

2020

Caseworkers' Perspectives on Female Juvenile Delinquent Rehabilitation Based on Age Groups

Cynthia Stephens
Walden University

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Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Cynthia Stephens

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
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Walden University
2020

Abstract

Caseworkers' Perspectives on Female Juvenile Delinquent Rehabilitation Based on Age

Groups

by

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MA, Southern University A & M, 2012

MS, Walden University, 2016

BS, Southern University A & M, 2009

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Human Services

Walden University

May 2020

Abstract

The incidence of female juvenile delinquency is increasing and, along with it, the need for effective age-appropriate rehabilitation. The purpose of this study was to address the lack of research regarding age-appropriate rehabilitation programs for female juvenile delinquents. This basic qualitative approach was used to uncover the perspectives of experienced caseworkers on the best practices and success of age-differentiated rehabilitation programming for female juvenile delinquents. Data were collected to answer the following guiding research question: What are the perspectives of caseworkers on rehabilitation programming for female juvenile delinquents, taking into account the age differences among the incarcerated youth population? Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory and Bandura's social learning theory served as the theoretical framework. Data came from semistructured interviews with 12 qualified caseworkers in the rural southern United States. Participants had 2 or more years of experience in the juvenile justice system. Following coding and thematic analysis, 3 primary themes emerged to answer the research question: (a) there are distinct developmental and situational differences between younger and older adolescents, (b) caseworkers provide more individual than group treatment to female juvenile delinquents to personalize services according to each female's age-specific needs, and (c) specialized rehabilitation programs are available to provide female juvenile delinquents of all ages with appropriate treatment. Implications for social change include using the findings of this study to devise and implement better, more successful rehabilitation programs for female juvenile delinquents, which would not only improve their trajectory but reduce the risk of recidivism and the danger to society.

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Dedication

This dissertation would not have been possible if I did not have devoted persons in my life that always inspire me to believe in myself no matter what the challenges are in life.

First, I would like to thank God for my husband; he has been with me for the latter part of my educational journey. He has always prayed for me and, with me, encouraging me to work hard to achieve my goal, God will always give you the desires of your heart and nothing is impossible with God.

Secondly, I want to thank my father and mother, who have been there for me, exhibiting the love, encouragement, and support that I needed in my life as a child. Although my father has passed on to be with the Lord, I can still hear his words in my heart, encouraging me to reach for the stars in your life. My mother and I are very close, being that I am the only girl of six siblings; my mother knew that I would need a tremendous amount of support growing up with my brothers. Therefore, we were able to build a strong and solid mother and daughter relationship.

Lastly, I cannot end the dedication section of my dissertation without mentioning my grandmother. I can remember some years back, my grandmother and I had a conversation concerning my educational endeavors. She asked me was I going to school to be a doctor; at the time, I was working on my bachelor's degree. I told my grandmother yes ma'am I am, not realizing what I replied to her. And, here I am today, Dr. Cynthia Stephens the experience with my grandmother signified to me, be careful what you said because it may come to pass in your life. Although my grandmother is no

longer with us, her spirit resonates with me, and I can still hear the conversation with had years ago in my heart.

Acknowledgements

There are many people that I want to acknowledge for me completing this document. First, I thank my Heavenly Father and my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit for this opportunity to complete my doctoral degree and dissertation.

I would like to also take this time to thank Dr. Mary Bold, Committee Chair. Dr. Bold's leadership and direction throughout the dissertation process was priceless to me, I would not have made it through this process without your encouraging words. Once again, Dr. Bold I truly thank you for all that you have done for me and my colleagues. Also, I would like to thank Dr. Garth denHeyer, Committee Member, for your knowledge, support, and feedback.

A very special thanks to all of my study participants. To my colleagues to my family, church family, and friends... words cannot fully express my appreciation to you. Your support for me over the years has not gone disregarded. Thank you for every word of encouragement and your rigid faith in me. Thank You!

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to address the lack of research regarding age-appropriate rehabilitation programs for female juvenile delinquents. This study was a means to gather the perspectives of experienced caseworkers on the effectiveness of age-differentiated rehabilitation programming for female juvenile delinquents. The rising number of U.S. teenagers who violate the law is concerning to the government, policymakers, and the public. Aizer and Doyle (2015) noted that nearly 130,000 juveniles enter police custody annually in the United States. In most cases, these arrests are mainly related to minor offenses, such as petty thefts and assaults Aizer & Doyle, 2015; however, some juveniles have entered detention for serious crimes such as burglary, criminal violence, drug abuse, sexual assault, and homicides. Research conducted on the causes of juvenile crimes and delinquent behaviors has indicated a link between aberrant tendencies among females and increased cases of substance abuse (Ttofi, Farrington, Lösel, Crago, & Theodorakis, 2016). The development of effective rehabilitation programs for this population may have a significant impact on social change.

Chapter 1 is an introduction to the study, including a brief summary of related literature. Both the problem statement and the purpose of the study appear, followed by the research question and justification for the conceptual framework of Bronfenbrenner's (1977) ecological systems theory and Bandura's (1977) social learning theory. Support for the general qualitative design precedes a list of definitions of terms as used in the study. Subsequent to a discussion of assumptions, limitations, and delimitations is the

significance of the study. A summary concludes Chapter 1, followed by a preview of Chapter 2.

Background

According to the background literature reviewed on the general topic of programming for female juvenile delinquents, there is a gap addressing female rehabilitation programs based on age differences within this population. Taylor and Borduin (2014) examined how female juvenile offenders engage in socially aggressive behaviors that make them more problematic to treat than male juvenile offenders; in turn, Asscher, Van der Put, and Stams (2015) studied the gender differences among abused and neglected juvenile delinquents. Although both sets of researchers focused on juvenile delinquency, they did not provide sufficient evidence specific to female rehabilitation programming based on age groups.

Some youth manage to progress through the development pathway successfully, whereas others break rules and regulations, which can cause issues with law enforcement (Espinosa, Sorensen, & Lopez, 2013). Espinosa et al. (2013) reported that although the juvenile crime rate has decreased, female juvenile delinquency has increased. Beardlee et al. (2018) explored the socialization effects of parents and friends on young men's substance use and criminal offending during adolescence and the transition to adulthood. The authors noted the relevance of the socialization effect of the males and the developmental stages of the female when it comes to the juvenile delinquents' crime rate within the juvenile justice system. Goldweber, Cauffman, and Cillessen (2014) explored the association between peer status and psychopathology in a young women's

correctional facility. Findings showed the women's prosocial and leadership behaviors led to increased popularity, which Goldweber et al indicated may serve as a buffer against psychosocial problems. Accordingly, treatment providers in female correctional facilities may wish to encourage socially acceptable behaviors and diminish aggression. Kerig (2018) determined the gender-differentiated patterns of risk, recidivism, and resilience as it relates to females' involvement in the juvenile justice system, finding that polyvictimization contributed greatly to conflicts with the legal system.

Researchers have identified the need for interventions to prevent female juvenile delinquents from progressing to adult criminality. Oliver and Holmes (2015) described the need for different approaches in treating juvenile female sex offenders compared to males. The researchers discussed ways to intervene in the lives of at-risk female youth before they offend, including engaging trained professionals to provide early education about sexual abuse and better support for young female victims. Tossone, Wheeler, Butcher, and Kretschmar (2018) focused on the effects of different traumatic experiences and how female juvenile delinquents are affected by these encounters, which may lead them to the juvenile justice system. However, these authors provided no significant evidence that addressed female rehabilitation programming based upon age appropriation.

Problem Statement

The problem addressed in this study was the lack of research regarding age-appropriate rehabilitation programs for female juvenile delinquents. Rehabilitation programs for females within the juvenile justice system may decrease crime rates among

this population. Although young males are still the primary perpetrators of juvenile crime, the percentage of girls having contact within the criminal justice system has increased (Pusch & Kristy, 2017). Traditionally, most theorists and researchers have focused on males' juvenile offense rates due to the lack of involvement girls had in the juvenile justice system (Kerig, 2018). Females are frequently underrepresented in the juvenile justice system, primarily due to a lesser number of female youth in the system compared to males (Tossone et al., 2018). There is a need to tailor the level and type of interventions provided to subgroups of female juvenile offenders to their risk–need profiles (Brewer-Welch, 2017).

The design of rehabilitation treatment programs is mainly for males (Yeater, Montanaro, & Bryan, 2015). Limited rehabilitation programming has been available for female juvenile delinquents (Yeater et al., 2015). In addition to planning programs suitable for both male and female juvenile delinquents, it is reasonable to plan supports that take into account developmental differences among a population, routinely considering behavioral and age differences in educational programming (Kim, 2017).

Comprehending the distinctiveness of female youth needs in rehabilitation programs could make a positive difference in outcomes (Yeater et al., 2015). In my search of the extant literature, I found articles on the general topic of programming for female juvenile delinquents; however, none emerged that addressed female rehabilitation programs specific to age differences within this population. This lack represents a gap in the literature on developmental or age grouping in rehabilitation programming for female juvenile delinquents. I addressed this gap with this study. Researchers use qualitative

approaches to uncover and understand individuals' meaning-making with regard to common experiences or shared phenomena (Creswell, 2014); accordingly, qualitative methodology was appropriate for speaking with experienced caseworkers to gather their perceptions of female juvenile delinquents within the juvenile justice system.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to gather the perspectives of experienced caseworkers on the effectiveness of age-differentiated rehabilitation programming for female juvenile delinquents. A generic, qualitative design allowed me to conduct one-on-one, semistructured interviews with 12 experienced caseworkers to gather information about their experiences and perspectives of working with female juvenile delinquents regarding age-differentiated rehabilitation programs.

Research Question

The following research question guided this study: What are the perspectives of caseworkers on rehabilitation programming for female juvenile delinquents, taking into account the age differences among the incarcerated youth population?

Conceptual Framework

Given the increasing numbers of girls involved in the juvenile justice system, more research is needed to meet the needs of this population (Yeater et al., 2015). According to Bronfenbrenner's (1977) ecological systems theory, female juvenile delinquency may bear the effects of adolescents' personal and social environment as well as the community in which they live. The ecological systems theory consists of five levels that may affect female juvenile delinquents' behavior: self, microsystem,

mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). In addition to Bronfenbrenner's (1977, 1986) concepts on human behavior, Bandura's (1977) social learning theory also shows human behavior as learned through personal environment and personality as well as how others within that environment may affect individuals' reactions to diverse situations. Relationships and interactions within the environment create personal values, beliefs, and human behaviors (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1979, 1986).

Nature of the Study

In this generic qualitative study, I focused on the impact of age variations on female juvenile delinquents within the juvenile justice system. Merriam (2010) said generic qualitative inquiry allows the researcher not only to understand a phenomenon but to incorporate the involvement of those individuals who experience the phenomenon. This qualitative study consisted of one-on-one, semistructured interviews using open-ended questions.

Definitions

Age-differentiated rehabilitation: These programs provide young offenders with relevant correctional measures that support their social reintegration (Unruh, Gangnon, & Magee, 2018).

Ecological systems theory: This theory of Bronfenbrenner (1979) consists of five levels: self, microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem.

Female juvenile offender: A girl or woman under the age of 18 years who has violated a law or penal code, entering the criminal justice system (Siegel & Welsh, 2017).

Juvenile delinquent: Young offenders who commit a crime and must take responsibility for their actions. Juveniles are under the age of majority, usually 18 years old, but not less than 7 years of age (Neal, 2016).

Assumptions

Assumptions are speculations a researcher makes about a study that are unproven (Merriam, 2010). For this study, I assumed the selected sample adequately reflected knowledge of age-differentiated rehabilitation programs for female juvenile delinquents. Another assumption was that participants provided honest responses to open-ended questions asked during the interview process. Finally, I assumed the use of one-on-one, semistructured interviews would effectively address the research question.

Scope and Delimitations

This study allowed me to explore the significance of age-differentiated rehabilitation programs from the perspectives of experienced caseworkers and their experiences with female juvenile delinquency. According to Pusch and Kristy (2017), female juvenile delinquents' crime rates have increased within the criminal justice system; therefore, I centered this study on how assigned rehabilitation programs based on different age groups could effectively influence at-risk, female juvenile delinquents. The findings of this study indicate the importance of age-appropriate rehabilitation programs for female juvenile delinquents. The research problem was that because there are fewer females than males in the juvenile justice system (Kerig, 2018), the population has not received enough attention from researchers. As this study involved uncovering participants' thoughts, opinions, and experiences, traditional qualitative designs (i.e., case

study, phenomenology, narrative, descriptive, and ethnography) were not sufficient to procure accurate information (Percy, Kostere, & Kostere, 2015). Accordingly, a generic qualitative design was most appropriate to explore caseworkers' experiences with this population of female juvenile delinquents.

The delimitations of this study were that participants must have been caseworkers in female juvenile rehabilitation programming built around age groups. To meet the criteria for participation, caseworkers must have worked for at least 2 years within the juvenile justice system and held at least a bachelor's degree. In addition, participants must have resided in the southern United States area of study and have been available to participate in semistructured interviews. Criterion sampling produced a sample of 12 caseworkers meeting participant criteria.

Because this was a qualitative study with a small sample size, the results are not directly transferable to other members of this population. However, I implemented as much trustworthiness as possible to improve the ability to transfer findings. Future researchers who may wish to replicate the study with caseworkers who work with female juvenile offenders from other areas may achieve similar findings, suggesting the potential for transferability.

