have improved applied knowledge across many different disciplines of study (e.g., criminology, psychology, social work, psychology, and sociology). Alase (2017) stated that the qualitative research method is helpful because it adds an advantage to the exploratory capability needed to investigate properly during a research study.

Creswell (2013) described qualitative research as a process that begins with philosophical assumptions and theoretical frameworks to inform the following procedures, including selecting and using qualitative approaches to gain a deeper understanding of a central phenomenon.

The rationale for selecting a qualitative method is that I sought firsthand knowledge regarding the participants' subjective perceptions of reentry programs' effectiveness in reducing recidivism. Conducting a qualitative inquiry will help expand the thoughts on juvenile reentry programs' effectiveness. I used a phenomenological approach in this study. This approach was developed by Moustakas (1994) as a method of finding and examining the underlying meaning of human experiences (Mihalache,

2019). Creswell (2013) noted that a phenomenological research inquiry concentrates on shared collective meaning across various individuals' experiences of a phenomenon.

According to van Manen (2019), the fundamental goal of phenomenology is to understand what it is like to have another's experience. Van Manen stated that research that searches for meaning often enhances a phenomenological understanding of the topic under investigation. Although there are different forms of phenomenology, I used interpretive phenomenology to examine the participant's shared experiences for the this research. Smith and Osborn (2014; Alase, 2017) noted that interpretative phenomenology attempts to explore an individual's lived experience in-depth. They believed interpretative phenomenology was helpful in qualitative research because it could examine complex and emotional research topics. Alase (2017) purported that interpretative phenomenology is "participant-oriented" and allows interviewees to tell their "lived experience" stories in their own voices without distortion or judgment. I chose interpretative phenomenology for this study to understand how juvenile justice professionals perceive their experiences with juveniles and with reentry programs aimed at reducing recidivism.

Role of the Researcher

A researcher in a qualitative study should be a neutral and unbiased individual who attempts to elicit the participants' thoughts and feelings (Smit & Onwuegbuzie, 2018; Sutton & Austin, 2015). I sought firsthand knowledge of participants' perceptions through qualitative interviews. I collected all data and analyzed the research topic. To guard against the introduction of a personal bias, I did not

interview any juvenile justice professional with whom I associate on a day-to-day basis. I also developed all interview questions in an open-ended format, so participants did not think they have to provide a particular response. Participants could add any clarification to their answers as they saw appropriate.

Methodology

Participant selection began immediately upon Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. Because of the nature of the research, all selected participants were required to be 18 or older. Eligible participants for interviews meet the following inclusion criteria:

1. Full-time juvenile justice professional in the selected geographical location.
2. Five years of experience in the juvenile justice field.
3. Assigned solely to juvenile justice duties, with no overlap in adult offender duties.

I ensured that all participants qualified for the study and meet the inclusion criteria before official inclusion. The first step to accomplish this was to submit a letter of cooperation to juvenile justice professionals, explaining the purpose of the research and requesting the use of the organization as a research tool for potential participants.

I obtained written permission to use the organization to collect data for the research through the director or administrator of the department. Potential participants interested in participating in the study contacted me via email or telephone and expressed their willingness to participate. Before recruiting the participants, I obtained permission from the Walden IRB to conduct my study.

Participant Selection Logic

The research study's target population were juvenile justice professionals in the Southwest Region of the United States. The OJJDP (2019) defined the mission of juvenile justice professionals as individuals who better understand society's fear of young people and develop strategies through collaborative efforts to address the issue of juvenile crime. For the study, juvenile justice professionals included juvenile judges, juvenile probation officers, court administrators, and counselors.

I used purposeful sampling, specifically snowball sampling, in the selection of research study participants. Hardesty et al. (2019) noted that sampling in qualitative research should align with the research purpose and qualitative method selected. Patton (2015) indicated that purposeful sampling helps uncover data-rich cases that can enhance study findings. Purposeful sampling was used in this study to gain access to the cases that provide the richest amount of data.

Sample size selection in qualitative research is critical and requires constant monitoring throughout the study (Patton, 2015). The target sample size for this study was based on recommendations from Creswell (2013). Creswell asserted that qualitative research studies require a minimum of 10 participants to ensure data saturation is met. Data saturation is when no new information or themes are developed during the data analysis (Harsh, 2017).

Instrumentation

I designed a questionnaire with 10 qualitative interview questions. The questions were developed based on my extensive knowledge of the juvenile justice system and

experience in dealing with delinquent youths and based on the knowledge and experience of Juvenile Justice Professionals. Participants were informed before the commencement of the study that their participation was entirely voluntary, and they could choose to exit the study at any point without repercussion. Participants were allowed a reasonable amount of time to discuss with me any concerns related to their participation in the study before starting the interview process. All participants received the same open-ended interview questions and were allowed to answer them as they deemed appropriate.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Participant recruitment and data collection commenced upon official approval from the Walden University IRB. Recruitment was conducted through a collaborative partnership with my community partner. Upon consultation and the consent of the community partner, I solicited research participation using recruitment announcement posters. The recruitment posters were displayed in common areas throughout the community partner's central location in the Southwest Region of the United States. The announcement was posted for 5 consecutive weeks and contained my phone numbers and e-mail information if potential participants want additional information.

Upon a candidate's initial contact, I reviewed the recruitment posters with them. I ensured that each potential participant met all the criteria necessary to be included in the study. Once I confirmed all the candidates' qualifications, I completed the selection process and arranged the qualitative interview sessions.

Dependability

Dependability relates to the participants' evaluation of a study's findings, interpretation, and recommendations, which must be rigorously supported by data collected from study participants (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Noble and Smith (2015) noted that keeping a clear and concise record (audit trail) is essential for qualitative research dependability. Such records allow an independent researcher to use the same information and arrive at a similar conclusion regarding the findings. I maintained dependability throughout this study by keeping a detailed audit trail.

Credibility

Credibility assists in establishing whether research study results plausibly represent information collected from the research study participants' original data and are an accurate interpretation of the participants' views regarding the study being investigated (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). I maintained credibility throughout the study using three different steps. First, I reviewed each transcription multiple times to ensure correctness. Second, I incorporated purposeful sampling in my study, which reduced the introduction of personal bias. Step two is crucial because I did not want my opinions and biases gained from my experiences as a juvenile justice professional to corrupt the research study's results. Third, I maintained a reflexive journal throughout the research study process. Intuitive journaling allowed other sources not associated with the study to review the steps throughout the study (Dodgson, 2019).

Transferability

Transferability relates to the degree to which a qualitative research study's finding can be transferred to other contexts or settings with other respondents. The transferability process is facilitated using a detailed and thick study description (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Amankwaa (2016) noted that it is the responsibility of the persons attempting to transfer the findings to ensure it is suitable for transference into their study. I used thick descriptions throughout the study to maintain transferability.

Confirmability

Confirmability is the degree to which other researchers can confirm a study's findings. Confirmability's primary goal is to ensure the research study findings are accurate and not the imagination of the inquirer (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). I maintained confirmability by adhering to the approved interview protocol. I reviewed each recorded interview session immediately upon completion to ensure interview protocol compliance and protect against introducing personal bias into the study.

Data Collection Plan

According to Carr et al. (2019), qualitative research mainly relies on data collected from focus groups, interviews, observations, or documentation. This study's data collection method included over-the-phone interviews with participants through the Speak App. The interviews were conducted over six weeks and held in a private room. I informed all participants that the interviews were voluntary, and they could withdraw their consent at any time throughout the interview process. Participants reviewed and signed the research study consent forms to acknowledge their participation. I also

informed participants that their interview sessions would be recorded using the Speak App, which would also transcribe the interview, and that I would then proceed to put it in a Word document. Other digital video recording devices were prohibited. Finally, I advised the participants that the complete process should not exceed 30-45 minutes, including time for them to inquire about any questions or concerns. At the end of each interview session, I debriefed participants, provided my email address information, and verified participants' contact information if follow-up contact was needed for quality assurance and accuracy.

Data Analysis Plan

Watkins (2017) noted that qualitative data analysis is daunting for researchers attempting to analyze data rapidly and rigorously. The research used phenomenology, which, according to Moustakas (1994), refers to the uncovering of shared structural and textual meanings that participants assign to their lived experiences. The data analysis plan started with careful transcription of each interview session. I reviewed the transcribed interviews several times to ensure accuracy and e-mailed each transcript to its respective participant, who was allowed to make revisions as needed. I uploaded the transcripts into NVivo qualitative data software, which was used to code the data. Then, I used the codes to develop themes for analysis. Each participant received a draft summary regarding interpreting findings for their interview session via email. The participants had ten days to contact me if the interpretation results did not accurately reflect their experiences.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Polit and Beck (2014) stated that trustworthiness refers to the degree of confidence in the data, interpretation, and methods used to ensure a study's quality. Korstjens and Moser (2018) noted that four quality criteria methods are involved in qualitative research: (a) credibility, (b) transferability, (c) dependability, and (d) confirmability. These criteria methods are the pillars of credible qualitative research. I provided a detailed description of these four pillars below and a summary of how I achieved them throughout the study to strengthen its degree of rigor.

Recruitment

Recruitment commenced after approval from Walden's IRB. I drafted a letter of cooperation detailing my responsibilities and those of the community partner that both parties signed and acknowledged. I did not use confidentiality agreements because I performed all transcriptions and data analysis to ensure anonymity. I recruited all participants through a letter of agreement with the community partner. I recruited juvenile justice professionals who work in the southwest region of the United States and advised participants that their inclusion in the study was voluntary, and they could withdraw consent and exit the study without repercussion. I conducted all interviews at the community partner's facilities throughout the southwest region of the United States, holding the interviews in private meeting areas to limit interruptions and protect the participants' privacy. I addressed participation refusal by implementing an eligibility questionnaire to verify that all potential participants were eligible for inclusion in the study. I addressed participants' early withdrawal using a consent form, which accurately

informed all participants that they can exit the study at any time for any reason. In addition, I advised participants that if they chose to leave the study, it would not affect them in any manner. Participants also received a copy of their signed consent form for their records.

Consent Form

I used a consent form with basic wording and terms to ensure that each participant clearly understood that participation was voluntary and to limit confusion regarding participation. The consent form accurately advised participants that they could exit the study at any point, for any reason, without fear of any repercussions. I gave each participant a copy of the consent form to read before the beginning of the study and a signed copy to retain after their interview session. I advised participants to secure the consent form in a safe location to keep their study participation confidential.

Safeguarding of Personal Identifying Information

I addressed ethical concerns surrounding safeguarding personal identifying information by masking and redacting any information that could directly or inadvertently reveal the participants' identity. I assigned each participant a study number that I was used to identify them throughout the data collection and analysis processes. I utilized an age range instead of the participants' exact age to provide an additional layer of anonymity.

Safeguarding and Proper Disposal of Collected Data

I treated all data and forms related to the research study in a confidential manner. If requested the data would only be released to committee members, university research

reviewers, or other Walden University personnel when specifically requested and when the chair cleared such a request. All collected data remained secured in a personal safe at my home. The safe did not contain other documents, and I was the only person with the unlock code to guard against data spillage. I will destroy all collected data kept in the safe five years after ProQuest publishes the research study.

Incentives for Participants

I offered a \$5 Starbucks gift card to all participants who agreed to be interviewed to compensate them for their time. I purposely chose the small amount to ensure participants' voluntariness remained intact and to reinforce that the financial incentive was not connected to the answers and feedback they would provide during their interview sessions. The incentive offer aligns with the Office for Human Research Protections (2016), which states that such payments can only be offered as an incentive for an individual's time, not as a benefit of study participation.

Ethical Procedures

This qualitative study examined several ethical procedures involving juvenile justice professionals. Mills (2019) noted that qualitative research requires significant interactions between researchers and participants. Mills suggested that these interactions present ethical challenges because of the personal aspect of the interactions throughout this study. Researchers also encounter the following ethical considerations at other stages of qualitative research: (a) recruitment, (b) a consent form, (c) the safeguarding of personal identifying information, (d) the safeguarding and proper disposal of collected data, and (e) incentives for participants.

Summary

In this chapter, I provided an overview of the methodology used for this research study. I identified the qualitative phenomenological approach as the research design and rationale. I also outlined the role of the researcher, the instrumentation (an open-ended questionnaire), and the participant selection logic, which was based on purposeful sampling. The chapter detailed the procedures for participant recruitment, the data collection process using semi-structured interviews, and the data analysis plan, which included using NVivo software. Finally, I provided an overview of issues of trustworthiness, which were addressed by maintaining (a) credibility, (b) transferability, (c) dependability, and (d) confirmability. The chapter concluded by addressing specific ethical procedures, including consent, safeguarding data, and the use of incentives.

Chapter 4 will present the results of this methodology, detailing the setting, participant demographics, and the data collected from the 13 interviews. It will then provide an in-depth analysis of the seven key themes that emerged from the professionals' responses.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

This chapter presents the voices and experiences of juvenile justice professionals who work closely with youth reentering their communities after incarceration. In response to the central research question how these professionals perceive the effectiveness of juvenile reentry programs in reducing recidivism the interviews revealed a mix of insight, concern, and hope for the future. Guided by Bandura's (1977) social learning theory, which suggests that behavior is shaped through observation and interaction with others, the findings reflect the social and environmental realities that shape a young person's chances of success after release. From the conversations, seven key themes emerged: Factors contributing to recidivism, role of the family, collaboration, effectiveness, challenges, implementation, and the future of reentry.

This chapter details the qualitative method and analytical strategy applied to data collected and developed derived results, rehabilitation, and reintegration into society. The data collected is described and interpreted in this chapter, along with detailed descriptions of the data collection instrument and any challenges faced throughout the data collection process. The data was collected through semi-structured interviews, transcribed, and analyzed by the researcher. From the interview, several themes emerged, revealing patterns that align with my research question. This chapter concludes with my comments on the findings and the relationship of those findings to the research question.

This research involves interviewing 13 juvenile justice professionals from the southwest region of the United States. Upon completion, the information provided by

these professionals will address this study's research question: What are the perceptions of juvenile justice professionals regarding the effectiveness of juvenile reentry programs and recidivism? The study delves into professionals' perceptions regarding the purpose of these programs, outcomes of reentry programs based on their experiences, and to what extent these professionals can connect youth to essential services, including mentoring, education, and mental health support provided through reentry programs. These findings provide insight into the perception of the reentry program's effectiveness in youth rehabilitation, diminished delinquency, participation in criminal activities, and overall reintegration into society.