Limitations

One limitation of this study was the lack of representation of all caseworkers of female juvenile delinquents; rather, only one geographic area defined the study. In addition, the results cannot provide universal guidance for developing age-differentiated rehabilitation programs for female juvenile delinquents. Study participants may not have

given entirely honest interview responses, perhaps due to a desire to protect their clients or to maintain further anonymity.

Significance

The findings from this study may contribute to social change by providing an increased understanding of rehabilitation programs based upon different age groups among female juvenile delinquents within the juvenile justice system. Female juvenile delinquents are a high-risk, susceptible, and understudied population (Yeater et al., 2015). Understanding gender differences within the juvenile justice system could be relevant in better defining the rehabilitation process for female juvenile delinquents (Kerig, 2018).

Some researchers have proposed that boys and girls experience different kinds of trauma (Kerig, 2018). Therefore, it is necessary to look at the background of the female juvenile delinquents to provide the most effective rehabilitation programs. Sexual exploitation is among the traumatic experiences endured by female juvenile delinquents (Kerig, 2018). Consequently, it is vital to develop interventions for female juvenile delinquents to perhaps lessen the increasing number of females in the juvenile justice system (Yeater et al., 2015). Further awareness of female juvenile delinquents is necessary to understand dissimilar rehabilitation programs between genders in hopes of subsequently reducing the increasing number of female juvenile delinquents (Kerig, 2018). Such a reduction may contribute to positive social change among individuals, families, communities, and society. Specific implications for social change include using the findings of this study to devise and implement better, more successful rehabilitation programs for female juvenile delinquents, which would not only improve their trajectory

but reduce the risk of recidivism and the danger to society. Furthermore, the findings of this study indicate the need for understanding appropriate treatment modalities within the juvenile justice system and incorporating further age-appropriate rehabilitation programs for female juvenile delinquents.

Summary

Developing rehabilitation programs based on age differentiation among female juvenile delinquents may lessen the juvenile crime rate. Although crime rates among juvenile delinquents have decreased overall, those of female juvenile delinquents have increased (Pusch & Kristy, 2017). This increase points to the need to develop effective rehabilitation programs for this population, which may have a significant impact on social change.

In Chapter 1, I discussed the background of the topic based on a quick summary of current research. The problem statement and purpose were provided with a focus on the perspectives of experienced caseworkers on the effectiveness of age-differentiated rehabilitated programming for female juvenile delinquents. Following a statement of the research question, I presented information regarding the nature of the study and conceptual framework as well as definitions, assumptions, and limitations. The chapter also included a discussion of the significance of the study against a backdrop of existing literature, along with the scope of the study.

In Chapter 2, I will provide the results of the literature review. A discussion of the search strategy and the conceptual foundation are first, followed by a detailed review of

literature related to the key variables of this study. Chapter 2 will conclude with summaries of the literature and the chapter overall, followed by a preview of Chapter 3.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The problem addressed in this study was the lack of research regarding age-appropriate rehabilitation programs for female juvenile delinquents. The purpose of this study was to gather the perspectives of experienced caseworkers on the effectiveness of age-differentiated rehabilitation programming for female juvenile delinquents. As this study involved uncovering participants' thoughts, opinions, and experiences, traditional qualitative designs (i.e., case study, phenomenology, narrative, descriptive, and ethnography) were not sufficient to procure accurate information. A generic qualitative approach was, therefore, appropriate to address the problem and achieve the purpose.

Nearly 130,000 juveniles enter police custody annually in the United States (Aizer & Doyle, 2015). In most cases, these arrests are mainly related to minor offenses, such as petty thefts and assaults (Aizer & Doyle, 2015). However, some juveniles put into detention have committed more serious crimes, such as burglary, criminal violence, drug abuse, sexual assault, and homicide. Researchers on the causes of juvenile crimes and delinquent behaviors have linked aberrant tendencies among females to increased cases of substance abuse (Aizer & Doyle, 2015).

The percentage of adolescent females arrested annually is on the rise (Aizer & Doyle, 2015). Recent statistics show females comprising approximately 30% of all juvenile arrests, posing a challenge for the juvenile justice system, which is less prepared for providing rehabilitation programs to females (Pusch & Kristy, 2017). A few programs are available to cater to the social, psychological, and educational needs of preadolescent

and adolescent girls (Pusch & Kristy, 2017). In addition, the United States has an independent juvenile system to address the delinquent behavior of youth (Pusch & Kristy, 2017).

Girls who enter the juvenile system often become victims of brutal punishment, overcrowding, and inadequate medical and educational programs (Decker & Marteach, 2017). The situation has prompted the introduction of applications based on age difference to ensure juvenile females receive opportunities equal to males while in detention (Decker & Marteach, 2017). Issues, such as trauma at the familial and community level, have compelled most of the female offenders to self-medicate in an attempt to solve various psychological problems (Decker & Marteach, 2017).

Chapter 2 begins with a review of the search strategy used to obtain research relevant to this study. A discussion of the theoretical foundation that undergirds this study follows. Ultimately, I present a thorough review of the literature related to the key variables in this study. The chapter concludes with a summary, followed by a preview of Chapter 3.

Literature Search Strategy

To obtain a thorough understanding of prior research conducted on the phenomenon of study, I first accessed the Walden University Library website. There, I searched for articles using multiple databases, including ProQuest, SAGE Journals, Research Gate, LexisNexis Academic, Academic Search Complete, PsycARTICLES, EBSCO, JSTOR, and Thoreau. Keywords searched were *juvenile delinquent*, *juvenile delinquency*, *female juvenile delinquent*, *female juvenile delinquency*, *juvenile courts*,

juvenile caseworkers, juvenile social worker, and juvenile recidivism. To ensure I was reviewing current literature, I prioritized articles published within the last 5 years, with the exception of historical and seminal sources. I also reviewed the reference lists of particularly relevant works to find additional material.

Theoretical Foundation

Female youth from lower socioeconomic status (SES) families are more likely to be involved with the juvenile justice system, as demonstrated by a large body of empirical literature using various theoretical frameworks. For instance, accounts based on strain and rational choice theories revealed that female delinquency could be a result of low economic resources in a family (Rekker et al., 2015). According to strain theory, female youth raised in poverty lack opportunities and acceptable ways to achieve their goals (Rekker et al., 2015). In comparison, rational choice theory shows adolescents from low socioeconomic backgrounds may engage in crime because of the gains in improving their quality of life (Rekker et al., 2015). The two theories provide a solid theoretical basis for discussing the relationship between SES and female delinquency (Rekker et al., 2015). Markedly, social disorganization theory disproves the emphasis on economic deprivation in the discourse regarding juvenile delinquency, instead demonstrating this correlation from a new perspective (Rekker et al., 2015).

Based on the social disorganization theory, the quality of a neighborhood plays a significant role in mediating the relationship between SES and delinquency, with the most unstable communities dominated by low-income families (Rekker et al., 2015). Arguably, such environments fuel the rates of misconduct due to the lack of sufficient

social capital and collective supervision to control youth's behaviors (Rekker et al., 2015). Neighborhoods of less affluence and residential stability have shown a high prevalence of youth delinquency (Rekker et al., 2015).

Literature Review Related to Key Variables

Notably, the United States has seen a decline in the number of sentenced individuals as a result of more humane rehabilitation methods, improved policies regarding the management of juvenile delinquents, increased economic development, reduced drug abuse and drug trafficking, and augmented inflow of first-generation immigrants (Aizer & Doyle, 2015). However, felony disenfranchisement laws continue to affect female juveniles, a population the U.S. criminal justice systems continue to disserve (Aizer & Doyle, 2015). These discriminatory laws, which state legislatures administer at their discretion, politically marginalize ex-felons by preventing them from voting (Hamilton-Smith & Vogel, 2012). According to Hamilton-Smith and Vogel (2012), "The severity of the disenfranchisement runs the gamut from allowing incarcerated prisoners to vote to prohibit voting rights to those who complete their sentences" (p. 408). Juvenile judges consider this alienation of juvenile delinquents to be a regulatory rather than a punitive measure (Hamilton-Smith & Vogel, 2012).

Among the reviewed literature were studies on the general topic of programming for female juvenile delinquents; however, a gap emerged specific to scholarly inquiry of female rehabilitation programs based on age differences within this population. The research gap indicates a problem not adequately addressed by previous researchers. Research gaps provide viability for the research and alert scholars of areas that need

attention (Hamilton-Smith & Vogel, 2012). Importantly, the research gap showed this study was not a duplicate of existing research.

History of Rehabilitation Programming in the United States

During the early 19th century, U.S. courts tried children as young as 8 years of age, deeming them to have already passed the age of reason (Guarino-Ghezzi & Loughran, 2017). In light of this historical foundation of child treatment, the development of juvenile justice reforms was one of the most progressive strategies in juvenile justice evolution (Guarino-Ghezzi & Loughran, 2017). Established in Chicago in 1899, the first juvenile justice court held jurisdiction over delinquent children 16 years old or younger (Guarino-Ghezzi & Loughran, 2017). In the late 18th century, youth endured confinement in penitentiaries, regardless of their age or sex (Dubois, Alem, & Silverthorne, 2018). There were also houses of refuge that paid little attention to the children's education and were focused more on behavioral reform (Dubois et al., 2018). Today, correctional institutions are the reform schools for juvenile rehabilitation.

The juvenile justice system emerged in consideration of the nature of the problems young people encounter (Guarino-Ghezzi & Loughran, 2017). As a result, the justice system sought to rehabilitate youth as opposed to punishing them in criminal courts (Guarino-Ghezzi & Loughran, 2017). The juvenile courts enabled a focus on the youthful offender as a person who needed a programmed intervention and not on the act leading to arraignment (Sankofa et al., 2018).

The idea of setting up rehabilitation programs across various jurisdictions soon gained in popularity (Wolff, Baglivio, & Piquero, 2018). Although the implementation of

these programs has often proven helpful for juveniles, tension remains between social control and social welfare (Wolff et al., 2018). In other words, there is a need to balance the interests of individual delinquents while enforcing some form of punishment and incapacitation to protect society from specific harms (Wolff et al., 2018). The current rehabilitation programs reduce recidivism rates through education programs (Bouffard, Cooper, & Bergseth, 2017).

The segregation of adolescents from adults served two purposes: to prevent youth from becoming full-fledged criminals and to reintegrate early offenders into mainstream society (Simpson, 1976). The 1960s saw the advent of individualism, personal and communal exclusiveness, and subsequent antisocial traits that eventually contributed to crime (Young, 1999). Toward the end of the 19th century, the United States became a carceral state due to the increased jailing of juveniles irrespective of their age or gender, with female juveniles now incarcerated for petty theft (Aikers, 1990). In addition, the criminal justice system detained a significantly higher number of people of color than individuals from ethnic minorities (Simon, 2007). Inferentially, the U.S. juvenile justice system was impartial because it ostensibly targeted Black youth with past criminal records, jailing even for petty crimes (Hamilton-Smith & Vogel, 2012). Most of the correction centers did not consider that imprisonment could affect the children's future; rather, the focus was on imparting behavioral reforms to juveniles while denying them the opportunity to realize their potential (Bazemore & Umbreit, 1995; Feld, 2017; Myers, 2018; Ward, 2012). Accordingly, this situation presented an urgent need to shift from a retributive justice model to a restorative one to better manage female juvenile offenders

(Bazemore & Umbreit, 1995). In response to this need, the U.S. justice system introduced policy reforms to provide young offenders with an empowering environment to continue with their studies (Feld, 2017; Myers, 2018).

The diversity of juvenile offenses indicated the necessity for a special criminal justice system to address the violations, even as the juvenile justice system incorporated the developmental stages of young offenders (Bazemore & Umbreit, 1995). It was important to establish a more humane process focused on rehabilitation to promote full recovery rather than draconian laws primarily intended to punish the young offenders (Bazemore & Umbreit, 1995). Likewise, there was a need for a system that provided systematic intervention to children to encourage behavioral transformation, with less emphasis on the offense (Bazemore & Umbreit, 1995).

Subsequently, the criminal justice system attempted to strike a balance between law enforcement and social protection to ensure juvenile offenders received the opportunity for personal growth (Reitz, 2001). This discernment fueled the urge for policy reforms to implement rehabilitative programs for the effective treatment of juvenile offenders (Reitz, 2001). Although the attendant rehabilitative programs were significantly beneficial, conflicts among various stakeholders concerning the castigation and treatment of female juvenile offenders hindered program implementation (Feld, 2017). Therefore, the government designed more comprehensive juvenile rehabilitation programs, which incorporated different stakeholder views to reduce recidivism among delinquent children (Feld, 2017; Reitz, 2001).

In the early 1900s, rehabilitative reforms stemmed from the positivist ideology, which asserted that deterrent behaviors resulted from uncontrollable forces in individuals (Akers, 1990). According to rational choice and deterrence theories, involvement in crimes by female juveniles could be linked to an inability to make sound decisions (Akers, 1990). The option to act in a deviant manner promoted logical calculation regarding the motivations for crime (Akers, 1990). The positivist school of thought was strongly based on determinism, with different factors determining the utility of engaging in crime, including familial or social environment and biological and psychological elements, among others (Akers, 1990). According to determinism, addressing the divergent forces that compel children to engage in delinquency can significantly influence positive behavioral change as well as help young offenders to lead crime-free lives (Loeber & Farrington, 1998). Loeber and Farrington (1998) held that the use of penal approaches in the management of juvenile offenders yielded positive outcomes in crime management in the United States; however, this strategy came with high human costs. Such methods augmented the risk of discriminatory and disproportional incarcerations in the state because the policies encouraged a racial divide in the treatment of offenders (Feld, 2017). According to Loeber and Farrington, it is impossible to achieve effective crime management by confining children in juvenile penitentiaries and subjecting teenagers to harsh punishments without any empowerment. Indeterminate sentencing meant offenders could serve prison terms of up to 10 years with little rehabilitative programming; after that time, adolescents received release, depending on the extent to which they appeared reformed (Blomberg, 2017).