Setting

While steps were taken to reduce outside influences on the responses, it is important to recognize that certain personal or workplace factors may still have shaped how participants shared their thoughts. For instance, some professionals might have felt a need to speak positively about their agency's reentry efforts, whether out of loyalty, concern about how their views might reflect on them, or fear of saying something that could be seen as critical. In some cases, the culture of their organization, recent policy changes, or their own experiences working with youth who've reentered the system may have influenced how they understood and described reentry effectiveness. Although participants were assured of their anonymity and encouraged to speak freely, these kinds of underlying pressures are hard to fully avoid and were kept in mind during the analysis of the findings.

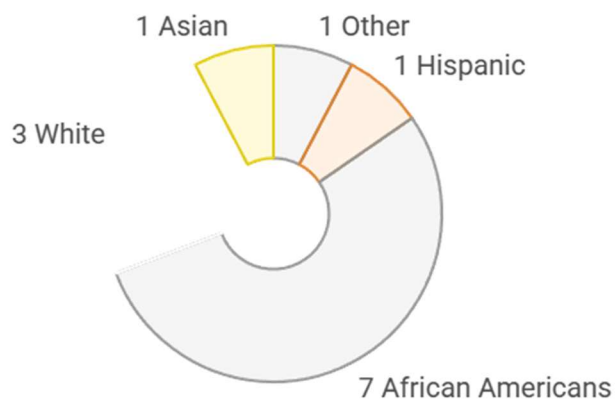
Demographics

Thirteen juvenile justice professionals participated in this study. Before the interviews, each participant completed a five-question demographic questionnaire. Initially, participants were asked to confirm their status as juvenile justice professionals in the Southwest Region of the United States. After this confirmation, participants were encouraged to generalize employment details to maintain confidentiality. This process ensured that personal and organizational identities were protected while providing accurate and valuable data for the study.

The demographic questionnaire (see Table 1) asked participants for their gender, race, age group, education, and years of experience. Over 70% of the participants were female, and 30% were male, out of the 13 participants in total. Of the 13 participants, 53.8% (7) identified as African American, 23.08% (3) identified as White (not Hispanic), 7.69% (1) identified as Other, and 7.69% (1) identified as Asian, and Hispanic had 7.69% (1). All 13 participants have degrees, 69.23% (9) received a bachelor's degree and 30.77% (4) received their master's degree. So, in essence, 76.92% (10) of the participants have 5-9 years of experience, and 23.08% (3) have 10+ years of experience.

Table 1*Demographics*

Participant	Race	Education	Experience
CC	White	Bachelor's	5+ years
AR	African American	Master's	10+ years
CS	Hispanic	Bachelor's	5+ years
JC	African American	Bachelor's	5+ years
SS1	White	Bachelor's	5+ years
RR	African American	Master's	10+ years
CL1	White	Bachelor's	5+ years
WC	Pacific Islander	Master's	5+ years
MC	African American	Bachelor's	5+ years
KN	Asian	Master's	10+ years
WB	African American	Bachelor's	5+ years
MW	African American	Bachelor's	5+ years
TT	African American	Bachelor's	5+ years

Figure 1*Demographic Distribution of Participants (Individuals)***Demographic Distribution of Participants (individuals)**

Data Collection

After receiving IRB approval from Walden University, I utilized snowball sampling to recruit participants. This method involved leveraging my network to identify initial participants who referred other potential participants. This approach enabled me to access a broader and more diverse pool of respondents. Utilizing snowball sampling ensured that the sample was representative of the population under study while maintaining high confidentiality and trust among participants. The plan described in Chapter 3 was to interview 10 participants or until data saturation was achieved. Saturation was reached at 13 participants.

Semi-structured interviews were used with 13 participants who were current juvenile justice professionals in the southwest region of the United States and worked directly with the youth. Before the interview, the participants read, reviewed, and returned the consent form by replying “I consent” via email to schedule a date and time to participate in the study. The participants were allowed to withdraw at any time during the interview. Each participant was contacted individually through email to sign up for a date and time appropriate for the interview; each participant was given a unique identifier of initials. All participants were reminded that they would be recorded and that the interview would last 30-45 minutes and be conducted over 8-10 weeks.

Data Analysis

The data analysis process began with a thorough review of each interview recording to ensure accuracy and clarity. Each interview was transcribed into Microsoft Word, and during this process, I began identifying repeated ideas, shared experiences,

and key perceptions that stood out. As Braun and Clarke (2020) pointed out, transcription is a valuable first step that helps researchers become deeply familiar with their data, and this was true in my case. To enhance accuracy and consistency, interviews were transcribed via the Speak App and then uploaded to NVivo, which was used for coding and organizing the data.

Once the transcripts were complete, the coding process was used for both deductive and inductive approaches. Deductive codes were created ahead of data collection, based on my research questions and existing literature, while inductive codes emerged organically as I noticed new ideas and patterns within the participants' responses. This blend allowed me to stay grounded in the research focus while also being open to unexpected insights. As I worked through multiple rounds of coding, I began clustering similar codes together, looking for patterns in how participants described the effectiveness of reentry programs and the challenges related to recidivism. Through this iterative process, I identified seven key themes, which captured the most important and commonly shared perspectives across the interviews. To illustrate how frequently each theme appeared, a reference-by-theme chart was created (see Figure 2). These themes form the foundation of the results that follow, offering insight into how juvenile justice professionals view the effectiveness of reentry programs and their impact on recidivism.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility is making sure the findings reflect what participants really meant, was important to me. To support that, I asked open-ended questions during our phone interviews and gave juvenile justice professionals like juvenile probation officers and

reentry coordinators the space to speak freely and share their honest experiences in their own words. I also checked in with them during the interviews, paraphrasing their answers to make sure I understood them correctly.

Transferability is about helping readers see if these findings apply to their own context. To support this, by provide detailed descriptions of who participated, such as their specific roles and the agencies they worked for, without naming them to protect privacy. Knowing that the insights came from professionals working directly with youth in reentry allowed readers to connect the results to similar settings.

Dependability involves being transparent and consistent throughout the research. I kept a thorough record of every step from recruiting participants to how I coded the interviews and developed themes. For example, I saved interview transcripts, notes on how codes were created, and memos about decisions I made along the way. This clear trail means someone else could follow the process and see how the conclusions came about.

Confirmability is about making sure the findings are shaped by the participants' voices, not my personal opinions. To do this, I regularly reflected on my own background and assumptions as a researcher and included many direct quotes from the interviews in the analysis. For instance, when discussing perceptions of program effectiveness, I used participants' exact words to back up each theme, so readers can hear their perspectives firsthand.

Results

Thirteen juvenile justice professionals took part in in-depth, semi-structured phone interviews where they openly shared their thoughts and experiences about juvenile reentry programs and their effectiveness in reducing recidivism. These interviews were guided by carefully developed questions that focused on understanding how these professionals perceive the strengths and challenges of the reentry process.

One of the strongest and most consistent perceptions among participants was the importance of follow-up support after juveniles' complete reentry programs. Many professionals explained that while the programs themselves provide valuable services, the real test of success comes after youth return to their communities. They emphasized that ongoing check-ins and support, especially when young people face new struggles, are vital to prevent them from falling back into old patterns. Participants also highlighted the need for a holistic approach to reentry. This means looking beyond just the individual youth to consider their family situations and the broader community context. Professionals shared that interventions are much more effective when they consider the complex web of factors influencing a young person's behavior.

Taken together, these insights clearly show that juvenile justice professionals believe effective reentry programs must do more than just offer services; they need to provide continuous, personalized support and consider the full environment around each youth. This perspective directly addresses the core research question by revealing how those on the front lines see the connection between these program elements and the goal of reducing recidivism.

Every professional interviewed spoke at length about the importance of measuring the effectiveness of juvenile reentry programs. There was clear agreement that without proper evaluation, it's difficult to know whether these programs are truly helping young people transition successfully. While most shared positive views about the goals and impact of these programs, about a third of participants also pointed out challenges. A very small number, around 3%, felt the programs weren't working at all.

Figure 2 shows that most of the respondents (27%) made many references to the effectiveness and measures of the Juvenile Justice system, followed by the Role of the family in reducing recidivism, while the least was on the negative perceptions (3%).

Figure 2

Perception Reentry

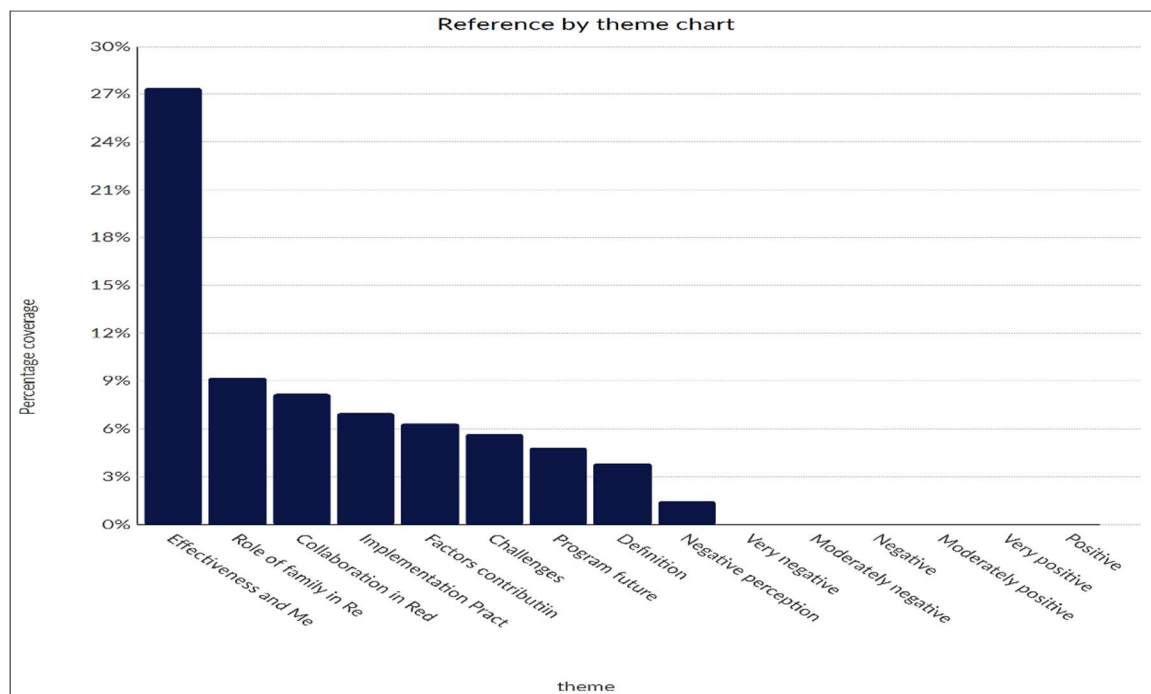


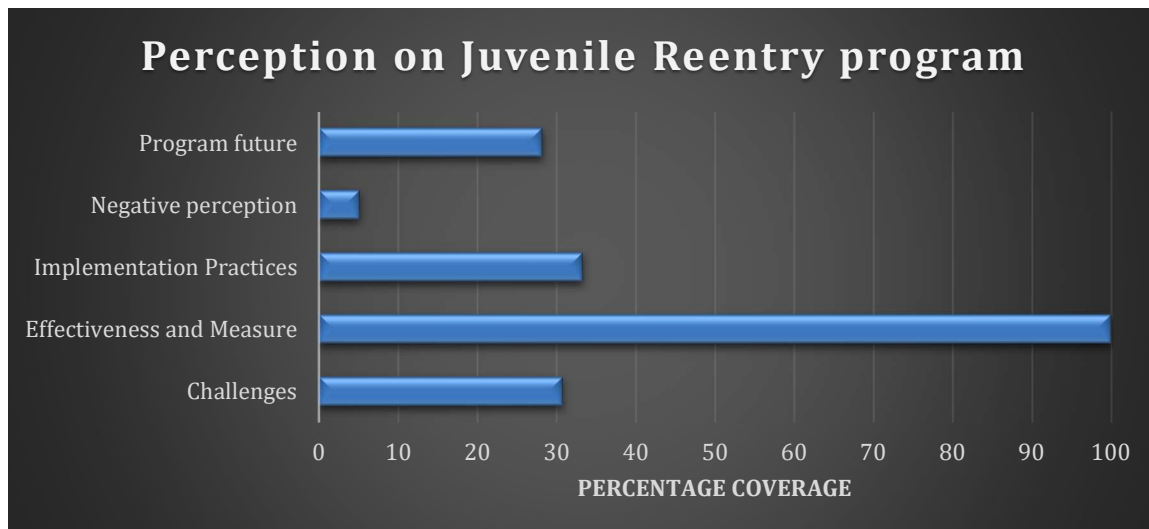
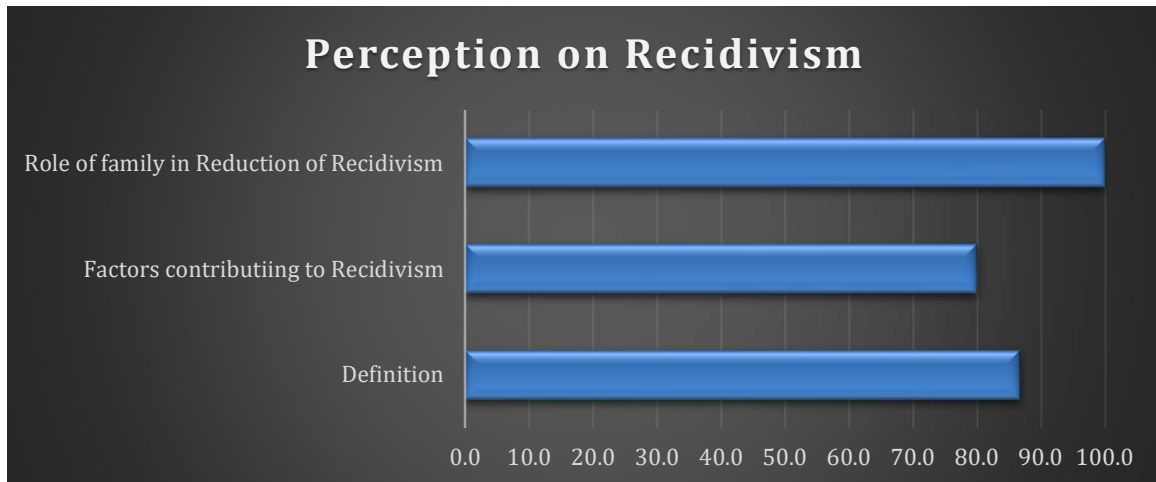
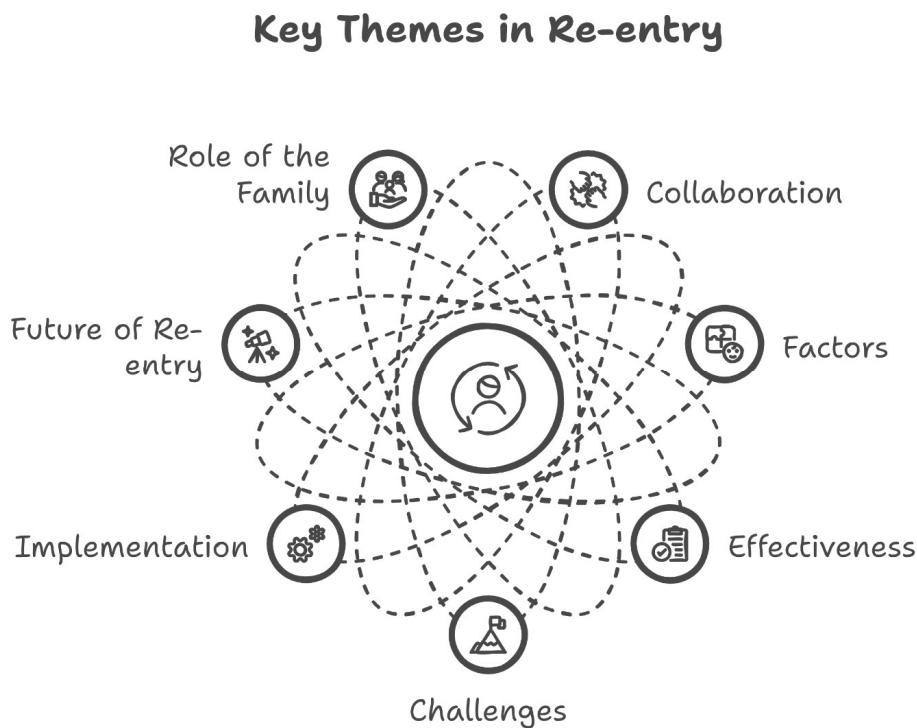
Figure 3*Perception on Juvenile Reentry Program*