However, the reformatory measures had flaws. Despite programming for offenders who committed lesser crimes, the majority of inmates suffered in correctional centers while trying to demonstrate behavioral transformation (Blomberg, 2017). The shortfalls of this mode of rehabilitation for child and adult offenders led to the introduction of probation and parole to release prisoners on a conditional basis so they could return to life on the outside while under watch (Blomberg, 2017). The establishment of noncustodial treatment for criminals was a progressive move that provided personalized treatment, depending on the impetus for the specific crime (Zimring, 2018). In this case, the rehabilitative effort centered on giving helpful human service to aid people in desisting from delinquent behaviors (Zimring, 2018).

In the early 1970s, the effectiveness of rehabilitative efforts as a way of curbing recidivism underwent significant challenges. Some people argued the approach was not a plausible way of addressing recidivism, especially among juvenile offenders, and thus objected to the programs (Howell, 1997; Zalman, 1977). For instance, Robert Martinson conducted several reviews of the multiple rehabilitative programs and concluded that these measures had little or no influence on the offenders (Cullen, 2013). The Civil Rights Movement supported these findings, as its supporters had lost faith in the ability and willingness of the U.S. government to improve the criminal justice system (Cullen, 2013).

The revolt, organized by various institutions and centers such as the Attica Prison, highlighted the need to overhaul the U.S. justice system. Many blamed the justice system for promoting immorality among youth, believing the system was lenient on offenders. A

majority of the public felt that rehabilitation programs could only “message” the offenders and encourage them to recidivate. Bull (2003) asserted the need for more intensive regimes, such as court diversion programs and drug courts that not only put the offenders on trial but also created effective measures to promote social integration after release from prison. Hence, there was an urgent need for a justice system to provide punitive treatment to offenders to induce behavioral change.

Racism contributed to the highly disproportionate incarceration of people of color and those from minority communities compared to the low number of Whites convicted by the same justice system. As such, the government implicitly institutionalized racism due to its use of discretion in the creation of rehabilitation programs to indirectly reinforce intolerance (Clear, Hewitt, & Regoli, 1978; Feld, 2017). Consequently, during the late 1970s and the early 1980s, the notion of determinate sentences that would facilitate the equal provision of justice emerged (Tonry, 2018). This situation led to a high rate of incarcerations in the 1990s, which reinforced criminal subcultures. Earlier efforts by the prisons to rehabilitate offenders were rendered futile, thereby increasing the risk of recidivism (Tonry, 2018).

By the turn of the 21st century, the role of probation and parole officers shifted to law enforcement. Offenders who were on parole underwent near-constant scrutiny, as parole officers searched for evidence to return the ex-offenders to prison (Vanstone, 2017). The U.S. government invested heavily in enacting strict crime policies, but this attention only contributed to the growth of the prison population and the “New Jim Crow” phenomenon (Feld, 2017; Ward, 2012). Disproportionate mass incarceration and a

racialized justice system led to the mass imprisonment of Blacks for often misdemeanor crimes such as drug abuse and trafficking, among others. Black children did not receive the same care and consideration as their White counterparts (Pisciotta, 1983). Rather, Black youth suffered from disenfranchisement and the denial of social and civil rights, thereby raising doubts about the purported color-blind administration (Pisciotta, 1983).

Today, reforms in the criminal justice system have abolished mandatory imprisonment and penalties that culminated in the indiscriminate incarceration of minority communities (Neubauer & Fradella, 2018). In addition, the government is currently focusing on alternatives in the management of drug offenders, including drug treatment, psychological therapy, and rehabilitation to facilitate a full recovery. The current juvenile court system endorses benevolence, rehabilitation, and nonpunishment, with particular emphasis on helping the youth (Neubauer & Fradella, 2018). However, some facilities may not implement these correctional measures due to the existence of industrial complexes that serve to encourage preventive and control-oriented methods for financial gain (Neubauer & Fradella, 2018).

The increased devotion to transforming the juvenile criminal justice system has contributed to the establishment of rehabilitation programs across various jurisdictions. Even though the implementation of these programs has helped juveniles, substantial tension remains between social control and social welfare (Wolff et al., 2018). In other words, there is a need to strike a balance between preserving the interests of individual delinquents and enforcing some form of punishment and incarceration to protect society from offending individuals (Wolff et al., 2018).

History of Caseworkers Working with Juvenile Delinquents

The rehabilitation of juvenile offenders is a contentious issue in the purview of criminology and penology. Muyobela and Strydom (2017) accused the juvenile justice system of incarcerating children (and thus separating from their families and the larger society) without considering the adverse long-term repercussions on individuals' mental, physical, and social development. The detention of youth leads to lifelong stigmatization, which hinders their reintegration into society (Muyobela & Strydom, 2017). The primary objective of the juvenile justice system is the rehabilitation of offenders, altering some aspects of the juvenile predictive of criminal behavior, extending to cognitive processes, mental health, attitudes, personality, social relationships, vocational skills, and education (Muyobela & Strydom, 2017). The juvenile justice system's failure to achieve rehabilitation of juvenile delinquents has led to increased cases of recidivism (Young et al., 2017).

From the 1890s to the 1920s, the Progressive Era saw the criminalization of female sexuality, a phenomenon that defined U.S. early juvenile practices and policies (Abrams, 2013; Abrams & Curran, 2000). Consequently, juvenile courts incarcerated girls for moral offenses, including real or suspected sexual behavior, separating them from their families and society for long periods. According to Abrams and Curran (2000), "This trend paralleled the emergence of adolescence as a unique developmental category and the growing public concern over women's role in a rapidly changing society" (pp. 49-50). With the onset of the 20th century, caseworkers became pivotal to the development of a U.S. juvenile, likening female delinquency to sexual expression

(Abrams & Curran, 2000). During this period, social workers shed premodern, religious roots in a bid to elevate their professional status, owing to the establishment of prestigious learning institutions. Social workers began to collaborate with professionals from various fields, including education and juvenile protection.

In the early 20th century, social workers split into two factions, caseworkers and social reformers (Abrams & Curran, 2000; Zastrow, 1993). Despite overlaps in the activities and philosophies of these groups, Lubove (1965) and Wencour and Reisch (1989) asserted that caseworkers and social reformers uniquely contributed to the development of the U.S. juvenile justice system. Throughout the Progressive Era, caseworkers participated in social science research concerning the favorable rehabilitation methods for juvenile offenders to reduce the incidence of recidivism among girls (Lubove, 1965). Caseworkers recorded crimes committed by female juveniles, expanding the focus on various psychological treatments for delinquency, as they were “eager to practice scientific management of the maladjusted girl” (Luker, 1996, p. 38). The caseworkers drew upon the records of female juveniles’ crimes to classify them scientifically. Furthermore, they used these female juvenile delinquents as research subjects in a bid to obtain an in-depth understanding of the root causes of crime and deviance among this population (Luker, 1996). In essence, the government proposed that by engaging caseworkers to conduct case studies of female delinquents, various stakeholders would understand and resolve the challenge of sexual immorality in the United States (Abrams & Curran, 2000).

The growth of casework as a profession resulted in the employment of such individuals in training schools and reformatories to support the rehabilitation of female juvenile delinquents (Kunzel, 1993). Analyzing stored criminal records sparked research on juvenile delinquency, with findings leading to reforms in the rehabilitation methods used to reintegrate female delinquents into society. Popular correctional methods were grounded in the concept of feeble-mindedness. The pervasiveness of the research resulted in the blurring of “sexual expression with delinquency, and delinquency with feeble-mindedness” (Abrams & Curran, 2000, p. 61). Consequently, the forced sterilization of female juvenile delinquents became a common practice. According to Luker (1996), forced sterilization was an inhumane and cruel component of the juvenile justice system during the Progressive Era.

The introduction of casework into the juvenile justice system to record crimes committed by female juveniles and subsequently evaluating these records spurred shifts from forced sterilization to more favorable rehabilitation methods aimed at inducing behavior change (Abrams & Curran, 2000). Specifically, criminal records analysis inspired the creation of effective rehabilitation programs, guided by policies and measures to discourage recidivism through the employment of practical correctional interventions (de Vries, Hoeve, Asscher, & Stams, 2018).

Caseworkers in early juvenile courts grew increasingly aware of the coercive character of the court’s environment and the way coercion could frustrate rehabilitative efforts (Peters, 2011). However, the efforts of caseworkers reinforced juvenile probation as a form of judicial guardianship during the Progressive Era. Furthermore, juvenile

probation became gendered, thus allowing caseworkers to address the issues of male and female juveniles separately. The entrenchment of the casework theory guided the organization of effective probation intervention for female delinquents based on the scientific classification from crime records maintained by caseworkers (Peters, 2011). The evolution of casework resulted in the development of an ecological framework that serves as the hallmark of social work intervention in the juvenile justice system.

Today, caseworkers play crucial functions in juvenile probation, especially with female delinquents. Indeed, caseworker efforts have led to probation services recognizing the need for family-based services to reduce the separation of female delinquents from their families and communities, an aspect found to contribute to recidivism (Alarid, Cromwell, & del Carmen, 2007). In this regard, caseworkers utilize family-based interventions in addressing the disadvantages of court-involved female juveniles (Peters, 2011). Further, casework supports the convergence of juvenile justice systems and child welfare with moderate juvenile delinquency and recidivism (Casillas & Mills, 2010). Caseworkers engage with juvenile probation, drawing upon the history of the field of social work as well as current expertise to serve female youth entangled with the juvenile justice system (Peters, 2011).

Effective Rehabilitation Programming

Active rehabilitation stems from policies that discourage recidivism and employ correctional interventions of what works. For a program to be considered successful, the delinquent child must demonstrate a change in behavior and show promise of developing into a productive member of society (Wilson, Olaghere, Kimbrell, George Mason

University, & United States of America, 2017). Programs with evidence-based treatment plans often succeed in reforming youth through the use of therapy and conscious behavior intervention. Rehabilitation programs, however, must have a balance between punishing the delinquents and treating them according to guiding rehabilitation policies (Goldman, 2018).

The category into which a youth criminal falls dramatically influences the effectiveness of rehabilitation programs (McCafferty, 2017). The categorization of juvenile offenders is by age, the severity of the crime, and the risk they pose to public safety. Juvenile systems that place youth in rehabilitation should also support the juveniles' healthy transition back into society as more responsible adults. Youth recidivism is significantly less when juveniles receive services and training to reenter society (McCafferty, 2017). Such programs offer these young offenders the opportunity for reform and positive development through relevant educational opportunities.

Programs effective in transforming youth offenders are those catered to juveniles' needs after reentering the community (Cicourel, 2017). Through the implementation of reentry programs, program facilitators combined various interventions with mentoring, managing, and therapy to help young offenders access needed opportunities. Such programs promote family reconnection and engagement to prepare young offenders for life outside the juvenile system. Other applications are community-based and focused on correcting behavior through group behavior modification. These programs incorporate opportunities and resources within the community to intervene and offer education, employment, and supportive community groups. The key to effective rehabilitation is

follow-up evaluations to monitor the offenders' progress (De Matteo, Heilbrun, King, & Filone, 2017).

Keep Safe is an intervention program that enhances prosocial skills and strengthens the stability of girls' placement in foster care as they transition to middle school. The prevention of substance abuse and delinquency are the key objectives of the program (Siegel & Welsh, 2017). Children who end up in the child welfare system may have endured neglect, maltreatment, or abuse that, without intervention, could result in delinquency (Gabrielli, Jackson, Tunno, & Hambrick, 2017).

To provide comprehensive intervention, Keep Safe has two components. The first, focused on caregiver training through six group-based sessions, enhances caregiver skills in behavioral reinforcement. Also, the courses equip caregivers with knowledge of how foster parents can improve child placement stability. The second component centers on the girls through skills training and completing a curriculum designed to increase positive peer relationships and self-confidence. Individual coaching sessions held during the first year of middle school are specific to each girl's unique developmental needs. Evidence of the effectiveness of Keep Safe is well documented (Siegel & Welsh, 2017). For example, girls who have gone through the program reported lower incidences of marijuana and tobacco use compared to the control group. In addition, girls involved in the program described fewer cases of delinquent behavior in the past year than girls in the control group (Siegel & Welsh, 2017).

Another effective rehabilitation program comes from the Practical Academic Cultural Educational Center, established in Jacksonville, Florida, as a school-based

program for at-risk adolescent girls (Siegel & Welsh, 2017). At present, the Center incorporates 19 preteen centers, care centers, and outreach programs that serve 2,000 girls. The centers mostly focus on recruiting girls aged 11 to 18 years who need protective services. The objective of the program is to reduce risk factors in domains such as substance abuse, behavior, and family, with the girls guided on how to make and pursue individualized social and educational goals. Teachers and advisers also perform case management. Girls who enroll for 30 days or more also receive transitional services such as counseling and follow-ups for 3 years (Siegel & Welsh, 2017). Overall, caseworkers within the field of rehabilitation services for juvenile delinquents have emphasized that intervention programs should be broad-based (universal) to generate more significant benefits (Dritsas & Theodoratou, 2017).