Figure 3 represents the sub-themes under the juvenile reentry program regarding references. The findings showed that most respondents talked about the program's Effectiveness and measures, while only a few spoke about its negative impact. All the professionals responded to the questions about the program's effectiveness and measures. About 35% saw the program's challenges, and only 3% felt that the program was ineffective.

Figure 4*Perception on Recidivism*

The study findings reveal that participants understood the role of family in reducing recidivism and contributed to discussing this role. The data analysis process resulted in the seven key themes displayed in Figure 5. These themes form the foundation of the findings presented below.

Figure 5*7 Key Themes***Theme 1: Factors**

Many participants pointed to family and environmental factors as major contributors to juvenile recidivism. Several professionals noted that when young people return to homes where parents or relatives have a history of justice system involvement, it becomes harder for them to break the cycle. The inability to leave or change their environment was also seen as a key issue. Youth often return to the same neighborhoods, reconnect with the same peer groups, and lack access to positive role models or community resources. These conditions increase the risk of reoffending.

Participants TT and AR both agreed that factors contributing to recidivism included juveniles often finding themselves stuck in the justice system, sometimes until they're old enough to move into the adult system. This cycle can run in the family, with parents, grandparents, and other relatives like siblings, aunts, and uncles all involved in the justice system at some point. Participant CL1 explained how mental health is a contributing factor to recidivism and that many of the juveniles who enter detention centers meet the criteria for a mental health disorder. Participant AR stated how violence, gangs, and drugs could also be significant factors. AR has experienced many juveniles who have experienced or witnessed violence, which can have severe psychological effects, contributing to issues like PTSD, anxiety, and depression.

Theme 2: Role of the Family

Participants consistently emphasized that family plays a critical role in helping juveniles avoid returning to the justice system. Many professionals shared that when youth have supportive families, those who are actively involved, emotionally present, and encouraging, there's a much better chance of long-term success after release. On the other hand, youth who return to unsupportive or unstable family environments often struggle to stay on track. As one participant noted, "It really starts at home. If they don't have that support system, they're going to fall back into what they know".

According to Participant SS1, family is a significant support system because it supplies encouragement, accountability, and a positive attitude, ensuring the effectiveness of reentry programs. This will lower recidivism rates since the juveniles will be accountable for their actions. Participant CW stated that family is very important, and it

goes a long way toward reducing the recidivism rate. Sometimes, their issue is with the family, so they act out because they struggle to deal with the chaos at home. Participant MC1 believes that family is a significant support system when it is positive, but "If it is negative, then it is counter-productive, almost like waiting for the youth to fail and return to the system".

Theme 3: Collaboration

Many participants stressed that reducing juvenile recidivism requires a team effort. They emphasized the need for stakeholders to invest not just resources, but also their time and genuine attention. Participants also highlighted that collaboration should extend beyond formal agencies to include family members, friends, and community organizations like churches. Because juveniles are often driven by emotions and vulnerability, having a strong, caring network around them can make all the difference.

Participant RR stated that stakeholders should be just as committed to investing time, attention, effort, and resources into helping these kids as they are to locking them up. "It is about creating opportunities, providing jobs, offering programs, and collaborating with communities, local leaders, and families". Participant AR said it is about everyone who plays a role in that young person's life. "Family, school, church, mentors, and anyone with regular, meaningful interaction with that youth should come together to support their reentry plan". Participants WB and CS both agreed upon the fact that one key thing stakeholders could do is provide more mental health professionals to support these kids, both while they are incarcerated and after they are released.

Theme 4: Effectiveness

Participants shared varied perspectives on how effective juvenile reentry programs are at reducing recidivism. Many agreed that traditional approaches, like sitting down for therapy sessions, often don't connect well with most youth. Instead, they suggested that professionals who engage with juveniles more informally, meeting them in their communities, building trust through genuine conversations... tend to have better success. Overall, participants emphasized that effectiveness comes from meeting young people where they are and building strong, trusting relationships.

Participant CW believed that "An effective juvenile reentry program should involve both family and individual therapy, but in a way that feels real and relatable for these youth". "Traditional therapy... doesn't always work for them". Participant JC replied, "After working in the juvenile justice system for over 16 years, I've seen the same youth come in and out like a revolving door... it is clear that these youths' real issues aren't being properly addressed". Participant MW stated, "Overall, from what I've seen, it depends on the client and the program". The most effective programs are the ones that... consider the various social factors... and are individualized. Participant CS relayed, "I believe that the most effective juvenile reentry programs need to focus on more than just reintegrating... A key part of the process should be looking at the environment they're returning to".

Theme 5: Challenges

Participants openly discussed several challenges they face when implementing juvenile reentry programs. One of the most significant barriers mentioned was the lack of

funding, which directly affects the program's reach and quality. Many professionals shared that it is difficult to find and retain qualified staff willing to work with justice-involved youth, largely because the resources and support for this work are limited.

Participant TT explained, "One of the biggest challenges with reentry programs is the lack of resources and funding to support the youth properly". "Another challenge is finding professionals who are not only qualified but also willing to work with these children". Participant MC answered, "I believe peer pressure is a real challenge for these kids". "It's easy for old habits to resurface, especially when they fall back into familiar environments". Participant CL1 commented that some of the biggest challenges are funding issues, staff shortages, and a lack of coordination between the different parts of the system. Participant CS indicated that one of the biggest challenges is "ensuring the juvenile has the right kind of support from their family and a positive mentor in the community".

Theme 6: Implementation

This theme centers on practices that can impact the program's effectiveness. Some of the study findings revealed that a holistic approach that includes emotional, physical, and environmental resources, using available community resources with professionals, will positively enhance the effectiveness of juveniles.

Participant CC stated that juvenile reentry programs must take a holistic approach to addressing their emotional, physical, and environmental needs. "It's also crucial to have professionals who are qualified, relatable, and able to connect with the youth personally". Participant RR revealed that involving the families of juveniles in reentry

programs is key to setting boundaries, offering support, and improving communication. "When families are part of the process, they help create a stable, supportive environment that encourages positive change". Participant CW stated that reentry programs should be flexible, allowing kids to try different options that fit their needs and interests. "Not every program works for every kid". Participant TT stated that each youth should undergo a thorough assessment to identify their individual needs and risk factors.

Theme 7: Future of Reentry

Participants expressed concern about the long-term sustainability of juvenile reentry programs. Many felt that without steady funding and fresh ideas for ongoing implementation, these programs risk fading away. Some also worried that changes in family dynamics... could weaken the support system. This decline in positive family involvement, combined with financial challenges, left many professionals questioning how effective reentry efforts will be.

Participant RR believes that the future of reentry programs will become less effective over time... "due to the positive support I've been seeing from my family... that family dynamic is not a parent-child relationship but more of a friend-child relationship". Participant CW stated, "reentry programs for juveniles are facing serious challenges, especially as funding continues to shrink". Participant CC says this could involve a combination of mentorship, life skills training, and community-based support. "The future of these programs depends on finding sustainable funding, better collaboration... and a willingness to adapt". Participant KN said, "I've watched the juvenile court system

evolve, and I genuinely feel it's heading in the right direction... I've seen real progress focusing more on rehabilitation than punishment".

Summary

Chapter 4 presented the data analysis from thirteen semi-structured interviews with juvenile justice professionals in the Southwest region. The data, transcribed using NVivo, was analyzed to identify key themes regarding the effectiveness of reentry programs. The findings revealed that professionals perceive reentry programs as having mixed results. Participants emphasized that success depends on holistic, tailored approaches including educational support, family involvement, and a focus on rehabilitation over punishment. However, professionals cited significant challenges that hinder effectiveness, primarily systemic issues like:

- Insufficient funding
- Staff shortages and a lack of qualified, committed staff
- Poor interagency coordination
- A lack of coordinated post-release support

The core message from participants was that a program's effectiveness hinges less on its structure and more on its implementation, particularly the development of long-term trust, consistent mentorship, strong family relationships, and community collaboration. Chapter 5 will present a detailed discussion of these results, along with conclusions, recommendations for future research, and implications for social change.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative research study is to examine the perception of the effectiveness of Juvenile Reentry Programs and Recidivism among Juvenile Justice Professionals in the Southwest Region. Thirteen participants who volunteered and met the study's criteria were interviewed. The interview questions were designed to spark insights from juvenile justice professionals as they shared their expertise on the effectiveness of juvenile reentry programs, the challenges that reentry programs face, how the role of the family is essential during this journey, and what the future may hold for many of these reentry programs. Several examples of reentry programs incorporated different components for reentry programs: multisystem therapy, mentoring programs, and community programs.

Data were collected using semi-structured interviews with 10 open-ended probing questions and then transcribed and coded. Chapter 5 presents the results, showing how juvenile justice professionals contribute their insights and expertise on how reentry programs will most effectively serve youth once they have been released from detention centers. Although many different components of reentry programs were mentioned in previous chapters, the concentration was on multisystemic therapy, mentoring programs, and community programs.

Additionally, this chapter discusses the implications of social change that could provide the juvenile justice system with several opportunities to reduce recidivism. This chapter also explores the potential for social change within the juvenile justice system,

highlighting opportunities to implement strategies that could help reduce recidivism and better support youth in successfully reintegrating into their communities.

Interpretation of the Findings

This section connects the findings back to the research question and discusses the seven key themes that emerged from the data: factors contributing to recidivism, role of the family, collaboration, effectiveness, challenges, implementation, and the future of reentry. It successfully relates these findings to the gap in the literature. The findings demonstrate a clear connection to Bandura's social learning theory, which proposes that individuals, particularly young people, acquire behaviors and attitudes through observing and imitating others. Collaboration among key stakeholders such as educators, parents, and community leaders creates environments where youth are exposed to positive role models. Through observing these collaborative interactions, young people can internalize values such as cooperation, empathy, and mutual respect. This process reflects the core principles of social learning theory, highlighting how community-based partnerships not only support youth development but also reinforce prosocial behavior through modeled example.

The findings from this study closely align with existing literature on the importance of family involvement in juvenile reentry. Research indicates that youth who receive consistent family support are more likely to successfully reintegrate and avoid recidivism (Mowen, Stansfield, & Boman, 2018). Similarly, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP, 2018) reports that programs that actively engage parents and caregivers are associated with stronger outcomes for youth, emphasizing the

critical role of family engagement in supporting successful reentry. By fostering these supportive relationships, programs provide positive role models and guidance, which not only help youth navigate challenges but also align with social learning theory principles, wherein individuals learn behaviors through observing and imitating others. The participants in this study confirmed those findings, noting that family members are often the first and most consistent source of support for returning youth.

However, this study extends previous research by focusing on the professionals' point of view, highlighting how strained relationships, lack of family resources, and caregiver burnout can undermine reentry efforts even when families want to help. Several participants stressed the need for more family-centered services, such as parenting classes and mental health support, which were not heavily emphasized in earlier research.

Regarding the theme of collaboration, this study supports the findings of Scott, Dennis, Grella, Funk, and Lurigio (2019), who argue that coordinated relationships between probation community supervision and behavioral health agencies lead to better service provision and outcomes for justice involved youth. Participants in this study strongly echoed this, often expressing frustration when communication between stakeholders was limited or inconsistent. What this study adds is a more nuanced view of how frontline professionals experience those breakdowns in collaboration and how it directly affects their ability to support youth effectively.

When it comes to factors contributing to recidivism, this study builds on the work Yukhnenko, Blackwood, and Fazel (2019), who identified association with antisocial

peers, employment problems, and mental health needs as significant predictors of reoffending.

These issues were echoed by my participants, but they also emphasized a lack of transitional support, such as housing and mentorship, as additional barriers not as prominently featured in the earlier literature.

Overall, this study confirms much of what existing research has found, but it also brings new depth by centering the voices of the professionals who work directly with justice-involved youth. Their perspectives help to fill a critical gap in understanding how policies and programs play out in real-world practice.

Family Involvement

Family plays a critical role in shaping behavior, as social learning theory emphasizes the importance of observing and learning from those closest to us. In many cases, youth learn coping skills, values, and behaviors from their parents or guardians. When families provide supportive and positive environments, juveniles are more likely to internalize pro-social behaviors and succeed during reentry. However, when family dynamics are strained or dysfunctional, the modeling youth receive can perpetuate negative behaviors. This theme underlines the need for family-focused interventions in reentry programs that encourage healthy behavior modeling and strengthen family support. Family involvement was a central theme in the responses from the participants, with each professional emphasizing its importance in varying ways. One participant, for example, stressed that family support is often the most consistent and enduring resource available to a young person, particularly when external systems may fail them. They

explained that actively engaging families can significantly reduce the chances of a youth reoffending, as they provide emotional grounding, guidance, and accountability.