Age and Crime

The association between age and crime is a robust relationship in the field of criminology (Rocque, Posick, & Hoyle, 2016). An analysis of historical records during the Progressive Era showed early adolescents were overly prone to delinquent behavior. In essence, the age crime curve spanned from 14 to approximately 20 years of age (Rocque et al., 2016). In a seminal work on the intersection of sex, crime, sociology, education, and religion, Hall (1904) noted “a marked increase at the age of twelve to fourteen, not in crimes of one, but of all kinds, and that this increase continues for a number of years” (p. 325).

The age crime curve for female juveniles spanned from ages 12 to 20 years during the Progressive Era, a time in which girls committed sexual crimes in increasingly large

numbers (Rocque et al., 2016). Employing data derived from various sources, Hall (1904) demonstrated that juvenile delinquency peaked late in puberty and early adulthood due to the youths' inability to assumed fixed positions in life. Adolescence reflects a time of flux during which biological maturity is juxtaposed with the lack of social features related to adulthood, an aspect that predisposes female juveniles to delinquent behavior (Rocque et al., 2016).

In this regard, the emergence of casework during the Progressive Era and the entrenchment of the concept of an age crime curve inspired change in the criminal justice system. System stakeholders formally recognized the importance of age in terms of the number and type of crimes committed by juveniles and the way the system should handle perpetrators of juvenile delinquency. This shift led to the establishment of juvenile courts to replace reformatories and create an independent juvenile justice system (Poe-Yamagata, & Butts, 1996; Rocque et al., 2016). Research on the age crime curve resulted in increased knowledge regarding juveniles' proclivity for delinquency throughout puberty. Subsequently, the group-based trajectory method resulted in the identification of female juvenile offenders in terms of their sequence of offending over time, as shown by caseworkers' detailed records to facilitate the scientific categorization of this young offender population (Abrams & Curran, 2000). Ultimately, the emergence of casework and invention of the age crime curve supported the enactment of effective rehabilitation methods in the U.S. juvenile justice system.

Age-Differentiated Rehabilitation Programming

Juvenile delinquents are young offenders who are by law able to commit a crime and take responsibility for their actions. Juveniles are under the age of majority, usually 18 years of age but not less than 7 years (Neal, 2016). Child delinquents are children less than 13 years of age who have committed a crime. Juvenile justice is an integral part of social development, facilitating the maintenance of a peaceful society through the detainment of young offenders (Unruh et al., 2018) by emphasizing the child's social protection while detained and after societal reintegration. In a study of child offenders, Goldman (2018) found children reported cases of physical abuse during arrest and consequent verbal abuse while and awaiting trial. Forty-eight percent of the child offenders said they had been abused, with 11% of this population being female (Goldman, 2018).

According to Neal (2016), a child should not face charges as an adult; therefore, the process to determine a child's age should be holistic and in consideration of the child's cognitive and emotional maturity. Children receive placement in juvenile centers to reduce their risk of physical and verbal abuse from adult offenders in the regular prison. Juveniles have the right to survival and development, as stipulated in the United Nations Human Rights for Children Charter (Braga, 2016). They are entitled to receive protection and care while receiving the physical, social, vocational, and mental education they need to develop (Davis, 2017). Age-differentiated juvenile rehabilitation programs provide young offenders with relevant correctional measures that support their social

reintegration (Unruh et al., 2018). Also, some social services facilities enable contact with the offender's family while in juvenile prison.

The Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention program dictates that adult and child offenders shall remain separated by sight and sound throughout any judicial procedure, including detention (Dubois et al., 2018). Because juveniles are children and adolescents, they have unique needs. Additionally, placing juveniles in age-differentiated rehabilitation makes it easier to manage them. Davis (2017) showed that young offenders in adult prisons were more likely to commit suicide and fall victim to depression as an effect of physical bullying by older inmates. Such a reality further necessitates that the juvenile system establishes more age-defined rehabilitation programs (Davis, 2017).

Caseworkers in age-differentiated programming for female juvenile delinquency make use of various data sources to design effective programs (Simpson, Mercer, Simpson, Lawrence, & Wyke, 2018). For example, cohort studies provide information about the patterns of female juvenile delinquency in specific age groups. Based on study findings, caseworkers can determine which rehabilitation programs would best suit particular age groups (Simpson et al., 2018).

Caseworkers also derive knowledge about female juvenile delinquency from observational studies. In one such study, Chambliss and Schutt (2003) examined perceptions about two classes of juveniles, lower and middle. The researchers found that social perceptions influence which youth will undergo juvenile justice system processing. The knowledge caseworkers gained from observational studies, such as the findings of Chambliss and Schutt, provides them with a deeper understanding of various adolescent

subcultures (Feldman-Barrett, 2018). To be most effective, caseworkers must learn to cope with the boredom of listening to teenagers talk about their experiences to gain maximum information from their accounts (Laninga-Wijnen et al., 2017). In addition, caseworkers should strive to create and maintain trusting relationships, stave off manipulation, and ensure personal safety (Levenson, 2017).

Caseworkers in age-differentiated rehabilitation programming in the United States structure the various interventions around specific theoretical approaches. Among the prominent theoretical views that shape caseworkers' responses are developmental views (de Vries et al., 2018). Existing professional knowledge shows that female delinquents have unique issues. Siegel and Welsh (2017) noted this uniqueness emanates from specific developmental concerns that mainly affect young girls. For example, Burgess-Proctor, Comartin, and Kubiak (2017) found that female involvement in the juvenile justice system was often the result of factors such as trauma, victimization, and sexual abuse.

Developmental knowledge on the trajectory of girls' delinquency classifies offenders as high-rate, low-rate, or nonoffenders (Dennis, 2017). Girls begin offending at different ages and by committing various offenses. For example, the majority of girls who engage in drug-selling offenses start in their mid- to late teens (16 to 18 years of age; Siegel & Welsh, 2017). Most of the girls whose first offense was a status offense began criminal activity between the ages of 13 and 14 years. Among those whose first delinquent act was public disorder, alcohol use, or minor theft, the first offense occurred between the ages of 7 and 10 years (Cusack, Balduzzi, & Waranius, 2017). Therefore,

caseworkers emphasize that female delinquency, being a developmental process, requires preventive programs that focus on the developmental needs of young girls. One such program within the juvenile justice framework is Keep Safe (Siegel & Welsh, 2017).

Some juvenile justice system interventions have a greater impact than others, prompting researchers to look into the specific characteristics of the most successful programs (Braga, 2016). Age differentiation promotes the cognitive development of children who fall victim to rehabilitation, developing their social transition as they interact with people their age (Neal, 2016). For example, high school students have more developmental needs than college learners, whose needs range from training to work. Some interventions previously initiated had adverse outcomes; therefore, McCord (as cited in Braga, 2016) recommended that these programs only require constant evaluation so that caseworkers can catch the loopholes causing poor outcomes. Because some prior interventions have produced adverse outcomes, McCord recommended constant evaluation to recognize and address loopholes.

Age-differentiated programming improves care for child offenders during rehabilitation to reduce the chances of progressing into criminal behavior. The primary challenge associated with age-differentiated programming is the sexual victimization of children by staff or other offenders with the placement of youth in adult prisons (Hawkins & Weis, 2017). The social control theory underpins age-differentiated programming, suggesting that children are less prone to carry out crimes if they actively interact with others to form strong social relationships and practice new skills (Hawkins & Weis, 2017). For juvenile justice to succeed in the United States, rehabilitation programs need

to be age differentiated to increase the effectiveness of the correctional services (Hawkins & Weis, 2017).

Modern scholars are increasingly examining the population of female youth who participate in the juvenile criminal justice system to identify reasons for the rapidly increasing number of juvenile female offenders in the last decade (Pechorro, Kahn, Gonçalves, & Ray, 2017). Researchers have attempted to explore various risks and modes of protection of juvenile female offenders through the examination of criminal profiles (Pechorro et al., 2017). Recent studies show the possibility of effectively exploring female juvenile delinquency based on individual age groups through an examination of different factors unique to each person. To demonstrate, Frick (2016) examined factors involved in delinquency by adopting an individualized approach to address the needs of young felons. Some of the issues specific to female juvenile delinquents included family and living environments, economic status, and academic and school experiences (Frick, 2016). Essentially, individualized approaches to examining female delinquency are crucial to recognizing the precursors for the increasing number of females in the juvenile criminal justice system.

Family and Living Environment of Female Juvenile Delinquents

Family structure and living conditions play a significant role in the prevalence of female delinquency. Adverse changes in family structures have contributed significantly to the increase of females in the juvenile justice system. Current family structures incorporate diverse parental perspectives to raising children without considering the possible implications. The changing structure of the family has led to the creation of all

types of families, including single, married, divorced, and cohabiting parents and extended or blended households. Notably, the family environment in which children grow and the influences they experience are critical determinants of behavior (Richie, 2018). Some females raised in society-determined nontraditional families such as single-parent households are at a greater risk of delinquent behavior than are girls from traditional homes (Richie, 2018). The type of monitoring, guidance, attachment, and involvement differ depending on family composition, which influences the youth's behavioral outcomes (Frick, 2016). With all other factors remaining constant, family composition can trigger delinquency among adolescent females.

Some scholars have asserted that environmental conditions in a family determine children's behavior (Frick, 2016; Parks, 2013; Wells & Rankin, 1991). Parental monitoring, adverse support such as hostility and rejection, as well as psychological control influence delinquency, with child and parent gender, parenting informant, child age, and delinquency type moderating specific effect sizes (Hoeve et al., 2009). Most female delinquents live in neighborhoods that have high crime rates (Parks, 2013). Additionally, factors such as single-parent neighborhoods, violent families, and gang involvement reinforce destructive relationships that lead to violence and other delinquent behaviors among females ("Effects of Community Environment," 2016). Being from low-income families is associated with high crime rates among both adults and teenagers (Bhoge et al., 2017; Parks, 2013). The rates of reported homicides are also higher in areas with more single-parent families ("Effects of Community Environment," 2016). Notably, the serious crime rates in socially disorganized neighborhoods—those with many broken

families (due to death, divorce, or separation) and often characterized by single-parent heads of household or older children raising their siblings—is not necessarily a function of race; instead, the absence of marriage and complete families determines the rates of female delinquency (Parks, 2013; Wells & Rankin, 1991).

Another significant factor affecting female delinquency is growing up in violent families in violent neighborhoods. Children exposed to violence in their home, school, or community environment are often more likely to commit violent crimes compared to their counterparts without such exposure (“Effects of Community Environment,” 2016). Some females who grow up in an abusive family environment and who witness the assault of family members might become versatile criminals who engage in criminal activities, such as theft, fraud, and drug offenses (Torres & Mariscal, 2016). Predictably, some female victims of violence may become future perpetrators of crime (“Effects of Community Environment,” 2016; Parks, 2013). Moreover, internal family violence appears to contribute to female adolescent violence in socially disorganized neighborhoods. Indeed, some children exposed to such conditions may experience physical, mental, and emotional problems, which could eventually predict violent behavior.

Economic Status of Female Juvenile Delinquents

The relationship between juvenile delinquency and SES is one that several researchers have explored over the years. Notably, a correlation exists between social and economic status and the rate of juvenile delinquency. All other factors remaining constant, female youth from low SES backgrounds are more likely to engage in

delinquent behaviors compared to their peers from wealthy family backgrounds (Rekker et al., 2015). The child poverty rate in the United States is 20%, with close to half of U.S. juveniles having spent at least 1 year in poverty before the age of 18 years (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2017). Common occurrences that affect the SES of a family are job loss and divorce. Such factors also adversely impact family relationships and thus predispose youth to delinquent behavior (Rekker et al., 2015).

The relationship between SES and female delinquency has several perspectives, not just neighborhood quality. In line with the family stress perspective, the correlation between SES and female delinquency stems from parenting styles (Rekker et al., 2015). A family's SES affects the relationships between children and their parents. Females whose parents experience higher stress levels due to low SES were more likely to offend compared to individuals of parents who experience low stress with high SES (Rekker et al., 2015). Subsequently, there is an association between SES, females' externalizing behavior, and delinquency mediated by family stress and parenting behaviors (Rekker et al., 2015).

Academic and School Experience of Female Juvenile Delinquents

Recently, researchers have addressed school performance among female students with delinquency. Scientific researchers have examined the relationship between delinquency and poor academic performance, and the results show an overly complicated link (de Vries et al., 2018). Aggressive behavior among female youth causes difficulties in the classroom, which eventually leads to reduced or unfavorable evaluations from teachers and peers (Clarke, 2017). Some female juveniles who undergo such class

experiences may be more likely to break school rules and regulations than their counterparts who do not have such encounters; therefore, delinquency predicts the juvenile's trouble with school authorities (Clarke, 2017). Eventually, juveniles who break school rules face out-of-school suspensions and expulsions, punitive measures adversely affecting classroom performance in the short and long term (Clarke, 2017), suggesting a strong association between juvenile delinquency and poor school performance.