Another participant acknowledged that while family involvement is crucial, not all families can provide this support. Some may face challenges such as financial instability, a history of substance abuse, or strained relationships, which can complicate their role in the reentry process. Despite this, they suggested that offering support to these families through counseling, parenting classes, or mentorship could help bridge these gaps and strengthen the foundation for successful reintegration. Several other participants highlighted the importance of recognizing each family's unique dynamics and tailoring support to meet their needs. They believed that by involving families in treatment plans, reentry programs could create a more holistic approach to addressing the root causes of recidivism.

However, family involvement isn't always straightforward. They acknowledged that many families face their struggles, such as financial hardship, unresolved trauma, or a lack of resources, which can make it difficult for them to provide the support needed. This professional explained that while family involvement is essential, it can't be assumed that every family is ready or able to step up in the required way. For these families, additional support services like counseling, parent education programs, or community-based resources can be key to bridging the gap and helping them become more active participants in the reentry process.

Every family is different, and their role in reentry should be tailored to meet their unique needs. They suggested that programs take the time to understand each family's

dynamics, struggles, and strengths and work to build trust with both the youth and their family members. One participant mentioned that, for some families, simply offering a non-judgmental space to talk and collaborate can be transformative. Another noted that when families feel empowered, educated, and supported, they can become true partners in reentry, reinforcing the program's work and ensuring long-term success for the youth.

Factors That Lead to Recidivism

The factors that contribute to recidivism often involve juveniles returning to environments where negative behaviors are common. Bandura's (1977) social learning theory explains that much of human behavior is learned by watching and imitating others, especially those in proximity. For many juveniles, being surrounded by peers or family members involved in the justice system means they continue to observe and model the same behaviors that led to their initial involvement. This cycle makes it difficult for youth to break free and highlights how important it is for reentry programs to create opportunities for juveniles to engage with positive role models outside these harmful environments.

The 13 participants in this study placed significant importance on the factors contributing to recidivism, acknowledging that the causes are complex and deeply intertwined with the youth's experiences. Participants explained that many of the young people they work with have endured significant trauma, abuse, neglect, or the loss of a parent, which leaves emotional scars affecting their behavior and choices. They highlighted that these youths often act out because they haven't developed healthy coping mechanisms for their pain.

Without addressing the root causes of this trauma, they noted, efforts to prevent reoffending would likely be ineffective. Another participant pointed out that peer influence and social environments are often key factors in recidivism. Many youths come from neighborhoods where criminal behavior is normalized, and being involved in crime can feel like the only way to gain respect or a sense of belonging. They emphasized the importance of shifting these social dynamics through mentorship, community engagement, or providing access to positive role models who can offer a different perspective on success.

Several other participants discussed the role of socioeconomic challenges in perpetuating recidivism. One professional shared that many of the youths they work with come from families struggling with poverty, limited access to education, or few job opportunities. Without the support and resources to create a better future, they often feel trapped in a cycle where crime seems like their only option. They suggested that addressing these structural issues by providing job training, educational resources, and stable housing was essential to help break the cycle of reoffending. Finally, a few participants mentioned the impact of the criminal justice system. They observed that many youths' face stigma and numerous barriers to reintegration, making it difficult to reconnect with family, secure a job, or continue their education. These challenges often lead to feelings of isolation and hopelessness, increasing the likelihood of reoffending.

Overall, all participants agreed that recidivism is not a single factor but a combination of personal, social, and systemic challenges. They decided that addressing

these issues requires a holistic, multi-faceted approach beyond punishment and focuses on healing, opportunity, and long-term support for these young people.

Collaboration Among Stakeholders

Collaboration among stakeholders is essential because it brings together a network of positive role models who can influence youth behavior. According to Social learning theory, juveniles learn best when they have access to consistent, pro-social models. Mentors, juvenile probation officers, community leaders, and even peers involved in the program provide varied examples of behaviors juveniles can observe and imitate. When these figures work together, they create a supportive community around the youth, reinforcing positive choices and helping to replace harmful patterns with healthier habits. This cooperative effort enhances the social learning environment and increases the chances of successful reintegration. Collaboration among stakeholders was another key theme highlighted by the participants, and all 13 professionals agreed on its importance for the success of juvenile reentry programs. Many emphasized that a single entity cannot achieve reentry but requires a team effort across multiple sectors, including juvenile justice, education, mental health services, community organizations, and families. One participant stressed that when all these different groups come together and work toward a common goal, it increases the chances of a successful reintegration. They explained that reentry is a complex process that requires various forms of support, and no single organization has all the resources or expertise to meet every need.

Another participant shared how critical it is for juvenile probation officers, social workers, educators, and community leaders to communicate closely and share

information. Everyone is of the same belief that youth should receive consistent messaging and coordinated services. One professional illustrated this by describing a case where a young person's school attendance was linked to their mental health struggles. The school counselor, juvenile probation officer, and family were all involved in crafting a plan that addressed the academic needs and the emotional support the youth required to stay in school and avoid getting involved in criminal activity again. Several others mentioned that collaboration also helps bridge gaps in services. For example, a few participants pointed out that some youth may not have access to adequate mental health care or may face barriers when trying to re-enter school or the workforce.

When stakeholders collaborate, they can pool resources, share funding, and create solutions that would be impossible to achieve individually. One participant reflected on the power of community-based programs working with local businesses to provide job opportunities for youth, giving them a sense of purpose and a way out of the cycle of crime.

Finally, many participants noted that collaboration goes beyond formal organizations. They emphasized the role of community members, mentors, and faith-based organizations in supporting the reentry process. When these community figures are involved, they can offer informal support that may not be accessible through more traditional services. Whether through providing advice, guidance, or simply being a positive role model, the community's role in supporting the youth's journey cannot be overstated. In short, the professionals unanimously agreed that effective collaboration among stakeholders is crucial. It provides a support network that can address the youth's

many challenges during reentry and ensures they are not left alone to navigate this difficult journey.

Effectiveness

Participants' perceptions of program effectiveness often hinged on whether youth were able to build trusting relationships with adults who modeled positive behaviors. Social learning theory suggests that simply offering services is not enough; what matters is the quality of interactions and the opportunity for youth to observe and adopt new ways of thinking and acting. Programs that provide individualized attention, community-based mentors, and family therapy are more effective because they offer environments rich with positive behavioral examples. This alignment with Bandura's (1977) social learning theory highlights why personal connection and role modeling are at the heart of effective juvenile reentry programs.

Challenges

Challenges like limited funding, staff shortages, and poor coordination directly impact juveniles' ability to consistently encounter positive role models. From the lens of social learning theory, when youth lack steady, supportive figures modeling constructive behaviors, they are more likely to revert to previous negative patterns learned from their environment. These obstacles can disrupt the social learning process and reduce the program's effectiveness. Understanding these challenges through Bandura's (1977) social learning theory helps explain why stable, well-supported relationships are crucial for long-term behavior change and recidivism reduction.

Implementation

Implementation is about more than just putting a program in place—it's about creating conditions where youth can observe, practice, and internalize new behaviors. Bandura (1977) reminds us that learning occurs through interaction and imitation, so successful implementation means ensuring youth regularly engage with positive role models who demonstrate pro-social behaviors. This includes consistent mentoring, family engagement, and community support. When programs are implemented with these principles in mind, they create an environment conducive to social learning, which increases the likelihood that juveniles will adopt and maintain positive changes.

Future of Reentry

Concerns about the future sustainability of reentry programs reflect fears about losing crucial sources of positive behavioral modeling. Bandura (1977) stresses that continuous exposure to pro-social role models is necessary for maintaining learned behaviors. If programs diminish due to funding cuts or waning community support, juveniles risk losing access to the very people who help guide them toward healthier choices. This potential gap highlights the need for ongoing investment and innovation in reentry programs to ensure youth have stable, positive influences throughout their transition back into the community.

Theoretical Framework

Social learning theory was the theoretical foundation for this study, which explores the perception of juvenile justice professionals. Social learning theory, created by psychologist Albert Bandura, is about learning by watching and imitating others. The

idea is that the people around us can influence us, whether it's family, friends, or the larger community. This is important for understanding how young people learn behaviors, especially regarding crime or positive actions. Social learning theory helps explain why changing a youth's environment is crucial in reentry programs. If a young person has spent years seeing bad behavior as the norm, they might have difficulty breaking out of that mindset. This is why reentry programs often focus on helping youth build new, healthier relationships and offering opportunities to engage with people who model positive behaviors. When they see that success and respect can come from making good choices like getting a job, finishing school, or staying out of trouble, they're more likely to want to imitate those behaviors instead. Reentry programs that bring youth into positive environments through mentoring, community service, or education use social learning theory principles to help break that cycle. These programs show that good behavior isn't just about following rules; it's about creating a new way of thinking and living that can lead to better outcomes. It is about giving the youth new role models who prove that there are better, more rewarding paths. By changing the social environment and introducing new role models, reentry programs can help youth unlearn the harmful behaviors they are picked up. Positive mentors and community members can provide real-world examples showing more to life than crime and negativity (Bandura, 1977).

Limitations of the Study

While the data collection method relied on in-depth interviews, it is always possible that participants may not have fully captured or shared every detail of their experiences. Despite this, for the ten probing questions, the participants provided

thoughtful and detailed answers based on their own experiences with the factors being studied. These insights reflect their perspectives and the challenges they've observed, making the data rich and valuable for understanding the topic. All the participants were enthusiastic and passionate about the subject matter. The study had a sample size of 13 participants, but I intended to recruit 20 participants. Most juvenile justice professionals did not meet the requirements, were busy with other projects, or had a bigger-than-typical caseload. This study focused specifically on juvenile justice professionals in the Southwest Region of the United States. The interviews were conducted over the phone and recorded using the Speak App. While I would have preferred to conduct the interviews in person to build a stronger rapport and gather richer insights, the circumstances at the time made that impossible. Despite this limitation, the phone interviews allowed meaningful conversations and valuable participant perspectives.

Recommendations

Future research could benefit from expanding the sample size and including a more diverse demographic. This study focused on juvenile justice professionals in the Southwest Region, but it would be valuable to explore the perspectives of professionals from other regions. Research could also dive deeper into specific types of reentry programs or focus on one role within the system, such as intake officers, restitution officers, or detention officers, to better understand how different professionals experience and influence the reentry process.

Replicating this study with a larger sample size would require more time, but it is doable with tools like Zoom and NVivo transcription for better efficiency. A broader

demographic could also enable more comparative analysis across regions or even specific states. Additionally, future studies might explore how the uniformity of the justice system interacts with the personal experiences of juvenile justice professionals, providing a clearer picture of how policies and practices play out in real-world settings.

The success factors of family involvement, the factors that contribute to recidivism, and collaboration among stakeholders all point to the fact that these three elements are essential for a truly effective juvenile reentry program. Considering how each of these factors plays a crucial role in the youth's ability to reintegrate successfully, it's clear that they must all work together. Family support provides the foundation, understanding recidivism helps address the underlying challenges, and collaboration between various professionals ensures that these youth have the resources and guidance they need to thrive. These factors create a well-rounded approach to helping youth build a better future. Future research could explore how these three success factors, family involvement, the factors leading to recidivism, and collaboration among stakeholders, can be strengthened and integrated into juvenile reentry programs. It would be valuable to investigate how these elements work together across different types of programs and regions to see if specific approaches are more effective than others. Additionally, future studies could look at the long-term impact of these factors on recidivism rates and youth outcomes, considering variables such as age, gender, and background. Exploring these dynamics further will help build a deeper understanding of how to create comprehensive and lasting solutions for youth reentry.

During the data collection process, it became clear that juvenile justice professionals play a pivotal role in guiding youth through reentry. However, the discretion and ability to connect youth to the right services often lie beyond their immediate control. Many professionals expressed frustration at their limitations when providing comprehensive support to youth. For example, while they can identify the needs of a youth, such as mental health care, educational support, or family counseling, they often lack the power or resources to connect the youth to these critical services directly. This gap in service delivery can hinder a youth's ability to succeed in their reentry journey.

Moreover, professionals pointed out that even though they may know about available resources, navigating complex bureaucratic systems or dealing with funding constraints can delay or prevent youth from accessing these services. It became evident that the success of a juvenile reentry program does not just depend on the efforts of one individual or agency but requires a collaborative approach, where juvenile justice professionals are empowered to coordinate and leverage support from a vast network of services. This ability to connect services effectively is crucial for addressing the multifaceted needs of youth in reentry, and without it, the chances for long-term success are limited.

Implications

This study aimed to foster positive social change in juvenile justice reentry programs by focusing on the professionals who work directly with the youth. By exploring their insights, the study brings attention to the critical role of family

involvement, addressing the factors that contribute to recidivism and the collaboration among various stakeholders that play a part in the success of reentry efforts. The findings underline the necessity for a holistic approach that addresses the youth's behavior and ensures they have the support and resources needed to reintegrate successfully into their communities.

This research has several implications for the future of juvenile reentry programs. First, it emphasizes the need for juvenile justice professionals to be better supported in connecting youth to essential services, including mental health care, education, and vocational training. Additionally, the study advocates for more training and collaboration among professionals from sectors such as law enforcement, social services, and educational institutions to ensure a seamless and supportive environment for the youth. The findings also suggest that programs should incorporate a family-centered approach, ensuring that the youth's family plays an active role in their reintegration process.

Finally, the study's implications extend to policy development, as it highlights the importance of creating systems that empower juvenile justice professionals to act as connectors, linking youth to the broader resources they need for a successful transition. By adopting a more integrated, community-centered approach, juvenile reentry programs can make a lasting impact, reduce recidivism and provide youth with the tools and support they need to build positive futures.

Conclusion

This study sought to understand juvenile justice professionals' views on what makes juvenile reentry programs effective. The semi-structured interviews revealed three

essential components for success: family involvement, understanding the factors contributing to recidivism, and fostering collaboration among stakeholders. These insights suggest that a holistic, integrated approach is vital for creating an environment that supports lasting change for youth.

A key recommendation for future research is to expand the sample size and include a more diverse demographic. The implications for positive social change are significant. The findings call for a systemic shift away from a purely punitive approach and toward one focused on rehabilitation, support, and reintegration. This means designing holistic, community-based programs that involve families and stakeholders. By recognizing that this collaboration is key and empowering youth with the resources and relationships needed to succeed, these systemic changes can create a more effective and compassionate long-term solution, ultimately helping to reduce recidivism and break the cycle of incarceration.

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