One phenomenon that contributes to the risk of delinquency is the adolescent's school experiences (Fine et al., 2018). Some adolescents with negative school experiences end up in prison, fueling the school-to-prison pipeline in the United States (Fine et al., 2018). Contact with the justice system reduces the chances of a female adolescent completing high school and going to college. Adverse school experiences contribute to an increased rate of academic failure among female delinquents (Fine et al., 2018); therefore, it is necessary to implement new strategies to increase academic success and school safety for young offenders. Such interventions may include enrolling female delinquents in alternative schools designed for students who find it difficult to conform to the expectations of traditional schools (Fine et al., 2018). Alternative schools employ different practices and services to meet the educational, behavioral, and personal needs of juvenile delinquents (de Vries et al., 2018). Keeping learners engaged by offering academic support is necessary to reduce delinquent behaviors in both male and female youth (Osher, Penkoff, Sidana, & Kelly, 2016). Engaging female adolescents in learning strategies can be useful in keeping girls from frequent juvenile delinquent system involvement.

Despite the reduction in the number of youth arrests of both males and females in the United States over the past decade, the decrease is lower for females compared to males (Nourollah, Fatemeh, & Farhad, 2015). Indeed, more young females now enter the justice system than males (Green, 2016; Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2017). Females' increasing involvement in the court system highlights the importance of focusing on the strengths and needs of juvenile courts specifically designed for females (Green, 2016). Therefore, there is a need to introduce better and efficient correctional facilities to prevent young female offender recidivism by reducing the time spent serving prison sentences.

Exploring female delinquency based on age groups from the perspective of caseworkers provides a foundation upon which to examine various influences. Female delinquency is associated with factors such as family and living environments, economic status, and academic and school experience. An exploration of these areas presents a view of what to accomplish to reduce the rates of female delinquency (Pechorro et al., 2017).

Developmental Milestones of Adolescents

When individuals perform a specific task daily, they are likely to become efficient at the activity. This supposition also applies to treating offenders, specifically juveniles. Understanding teenagers places an individual in a strong position to respond to delinquent behaviors (Curcio, Mak, & George, 2017). Adolescent development is one of the most critical areas of understanding for a justice system to consider in trying to resolve delinquency. Having increased knowledge significantly reduces the incongruity

in juvenile justice policing, delinquency theories, and adolescent development (Thornberry, 2018). Comprehending the complex biological, psychosocial, and physical developmental stages of adolescents and their relationship with delinquency can significantly diminish the criminal tendency in juveniles (Thornberry, 2018). Juvenile defenders should be in a position to identify the way personal disabilities, distress, and level of maturity can affect the behaviors, reasoning, interactions, and perceptions of youth.

The level of seriousness of a particular crime can be an indicator of the offender's maturity (Loughran, Paternoster, Chalfin, & Wilson, 2016). It takes a rational individual to weigh the merits and demerits of committing a dangerous and violent offense before acting (Loughran et al., 2016). Conservatives believe that delinquency results from free will and a thoughtful decision to break the law. Juveniles will only involve themselves in crime if they perceive more benefit with the delinquent act (Loughran et al., 2016). In this regard, the only available option is to worsen the consequences of committing an offense to reduce negative behaviors (Loughran et al., 2016). Individuals working with juveniles cannot serve as their helpers; instead, they should serve as guards to prevent the teenagers from prospective engagement in criminal behavior (Loughran et al., 2016). As a caregiver, understanding the forces behind behaviors observed among juvenile offenders increases one's capacity to identify the appropriate correctional measures to curb such actions (Loughran et al., 2016). Working with juveniles necessitates recognizing that personality development occurs sequentially; as a result, any glitches may lead to the development of delinquent behaviors (Loughran et al., 2016).

Most humans go through similar stages in the process of growing up. Each step of development builds upon experiences gained from the previous ones and involves a complex interaction of biological, physical, emotional, cognitive, and social processes (Wolff et al., 2018). The complex interplay between environmental, social, and genetic factors can significantly influence individual development and conduct.

Adolescence is a critical stage during which a child shifts into adulthood. At this time, an individual may experience various changes in body, intellectual capacity, emotions, attitudes, values, socialization, and responsibilities. A teenager might be interested in learning about physical growth and understanding the frequent behavioral and emotional shifts. Adolescents want to appear independent, which may lead to isolation from the family (Hawkins & Weis, 2017). In addition, young adults may try to build their identities to achieve social recognition. However, because the process of development varies among teenagers, people of the same age might show significant discrepancies in behavior due to disparities in interactions among physical, emotional, cognitive, and social factors (Hawkins & Weis, 2017).

Adolescence is a time to experiment; however, the propensity for risky endeavors may diminish as teenagers achieve maturity. According to Moffitt (2017), only a small percentage of adolescents continue to engage in dangerous activities in adulthood. For this reason, it might be challenging to judge a particular antisocial behavior observed in an adolescent, as this trait could disappear later. In most cases, the involvement in antisocial behaviors is part of trying to form an identity. The impetus to satisfy sexual desires and explore adult liberties may push an individual to engage in antisocial acts.

Cognitive and Behavioral Adolescent Development

Adolescents may lack the ability to act in a self-regulatory manner in situations that arouse their emotions (Baglivio, Wolff, Piquero, DeLisi, & Vaughn, 2017).

Teenagers tend to display a higher sensitivity to what happens within their social environments. For example, it is easier for incentives and peer pressure to influence teenagers' behavior, which may determine their actions (Ronald & Rand, 2018).

Providing a promise for a reward can modulate individual behavior—that is, an individual may respond to the rewarding cues in a particular way.

Adolescents show a reduced capacity to make rational judgments and choices that have implications for the future. The combination of these cognitive factors explains why youth are more likely to engage in antisocial behaviors that may have short-term benefits yet cause more harm in the long run (Patterson, DeBaryshe, & Ramsey, 2017). According to Basanta, Fariña, and Arce (2018), the tendency to engage in risky behaviors is highest during the early stages of adolescence (between 10 and 16 years of age); however, this trait tends to decline as the youth moves into adulthood. Basanta et al. concluded that the juvenile justice system must consider these realities.

Humans are in a constant struggle to counterbalance conflicting internal forces (Lahey & Waldman, 2017). The desire to achieve a sense of belonging, conform to others, attain freedom and power, survive, or merely find enjoyment can all influence individual decisions. The urgency to access essential items such as food, clothing, and shelter may promote delinquent behaviors. Developing a sense of belonging could make people feel appreciated and respected, giving them a shared sense of purpose (Lahey &

Waldman, 2017). In the same way, the desire for conformity might compel an individual to seek the company of the wrong people, which may again lead to harmful behaviors (Lahey & Waldman, 2017). The yearning for power, recognition, and a sense of competition can significantly influence personal conduct (Lahey & Waldman, 2017). For example, a female adolescent may join a gang as a way of gaining importance and recognition among peers.

Summary and Conclusions

In Chapter 2, I provided comprehensive information on the topics related to the proposed study, including the history of rehabilitation programming in the United States; the history of caseworkers working with juvenile delinquents; effective rehabilitation programming; age, crime, and age-differentiated rehabilitation programming; the family, economic, and school environments of female juvenile delinquents; and the developmental milestones and cognitive and behavioral development of adolescents. Chapter 3 will present a detailed discussion of the methodology and design of this study.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the perspectives of experienced caseworkers on the effectiveness of age-differentiated rehabilitation programming for female juvenile delinquents. Programs with evidence-based treatment plans often succeed in restructuring adolescence through the use of therapy and conscious behavior intervention (Goldman, 2018). Rehabilitation programs, however, must have a balance among punishing the delinquents and treating them according to rehabilitation regulations (Goldman, 2018).

This chapter includes an overview of the methodology for the project, including the research design and rationale, my role as the researcher, participant selection logic, instrumentation, and procedures for recruitment. I also discuss the plan for data analysis, as well as how I addressed issues of trustworthiness, including credibility, transferability, and confirmability. Following a discussion of the ethical considerations of the study is a summary and transition to Chapter 4.

Research Design and Rationale

The research design is a systematic approach a researcher employs to carry out a study (Merriam, 2010). Qualitative research is the systematic collection, organization, description, and interpretation of data (Hammarberg, Kirkman, & de Lacey, 2016). Qualitative researchers usually choose subjectivity during data collection (Merriam, 2010). A qualitative approach enables a focus on participant perceptions and possible underlying reasons for a phenomenon. With qualitative study, it is possible to understand

a given phenomenon through the involvement of persons who experienced it (Merriam, 2010). Qualitative methodology was the most appropriate approach for exploring individual perspectives regarding the research topic. A generic qualitative research design was useful for communicating with experienced caseworkers concerning their views on age-differentiated rehabilitation programs for female juvenile offenders. Moreover, the approach was aligned with the primary aim of the study of eliciting detailed narratives from participants to assist in understanding and explaining female juvenile delinquency and rehabilitation.

Research Question

The research question in this study was: What are the perspectives of caseworkers on rehabilitation programming for female juvenile delinquents, taking into account the age differences among the incarcerated youth population?

Participant Selection

The sample for this study comprised 12 caseworkers in female juvenile rehabilitation programming built around age groups. All participants resided in the rural southern United States. To meet the criteria for participation, caseworkers must have worked for a minimum of 2 years within the juvenile justice system and held at least a bachelor's degree. Criterion sampling entails choosing the study participants based on the predetermined standards (Moser & Korstjens, 2017). It was necessary for all participants to meet the criteria so that the study results may be useful. My recruitment of participants ceased upon achieving data saturation.

Role of the Researcher

To identify participants, I focused on the juvenile justice system specific to female offenders in a rural area of the southern United States. I began recruiting through outreach to professional contacts, providing them with the study recruitment flyer to distribute to other caseworkers. The recruitment flyer included information about the study as well as an e-mail address for interested participants to contact me. Using the list of interested parties, I invited 12 individuals to schedule face-to-face interviews. On our initial, introductory telephone call, I explained the purpose of the study and informed participants about the voluntary nature of their participation, privacy, confidentiality, and the withdrawal process. The 12 experienced caseworkers then participated in individual, semistructured interviews scheduled according to their availability, with the flexibility to accommodate unexpected participant circumstances. Each interview session lasted between 30 minutes to 1 hour and took place in a private room at a public library. To ensure the accuracy of participant responses, I audio recorded all interviews with participants' consent. After transcribing recordings, I began to analyze, code, and interpret all data collected.

Although I had professional relationships with the individuals who distributed recruitment flyers, I did not include any of them in the study to avoid the appearance of power relationships or expectations based on my knowledge of or relationships with the individuals. Even so, my familiarity with and feelings about the study topic had the potential to create bias. To keep bias from affecting data collection and analysis, I performed bracketing, acknowledging my feelings and opinions to set them aside,

separate from this study. No other ethical issues existed with regard to my role in the study.

Methodology

Participant Selection Logic

Researchers use criterion sampling when they seek to recruit individuals who meet a predetermined set of criteria for participation (Patton, 2002). As such, criterion sampling was the best means to recruit participants who fit the delimitations in the study. All participants must have resided in the rural, southern United States and worked a minimum of 2 years in rehabilitation programming built around age groups. They all held at least a bachelor's degree and had caseworker experience with female juvenile rehabilitation programming.

Data collection for this generic qualitative study came from interviews with 12 caseworkers, which proved sufficient to achieve the point of data saturation. Saturation occurs when sufficient themes emerge from already-collected data, rendering pointless the gathering of further information (Moser & Korstjens, 2017; Saunders et al., 2018). I ensured data saturation by scrutinizing collected information after every interview until repetition appeared instead of new themes, which occurred after 11 interviews.

Instrumentation

I conducted face-to-face interviews with the participants using an interview protocol (see Appendix) I developed to retrieve information from experienced caseworkers in rehabilitation programming built around age groups. The open-ended format of the interview questions was sufficient to collect data to answer the research

question. Open-ended questions allowed me to ask for additional details about topics mentioned by the interviewees. I followed the interview protocol in every interview so that questions were consistent for all participants.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

I used criterion sampling to find participants, first connecting with my professional contacts and asking them to distribute recruitment flyers. Interested caseworkers were able to contact me via the e-mail address on the flyer. Upon confirming by telephone that caseworkers met the criteria for participation, I sent them the informed consent form. To ensure privacy, I stored all names and contact information in a password-protected Word document, using an identifier (e.g., P1, P2, etc.) in all documentation and write-ups. Because I received sufficient interest within 7 days, there was no need to ask additional professional contacts to distribute the recruitment flyer.

Data Collection

Collected data were participants' responses to the open-ended interview questions. To ensure the accurate capture of the caseworkers' words, I used a digital audio recorder. The digital audio recorder will remain locked in a security box in my home office, along with all other physical materials related to the study, for 5 years, after which time it will undergo destruction in accordance with Walden University guidelines.

All 12 interviews took place in a private room at the public library. As a token of appreciation, I gave participants a \$10 Walmart gift card for taking part in the study. In addition to recording all interview sessions, I collected further data by making notes on a printed copy of the interview protocol (see Appendix) during the interviews. This

allowed me to document the facial expressions and body language of participants, as well as any hesitation or eagerness displayed in responding to questions. I concluded each interview by asking the participant for any questions, comments, or concerns regarding the interview experience and the responses provided.

Data Analysis

Once I transcribed the interviews, I played back the audio recordings as I read along to confirm accuracy. At that point, I e-mailed each participant a password-protected, read-only transcript of their interview to ensure I captured their responses as they intended. Transcript-checking contributes to a study's credibility because it allows participants to confirm the accuracy of information (Harper & Cole, 2012). After making two small transcript adjustments, I began coding.

Upon identifying common themes in the data, coding enables a researcher to divide themes into groups, compare the groups, and establish findings (Stuckey, 2015). I used thematic analysis to code transcripts, with a constant comparison method to establish the relationship between responses and consistency between various themes, facilitating conclusive results (Giavarina, 2015). I used colored highlighters to denote common words and phrases in the transcripts according to themes, subsequently repeating the coding for confirmation. Lastly, I recorded the confirmed codes.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is an essential aspect of research because it ensures the validity and reliability of results (Morse, 2015). Unlike quantitative inquiry, qualitative research does not produce metrics to measure the truthfulness of the results (Leung, 2015).

Moreover, qualitative trustworthiness is subject to unintended bias and erroneous interpretation from the researcher (Connelly, 2016). Therefore, a researcher must address issues such as credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability to ensure the highest degree of trustworthiness.

Credibility

In qualitative research, credibility signifies that the relationship between what the researcher is studying and the research process undertaken produces believable observations (Merriam, 2010). Credibility in qualitative research is the equivalent of validity in quantitative studies (Merriam, 2010). There are various means of establishing credibility, among them triangulation, member checking, saturation, and reflexivity (Merriam, 2010). I performed triangulation by reviewing other researchers' findings as a means of confirming my interpretations. Transcript checking occurred through participants reviewing transcripts of their interviews to ensure I accurately captured their words and what they meant to say. Although I had planned to sample more participants should the responses of the 12 caseworkers proved insufficient to achieve data saturation, this was unnecessary. Finally, I used reflexivity to consider my findings before drawing conclusions.

Transferability

Due to the nature of small, specific sample sizes, qualitative results are not directly generalizable to populations outside the sample of study (Merriam, 2010). However, qualitative researchers can take steps to improve the transferability of their results. One step is by maintaining thick description, taking detailed notes of such things

as participants' facial expressions, gestures, and mannerisms. Another means of increasing transferability is establishing variation in participant selection (Merriam, 2010), which I did by recruiting 12 participants holding one of three job titles. Another scholar may be able to follow my research procedures and achieve similar results (see Merriam, 2010).

Dependability

As with credibility, triangulation also improves dependability (Merriam, 2010); therefore, considering prior research findings when drawing my conclusions was especially important. Keeping an audit trail entails carefully documenting every step of the research process (Merriam, 2010), contributing to the dependability of a study's results. I maintained an audit trail throughout the study so that future researchers could replicate my process and perhaps arrive at similar results.

Confirmability

Confirmability is a means of ensuring that participants, not researchers, are the ones who influence the results (Fusch, Fusch, & Ness, 2018). On many occasions, researchers can experience biases or other perceptions that may compromise the results. Bracketing is one means to reduce this risk, which I practiced by first acknowledging my biases and then setting them aside to avoid them influencing my findings. By maintaining an ongoing examination of processes and analyses throughout the study, I exercised reflexivity, another means of increasing confirmability and transferability.

Ethical Procedures

Ethical considerations are among the most crucial aspects of any research; they are standards set for the conduct of those involved in the study, especially when the research involves human subjects (Merriam, 2010). Before beginning any recruitment or data collection, I submitted the study proposal to the Walden University Institutional Review Board to obtain approval to proceed (IRB Approval No. 11-13-190352034). In the application, I demonstrated adherence to the ethical principles outlined in *The Belmont Report*, which call for beneficence, justice, and respect for persons (see National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979). Accordingly, I treated all participants fairly and honestly, with their safety as my primary concern.

Another ethical consideration was engaging only participants who consented to take part with the knowledge of what participation entailed. Along these lines, all participants read and signed an informed consent form to expressly state they understood the purpose and process of the study and that their contributions were made with free will. In addition, participants knew they were free to leave at any point during the study without repercussion or penalty, in which case I would not have used any data I collected from them; however, no participants left the study. Before each interview, I invited participants to speak about any discomfort they could anticipate having when listening to or answering the questions.

All data collected for this study will remain confidential, without any identifying information tying participant responses to individual caseworkers. Rather, in all

documentation, alphanumeric codes (e.g., P1, P2, etc.) were used to differentiate participants and their responses. I have locked all physical documents and materials in a security box with electronic files stored on a password-protected computer, both of which are in my home office. I will safely retain all data for 5 years, according to Walden University's guidelines. After that time, I will destroy study information by shredding all documents and deleting all files.

Summary

This generic qualitative study was a means to explore the perspectives of caseworkers within the juvenile justice system regarding the phenomenon of age-differentiated rehabilitation programming for female juvenile delinquents. I recruited 12 participants, which proved to be sufficient to achieve data saturation. The data collection process entailed conducting one-on-one, semistructured interviews using open-ended questions. All data collected for this study will remain confidential, without any identifying information connecting participant responses and individual caseworkers.

In this chapter, I addressed issues of trustworthiness, including credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, to increase the transferability of the findings to other populations. All steps in the research process occurred in accordance with ethical procedures as outlined by the Walden University Institutional Review Board and *The Belmont Report*. In the next chapter, I will present the results of data collection and analysis.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of the study was to gather the perspectives of experienced caseworkers on the effectiveness of age-differentiated rehabilitation programming for female juvenile delinquents. A generic qualitative design allowed me to conduct one-on-one, semistructured interviews with 12 experienced caseworkers who had worked with female juvenile delinquents to gather information about their lived experiences and perceptions with regard to age-differentiated rehabilitation programs. The research question that guided this exploration was: What are the perspectives of caseworkers on rehabilitation programming for female juvenile delinquents, taking into account the age differences among the incarcerated youth population?

Following a review of the setting, participant demographics, and means of data collection used in this study, I provide a discussion of the data analysis process. In a section on trustworthiness, I share the procedures I followed to achieve credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Chapter 4 also includes a detailed review of the study results, including the primary themes that emerged from caseworker interviews to answer the guiding research question. The chapter concludes with a summary and a look to Chapter 5.

Setting

The setting for this study was juvenile justice facilities in the southern United States. All interviews took place in a private room at a public library in the geographic region of study. No personal or organizational conditions adversely affected participants'

comfort, openness, or experience. All originally selected 12 individuals took part in semistructured interviews, with their responses sufficient to achieve data saturation; therefore, no additional recruitment was necessary.

Demographics

Participants in this study were 12 caseworkers who worked in female juvenile rehabilitation programming built around age groups. All caseworkers met the criteria of having worked for at least 2 years within the juvenile justice system in the southern United States and holding at least a bachelor's degree. See Table 1 for a representation of participant demographics.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Participant	Sex	Ethnicity	Job title	Years of experience
P1	Female	Hispanic	Licensed caseworker	20+
P2	Female	White	Licensed caseworker	15
P3	Female	Black	Licensed mental health counselor	3
P4	Female	White	Licensed clinical director	4
P5	Female	White	Licensed caseworker	18
P6	Female	Hispanic	Licensed mental health counselor	22
P7	Female	Hispanic	Licensed mental health counselor	16
P8	Male	Black	Licensed clinical director	25
P9	Male	Hispanic	Licensed mental health counselor	8+
P10	Female	White	Licensed caseworker	12
P11	Male	Black	Licensed caseworker	27
P12	Female	White	Licensed caseworker	10+

Data Collection

All 12 participants were asked and responded to the same 10 questions as outlined in the interview protocol (see Appendix). The questions asked were open ended, leaving room for me to ask follow-up or probing questions as necessary. I used an audio recorder

to record each interview with the permission of each participant as part of the signed informed consent form. Each interview lasted between 30 and 60 minutes.

Data Analysis

Analysis of data began with the transcription of audio-recorded interviews. Next, I read each transcript while listening to the corresponding recording to ensure accuracy. I e-mailed all participants their transcripts to further confirm the accurate capture of their responses, subsequently making only two minor changes. I then performed multiple close reads of the 12 semistructured interview transcripts according to responses to each of the 10 open-ended interview questions. My reviews entailed highlighting common words, phrases, ideas, and topics appearing across the transcripts.

A qualitative researcher frequently performs three cycles of coding: in vivo coding, pattern coding, and thematic analysis (Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules (2017). In vivo coding entails analysis of participants' responses to identify common words and phrases. I undertook this cycle through reading and rereading interview transcripts, making a note of common terms and concepts. I began with broad concepts and descriptions, which I then narrowed down into more manageable data. Pattern coding entailed developing preliminary codes from the overarching topics I had identified. At this point, I was also able to determine that I had achieved data saturation; therefore, no further sampling or interviews were necessary. Finally, I closely reviewed the broad descriptions to arrive at more specific themes, a process known as thematic analysis. I conducted thematic analysis according to the phases identified by Nowell et al., 2017, which entailed achieving data familiarity; identifying initial codes; identifying,

reviewing, and naming themes; and writing up my conclusions. There were no discrepant cases.

Three themes emerged from semistructured interviews with the 12 qualified participants: (a) there are distinct developmental and situational differences between younger and older adolescents, (b) caseworkers provide more individual than group treatment to female juvenile delinquents to personalize services according to each female's age-specific needs, and (c) specialized rehabilitation programs are available to provide female juvenile delinquents of all ages with appropriate treatment. I address each of these themes in great detail later in this chapter. The findings were sufficient to answer the research question.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

If qualitative research results are to be reliable and valid, they must have trustworthiness (Morse, 2015). Achieving trustworthiness in qualitative studies is different than in quantitative inquiry because the latter entails statistical tests of numerical data and the former is more subjective (Morse, 2015). The first step to ensure the trustworthiness of the results of this study entailed acknowledging and setting aside personal bias so that only the participants' words became part of data analysis. This occurred through a process known as bracketing, by which a researcher documents any biases and preconceptions in a journal before dismissing them from consideration during data collection and analysis (see Tufford & Newman, 2012). Next, I made efforts to maximize the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of results.

Credibility

Qualitative findings are credible when they plausibly develop from the research process and objective (Merriam, 2010). The quantitative equivalent of credibility is validity (Merriam, 2010). To achieve credibility in this study, I used triangulation, transcript checking, data saturation, and reflexivity. Triangulation entailed performing a comprehensive literature review to uncover other researchers' findings on similar topics. To ensure the accurate capture of participants' responses and intentions, I enlisted the caseworkers to review their transcripts as a means for them to suggest any changes to clarify their words; subsequently, I made two small transcript adjustments. I achieved data saturation with the information provided by participants, which meant the sample size of 12 was sufficient and did not need to increase because no new themes would have been forthcoming. I practiced reflexivity by journaling my thoughts and perceptions during the interviews, something that enabled me to examine my feelings and biases throughout the process to set them aside when analyzing data and drawing conclusions.

Transferability

Qualitative research has internal validity if the results are transferable to similar populations and studies (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Means of achieving transferability include introducing variety into the sample. Accordingly, the sample of this study comprised individuals with one of three job titles: licensed caseworker, licensed mental health counselor, or licensed clinical director. Both men and women took part, representing a variety of ethnic backgrounds. Transferability of the findings also increased because I kept an audit trail using rich, thick description, carefully documenting

every step of the research so later scholars could replicate the study and arrive at similar results.

Dependability

Qualitative research results are dependable when they accurately reflect the collected data (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Accordingly, any data collection instruments or tools must be appropriate to obtain information that answers the research questions. As with transferability, I improved dependability in this study by keeping a detailed audit trail. Note-taking during one-on-one participant interviews helped because I documented nonverbal behaviors, such as movements, expressions, and intonation. Taking notes also allowed me an opportunity to record and address my perceptions and thoughts to put them aside, keeping researcher bias from influencing participant responses or my interpretations.

Confirmability

Confirmability in qualitative research means that other scholars following a carefully documented audit trail and processes can achieve similar findings (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). I boosted the confirmability of my results by using bracketing, recording my preconceptions and opinions to set them aside so they would not influence data analysis or conclusions. Performing similar efforts through note-taking and reflexivity were additional means to achieve confirmability.

Results

Coding and thematic analysis of collected data produced three themes to answer the research question. These themes were: (a) there are distinct developmental and

situational differences between younger and older adolescents, (b) caseworkers provide more individual than group treatment to female juvenile delinquents to personalize services according to each female's age-specific needs, and (c) specialized rehabilitation programs are available to provide female juvenile delinquents of all ages with appropriate treatment.

Theme 1: Developmental and Situational Differences by Age

Children and adolescents pass through many age-related stages of development (Vijayakumar, de Macks, Shirtcliff, & Pfeifer, 2018). In addition to emotional and physical maturity, youth undergo notable brain development that affects risk-taking, mental health, and psychosocial behavior (Vijayakumar et al., 2018). These stages indicate the need for age-differentiated treatment for female juvenile delinquents, something highlighted by several participants in this study.

Younger female juvenile delinquents. P12 reported abandonment and trauma were more common among younger female juvenile delinquents. P6 pointed to the difference in trauma situations faced by older and younger adolescents. About her experiences as a caseworker for female juvenile delinquents, P6 noted:

The females in detention all have needs, but specific needs vary with age. The younger population appears to need more nurturing and guidance (i.e., attention, reassuring, confidence-building, and basic life skills), whereas the older population may desire more autonomy but needs the occasional reassurance and guidance to navigate through life-changing decisions.

P12 also identified distinct differences between the age groups:

Eleven to 13 are the ages where female juveniles experience the most abandonment and trauma, whereas they are evolving through the system of home to home through group homes, as they have been taken from their parent or [their] parents are incarcerated. They are at the age of lost and finding themselves.

Fourteen to 17 are where they start to find their way and tend to find things that negatively help them cope, such as trying to fit in and substance abuse. That's when they start to get introduced to the legal system.

P8 mentioned the transition from middle school to high school as a critical period in self-perception and concept, identifying midteens as the time juveniles are:

Attempting to identify who they are . . . trying to connect with their identity.

Trying to be accepted by their peers and develop that side of it. When they are done with that phase, each [is] interested in graduating and looking forward to their future.

The participants discussed the personalities and intentions of female juvenile delinquents by age. They viewed the younger group as in need of more attention (P10), "more personable" (P5), "lost and finding themselves" (P12), and more likely to speak truthfully (P5 and P10) and share their feelings (P7). In addition, as P5 noted, younger female juvenile delinquents had better success rates with rehabilitation program achievement and reduced recidivism.

Older female juvenile delinquents. In comparison to younger teens, who are seeking personal identities and more open to expressing themselves, older adolescents want more autonomy and less interaction (P2). According to P5, 15- to 16-year-olds "did

not tell the truth or . . . open up . . . about their feelings.” Older female juvenile delinquents have had more experience with deviant and criminal behaviors and have undergone more adverse experiences, such as sexual abuse. Rather than seek the guidance of knowledgeable adults, said P10, older adolescents are more likely to “take advice from their peers, which can cause more issues in their lives.” Instead of following the treatment rules outlined for them, older female juvenile delinquents “attempt to develop their own rules” (P9).

Perhaps most dangerous was that older adolescents in juvenile rehabilitation would negatively influence the younger girls. As P2 explained, “The older groups have learned some of the tricks of the trade, which cause negative impacts in the minds of the younger age groups.” Such influence was especially problematic, P2 continued, because “the younger age groups seem to depend on the older age groups to learn how to maneuver within the program.”

P8 was the only interviewee to identify positive traits among older female juvenile delinquents taking part in rehabilitation programs. P8 described the older teens as “interested in graduating and looking forward to their future.” For the most part, though, participants spoke about the difficulties in engaging older adolescents, whom they viewed as having “more life experiences that significantly influence their character and decision-making” (P11).

Theme 2: Individual Treatment Services by Age

A common thread among participant responses was that there was no one-size-fits-all treatment program. Although caseworkers discussed a wide range of group

rehabilitation programs, they were united in the opinion that individual settings were significantly better than group settings. P1 explained, “In an individual setting, you are better able to relate to each female juvenile delinquent one on one in accordance to their age.” Similarly, P7 found the “individual setting works better for female juvenile delinquents because it allows them to receive the one-on-one attention that they need to succeed in life.”

Participants shared strong opinions regarding the need for individual treatment.

P1 asserted:

I am a firm believer—I do not believe that female juvenile delinquents with different ages should meet in a group setting. Each female juvenile delinquent goes through different phases in their lives, which means the level of maturity is not the same. For example, within the age groups 13 to 14 [years] as it relates to the 15 to 16 [years] age groups. In an individual setting, you are better able to relate to each female juvenile delinquent one-on-one in accordance to their age.

P12 also emphasized the need for an individual therapeutic setting “because the need of the program varies in age.” By way of illustration, she continued, “A 12-year-old versus a 17-year-old and drug use, for example, will be different.”

Another benefit to individual treatment was that it allowed female juvenile delinquents to more freely share their experiences and perceptions without fear of ridicule from others. To this end, P9 related, “[The girls] are more likely to share their emotional feelings. In some cases, you can find out from them why did they commit the crimes and act out the way they do in life.” P2 noted that individual settings “allow the female

juvenile delinquents the opportunity to express themselves” in ways the group settings do not.

With group treatment, there were often guidelines and best practices in place. For example, P11 said:

Age differences are identified in the rehabilitation programs by both individual settings and group settings. A child’s age, maturity level, and the type of presenting circumstances that allowed for placement in a rehabilitative setting in the first place would factor in decisions about a child’s placement in a group setting.

Some caseworkers said they relied almost exclusively on individual settings, only using groups to communicate changes in facility policy. Other rehabilitation centers put female juvenile delinquents together in residential halls, usually divided into age groups (P4, P6) with all ages allowed in common areas (P4). Similarly, facilities grouped adolescents into age-appropriate educational settings for teaching school content along with better coping skills, which P2 described as “provid[ing] female juvenile delinquents with a feeling of hope and a path to success.”

Theme 3: Specialized Rehabilitation Programs

Participants identified various programs available in their respective facilities, the most common of which were counseling, education, and mentoring. Other programs included drug and substance abuse treatment (P2, P4, P6, and P11), sister-to-sister match-ups (P8 and P10), sexual trauma support (P11), and family strength skills (P6), the latter a 12-week program that trains family members to provide caring and appropriate support

for their daughter upon her release. As they did when discussing their preference for individual over group settings, participants stressed the importance of identifying the needs of each female juvenile delinquent to match her with the programs she requires.

Both P1 and P8 again mentioned that one size does not fit all. Expounded P1:

First, you have to make sure that the rehabilitation program is appropriate for each female juvenile delinquent. . . . You need to know your juveniles; you need to know what works best for them. A lot of times, different concepts come up as I go.

In addition to identifying a range of programs available in their facilities, participants spoke in general about treatment settings. Said P11:

Rehabilitation programs make a difference in the lives of female juvenile delinquents as they provide structure, a system of discipline, education, and respite, [the latter] in cases of inpatient treatment or a stay in a group home. These are qualities found in “normal environments” that aid in producing positive, general well-being.

P12 also stressed the importance of rehabilitation programs that “provide consistency, discipline, positive thinking, structure, [and] education on how to express one’s feelings and interact with their environment in a positive way.” Rather than citing a particular program, P1 indicated a type of interaction that occurred in the group setting:

Being able to talk is another means of rehabilitation; therefore, I allow the females to convey with each other within the group. Without rehabilitation programs, they

would not have the confidence and self-esteem within themselves, which is vital in today's society.

Counseling. The most common type of treatment female juvenile delinquents received was counseling. P10 explained, "The counseling program is used as a way to address the female juvenile delinquent's concerns—issues in life—and needs as a youth offender." P6 heralded the importance of immediate individual counseling as a means "for each female juvenile delinquent to develop trust and confidence with the caseworker." Only after achieving such trust did she introduce group treatment to the adolescent girl. She explained:

Once the trust and confidence is accomplished, [the girls] are then able to get involved with the programs available for them to be successful in their lives and in the lives of other female juvenile delinquents by sharing their positive stories with each other.

Many caseworkers viewed one-on-one counseling as the foundation for a female juvenile delinquent to succeed in life and society upon release. P11 was adamant, stating, "I believe that mental health is how we think, feel, and act. It affects how children feel about themselves, how they relate to other children and adults, and how they handle change, stress, and life situations." P11 continued, "Life, in general, dictates that children experience mental, emotional, and/or behavioral health issues, notwithstanding the fast pace of life in today's society, which seems to garner negative experiences at a rapid rate."

Although most counseling occurred individually, some caseworkers also provided family therapy. According to Alarid et al. (2007), caseworkers have been instrumental in incorporating families into the care of female juvenile delinquents. P9 explained the need to include the family unit, identifying “the school system and the family of the female juvenile delinquents [as] primary agents of socialization within their lives.” P10 went even further, arguing:

The family is the key social institution that provides the nurturing socialization among the female juvenile delinquent population; therefore, it is vital to incorporate agencies that will promote families and female juvenile delinquents working together so that the family as a whole will be successful.

P6 shared that her organization also incorporated an in-home model. For up to 1 year postrelease, the case manager and qualified professional visit the home to work with both the female juvenile delinquent and her family. P6 explained the need for such follow-up, stating, “Completion of this program depends on the involvement of the parents and the female juvenile delinquents.”

Educational programs. Another common rehabilitative program involved some type of formal education. Although young adolescents also benefited from education, most participants emphasized educational programs for older female juvenile delinquents. P2 identified educational programs as “provid[ing] female juvenile delinquents with a feeling of hope and a path to success.” P11 indirectly addressed the importance of educational programs, stating that “children, in general, want to be taught, instructed, directed, led, and guided.”

Tutoring was often an addition to the standard educational program, building upon what the girls learned in the traditional classroom settings. Four participants—P1, P2, P4, and P7—mentioned tutoring among the list of programs offered by their facility. However, P1 identified the need for other treatment before providing tutoring, noting, “There are a lot of barriers and walls built up with the female juvenile delinquents; therefore, in order to tutor them, you must mentor them first so that you can teach them.”

Vocational training and job placement were two other educational programs specific to older adolescents. P10 identified vocational training first among the list of programs offered by her facility, saying, “The vocational training program allows the female juvenile delinquents to learn additional trades and skills so that they can become a productive adult in society.” P12 mentioned job placement, although she was the only caseworker to do so.

Mentoring. Two thirds of participants (P1, P3, P4, P5, P6, P8, P9, and P11) identified the presence of mentoring programs, which the majority of them heralded. P1 matched female juvenile delinquents with mentors as a way to “break down barriers and walls” and “relate to them,” finding it a necessary first step before any other program, including counseling. P3 noted that pairing female juvenile delinquents with female professionals as mentors gave the girls “the capability to become a success.” According to P6, “The vast majority of the rehabilitation programs are designed to treat each female juvenile delinquent . . . [including] mentoring the female juvenile delinquent population with matched mentors within the community.”

P11 heralded the importance of matching female juvenile delinquents with mentors in a variety of settings. The participant explained, “Mentoring programs at school, in the community, and in group homes infuse some ethical values: respect, responsibility, caring, trustworthiness, fairness, and citizenship.” Among the multiple roles P4 held as a caseworker was that of confidant and mentor.

Summary

This generic qualitative study was a response to the lack of research regarding age-appropriate rehabilitation programs for female juvenile delinquents. To contribute to filling the literature gap, I solicited the perspectives of 12 experienced caseworkers on the effectiveness of age-differentiated rehabilitation programming for female juvenile delinquents. I collected data from semistructured interviews using open-ended questions to answer the overarching research question: What are the perspectives of caseworkers on rehabilitation programming for female juvenile delinquents, taking into account the age differences among the incarcerated youth population?

Following the coding and thematic analysis of interview transcripts, I identified three themes from participants’ responses: (a) there are distinct developmental and situational differences between younger and older adolescents, (b) caseworkers provide more individual than group treatment to female juvenile delinquents to personalize services according to each female’s age-specific needs, and (c) specialized rehabilitation programs are available to provide female juvenile delinquents of all ages with appropriate treatment.

Theme 1: Developmental and Situational Differences by Age

The developmental stages of female juvenile delinquents dictate their classification as offenders (Dennis, 2017). Age-differentiated rehabilitation programming helps to address the developmental and situational differences between older and younger adolescents, thus increasing the likelihood of correctional services success (Hawkins & Weis, 2017). In general, the older the juvenile, the more serious the offense (Loughran et al., 2016); therefore, young female offenders require rehabilitation programs specific to their situations.

P12 differentiated between older and younger adolescents with regard to trauma and situation, noting that young girls (ages 11 to 13 years) “experience the most abandonment and trauma,” whereas older teens (14 to 17 years) “tend to find things that negatively help them cope.” Girls aged 11 to 13 years, said P12, “are at the age of lost and finding themselves.” P8 focused on the transition from middle school to high school as being critical to a young girl’s self-perception as she tries to identify who she is and gain acceptance from her peers. The participants often held complimentary views of younger female juvenile offenders as being more personable, more likely to speak truthfully, and more inclined to share their feelings.

In comparison, participants shared that older female juvenile delinquents often refused to tell the truth or speak about their feelings, instead attempting to develop their own rules for the rehabilitation programs. Older adolescents were less likely to look up to or take advice from caseworkers or other adults, turning instead to their peers for guidance, which, as P10 noted, “can cause more issues in their lives.” P11 explained the

challenge in engaging and helping older adolescents, who “more life experiences that significantly influence their character and decision-making.” As a result, not differentiating rehabilitative treatment by age was risky because, as noted by P2, the older adolescents were often negative influences on the younger ones.

Theme 2: Individual Treatment Services by Age

The acts of female juvenile delinquents vary by age group; therefore, it is important for caseworkers to take age into consideration when designing or implementing rehabilitation programs (Simpson et al., 2018). Participants overwhelmingly agreed there is no one-size-fits-all treatment program. Even beyond dividing group rehabilitation programs by age group, caseworkers asserted the benefits of individualized treatment. Said P1, “In an individual setting, you are better able to relate to each female juvenile delinquent one on one in accordance to their age.” The participant was adamant that “female juvenile delinquents with different ages should [not] meet in a group setting,” explaining:

Each female juvenile delinquent goes through different phases in their lives, which means the level of maturity is not the same. For example, within the age groups 13 to 14 [years] as it relates to the 15 to 16 [years of] age groups.

Similarly referencing the varied needs of adolescents by age, P12 asserted, “A 12-year-old versus a 17-year-old and drug use, for example, will be different.”

Theme 3: Specialized Rehabilitation Programs

Successful rehabilitation programs are those that employ correctional interventions of what works, teach offenders positive behaviors and means of achieving

goals, and discourage recidivism. Rehabilitated individuals are those who demonstrate positive change and can successfully return to the community (Cicourel, 2017; Wilson et al., 2017). The success of rehabilitation programs is heavily dependent on the young offender's age, the severity of the crime, and the risk to public safety (McCafferty, 2017).

Participants in this study asserted that it was imperative to match each female juvenile delinquent with the programs most appropriate to her needs. "You need to know your juveniles," said P1. "You need to know what works best for them." P11 heralded rehabilitation programs as "mak[ing] a difference in the lives of female juvenile delinquents, as [the programs] provide structure, a system of discipline, education, and respite." Three of the most common and important types of programs that emerged from the interviews were counseling, education, and mentoring.

For many caseworkers, one-on-one counseling provided female juvenile delinquents with a foundation for success upon release. Said P10, "The counseling program is used as a way to address the female juvenile delinquent's concerns, issues in life, and needs as a youth offender." P6 asserted that achieving trust and confidence from effective counseling was imperative before attempting other rehabilitation programs.

Formal education programs were also common offerings for female juvenile delinquents, "provid[ing them] with a feeling of hope and a path to success," according to P2. Interestingly, the majority of caseworkers who mentioned educational programs did so in the context of older adolescents. One-on-one education by way of tutoring built upon standard programming, yet required a degree of trust to be successful. Additional

services included vocational training and job placement so the female juvenile delinquent “can become a productive adult in society” (P10).

Eight of the 12 participants remarked that their facilities offered mentoring programs, with many stressing the importance and success of such programs. P1 found pairing female juvenile delinquents with mentors as a way to “break down barriers and walls.” According to P3, mentoring by female professionals provided the adolescents with “the capability to become a success.” P11 spoke about mentoring programs outside of the facilities—in schools, the community, and group homes—noting shared ethical values to include “respect, responsibility, caring, trustworthiness, fairness, and citizenship.”

Chapter 5 will present an interpretation of the findings, which extend knowledge in the discipline based on the previously discussed literature review. Analysis of the findings appears in accordance with Bronfenbrenner’s (1977) ecological systems theory and Bandura’s (1977) social learning theory, which served as the theoretical framework for this study. Also discussed are study limitations, along with recommendations and implications for social change and professional practice.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to address the lack of research regarding age-appropriate rehabilitation programs for female juvenile delinquents. Researchers use generic qualitative inquiry because traditional qualitative designs such as case study, phenomenology, and ethnography are not apt for uncovering the meaning participants ascribe to a specific phenomenon (Creswell, 2014). The generic qualitative approach was appropriate to gather the perspectives of experienced caseworkers on the effectiveness of age-differentiated rehabilitation programming for female juvenile delinquents. I collected data through one-on-one, semistructured interviews with 12 qualified caseworkers, performing subsequent coding and analysis of their responses to derive findings. In the interviews, participants discussed their experience and roles; types of rehabilitation programs offered by their facilities; appropriate treatment settings; and the need for individual, age-differentiated treatment. Three themes emerged from analysis of the interview transcripts: (a) there are distinct developmental and situational differences between younger and older adolescents, (b) caseworkers provide more individual than group treatment to female juvenile delinquents to personalize services according to each female's age-specific needs, and (c) specialized rehabilitation programs are available to provide female juvenile delinquents of all ages with appropriate treatment.

Interpretation of the Findings

Semistructured interviews allowed me to obtain the perspectives of experienced caseworkers on the types and appropriateness of age-differentiated rehabilitation

programming for female juvenile delinquents. The findings of this study both confirm and extend knowledge in the discipline. In the following subsections, I provide a breakdown of the findings by theme.

Theme 1: Developmental and Situational Differences by Age

Many scholars have investigated the relationship between age and crime (Rocque et al., 2016). Young people pass through age-related stages of growth and development between early to late adolescence, not only physically but emotionally and psychologically as well (Vijayakumar et al., 2018). P12 noted that female juvenile delinquents present with different trauma situations based on whether they are older or younger. This juxtaposition between physical maturity and unpreparedness for adult responsibility may lead adolescent females to engage in delinquent behavior (Rocque et al., 2016). P6 identified the specific needs of female juvenile delinquents as varying with age.

The developmental stages of female juvenile delinquents dictate their classification as offenders (Dennis, 2017). Age-differentiated rehabilitation programming helps to address the developmental and situational differences between older and younger adolescents, increasing the likelihood of correctional services success (Hawkins & Weis, 2017). In general, the older the juvenile, the more serious the offense will be (Loughran et al., 2016); therefore, young female offenders require rehabilitation programs specific to their situations.

P12 differentiated between older and younger adolescents with regard to trauma and situation, noting that young girls (i.e., 11 to 13 years old) “experience the most

abandonment and trauma,” whereas older teens (i.e., 14 to 17 years old) “tend to find things that negatively help them cope.” Girls aged 11 to 13 years, said P12, “are at the age of lost and finding themselves.” P8 focused on the transition from middle school to high school as being critical to a young girl’s self-perception as she tries to identify who she is and gain acceptance from her peers. The participants often held complimentary views of younger female juvenile offenders as being more personable, more likely to speak truthfully, and more inclined to share their feelings.

In comparison, participants shared that older female juvenile delinquents often refused to tell the truth or speak about their feelings, instead attempting to develop their own rules for the rehabilitation programs. Older adolescents were less likely to look up to or take advice from caseworkers or other adults, turning instead to their peers for guidance, which, as P10 noted, “can cause more issues in their lives.” P11 explained the challenge in engaging and helping older adolescents, who have “more life experiences that significantly influence their character and decision-making.” As a result, not differentiating rehabilitative treatment by age was risky because, as noted by P2, the older adolescents were often negative influences on the younger ones.

The findings from this study support those of Burgess-Proctor et al. (2017), who attributed female adolescents’ delinquency to adverse events, including trauma, victimization, and sexual abuse. In the interview, P12 stated that girls 11 to 13 years old “experienced the most abandonment and trauma.” Following up that statement, P12 cautioned that older adolescents “tend to find things that negatively help them cope, such as trying to fit in and substance abuse.”

The findings extend knowledge in the discipline through the caseworkers' observations regarding the different behaviors and rehabilitation needs of younger and older female juvenile delinquents. In their responses, caregivers revealed how much more open to treatment the younger female juvenile delinquents were compared to the older ones who both sought (P10) and served as (P2) poor role models. Based on the range of developmental differences between early and late adolescence, age-differentiated rehabilitation programming is needed for female juvenile delinquents.

Theme 2: Individual Treatment Services by Age

The findings of this study showed the importance of individual treatment, confirming the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. Researchers discussed the Keep Safe intervention program, one component of which is individual coaching that each girl receives during the first year of middle school (see Siegel & Welsh, 2017). Along similar lines, P1 explained, "In an individual setting, you are better able to relate to each female juvenile delinquent one on one in accordance to their age."

The acts of female juvenile delinquents vary by age group; therefore, it is important for caseworkers to take age into consideration when designing or implementing rehabilitation programs (Simpson et al., 2018). Participants overwhelmingly agreed there is no one-size-fits-all treatment program. Even beyond dividing group rehabilitation programs by age group, caseworkers asserted the benefits of individualized treatment. P1 was adamant that "female juvenile delinquents with different ages should [not] meet in a group setting," explaining:

Each female juvenile delinquent goes through different phases in their lives, which means the level of maturity is not the same. For example, within the age groups 13 to 14 [years] as it relates to the 15 to 16 [years of] age groups.

Similarly referencing the varied needs of adolescents by age, P12 asserted, “A 12-year-old versus a 17-year-old and drug use, for example, will be different.”

The findings extend knowledge in the discipline through the participants’ unwavering emphasis on individual treatment. Rather than discussing group programs in detail, the caseworkers identified one-on-one counseling as the foundation for the postrelease success of the female juvenile delinquent. P11 felt strongly that “mental health . . . affects how children feel about themselves, how they relate to other children and adults, and how they handle change, stress, and life situations.

Theme 3: Specialized Rehabilitation Programs

Effective rehabilitation programs are those that reduce recidivism by teaching juvenile offenders how to control their behavior and make better choices, employ correctional interventions of what works, teach offenders positive behaviors and means of achieving goals, and discourage recidivism (Goldman, 2018; Wilson et al., 2017).

Rehabilitated individuals demonstrate positive change and can successfully return to the community (Cicourel, 2017; Wilson et al., 2017). The success of rehabilitation programs is heavily dependent on the young offender’s age, severity of the crime, and risk to public safety (McCafferty, 2017).

Participants in this study asserted that it was imperative to match each female juvenile delinquent with the programs most appropriate to her needs. “You need to know

your juveniles,” said P1. “You need to know what works best for them.” P11 heralded rehabilitation programs as “mak[ing] a difference in the lives of female juvenile delinquents, as [the programs] provide structure, a system of discipline, education, and respite.” Three of the most common and important types of programs that emerged from the interviews were counseling, education, and mentoring.

Many caseworkers saw one-on-one counseling as providing female juvenile delinquents with a foundation for success upon release. P10 said, “The counseling program is used as a way to address the female juvenile delinquent’s concerns, issues in life, and needs as a youth offender.” P6 asserted that achieving trust and confidence from effective counseling was imperative before attempting other rehabilitation programs.

Formal education programs were also common offerings for female juvenile delinquents, “provid[ing them] with a feeling of hope and a path to success,” according to P2. Interestingly, the majority of caseworkers who mentioned educational programs did so in the context of older adolescents. One-on-one education by way of tutoring built upon standard programming yet required a degree of trust to be successful. Additional services included vocational training and job placement “so [female juvenile delinquents] can become a productive adult in society” (P10).

Eight of the 12 participants reported that their facilities offered mentoring programs, with many stressing the importance and success of such programs. P1 found pairing female juvenile delinquents with mentors as a way to “break down barriers and walls.” According to P3, mentoring by female professionals provided adolescents with “the capability to become a success.” P11 spoke about mentoring programs outside of the

facilities—in schools, the community, and group homes—noting shared ethical values to include “respect, responsibility, caring, trustworthiness, fairness, and citizenship.”

The findings from this study built upon prior scholarship because participants identified the need “to make sure that the rehabilitation program is appropriate for each female delinquent” and “to know your juveniles . . . to know what works best for them” (P1). The literature review revealed overarching rehabilitation programs, including community reentry and follow-up evaluations (Cicourel, 2017; De Matteo et al., 2017). Some specific interventions had received scholarly inquiry, including Keep Safe and a program from the Practical Academic Cultural Educational Center (Siegel & Welsh, 2017); however, participants in the current study discussed rehabilitation programs in much broader terms. Although specific programs came up, more participants mentioned treatment in general terms, including counseling, education, and mentoring. Counseling emerged as an integral first step in treatment, which P10 said was essential “for each female juvenile delinquent to develop trust and confidence with the caseworker.”

Limitations of the Study

The chief limitation of this study was inherent to the research approach. Qualitative research findings are subjective and specific to the participants under study. As such, qualitative results are not directly transferable to other populations or samples. Additional limitations pertained to the restricted geographic area of the rural, southern United States and the lack of representation of all caseworkers working with female juvenile delinquents. Finally, despite insight from the firsthand experiences of the caseworkers in this study, the findings are insufficient to provide guidance or direction in

developing effective age-differentiated rehabilitation programs for female juvenile delinquents.

Recommendations

The findings of this study provide insight into the perceptions and experiences of caseworkers in the rural, southern United States who work with female juvenile delinquents with regard to age-differentiated rehabilitation programming. My recommendations for further study include expanding the geographic region outside of the limited area, perhaps into urban areas in the southern United States or other regions across the country. Future scholars may also wish to explore caseworkers' ideas for creating more appropriate and successful age-differentiated rehabilitation programming for female juvenile delinquents.

Implications

This study's implications for positive social change begin at the individual level, as caseworkers may benefit from the insight of others in their field. Facility leaders and owners could also use the information from this study to assess current rehabilitation offerings for their female juvenile delinquent patients and clients. Families of this young population could also learn from these findings, perhaps identifying and suggesting which types of treatment would be best for their daughters.

One implication comes from the conceptual framework of ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1977) and social learning theory (Bandura, 1977). In line with ecological systems theory, an adolescent's personal and social environments have a strong influence on juvenile delinquency, something echoed by many of the caseworkers

in this study who expressed a strong preference for individual over group settings. Social learning theory shows that individuals learn from watching others, which was apparent in caseworkers' references to older female juvenile delinquents being poor role models for the younger girls.

Caseworkers and facilities providing rehabilitation programs for female juvenile delinquents can draw upon the tenets of ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1977) in assigning female juvenile delinquents to rehabilitation programs. This theory indicates that individuals are strongly influenced by their environment, indicating that the importance of recognizing that the actions and perceptions of older females often have an adverse impact on younger females. As noted by P9, older adolescents less likely to follow rules and more inclined to "develop their own rules."

Social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) is a similar concept, dictating that individuals learn from observation. The younger female juvenile delinquents are likely to look up to their older peers for guidance, as noted by P2. They may mirror the behaviors they see, which, according to P2, are often negative. These theories indicate the need for differentiating rehabilitation programming by age, thereby meriting consideration by caseworkers and facilities in planning and providing age-differentiated rehabilitation programs for female juvenile delinquents.

Among the recommendations for practice are that current caseworkers who work with female juvenile delinquents carefully consider the perceptions offered by the participants in this study. Such consideration is essential, as the availability of age-differentiated programming may mean the difference between rehabilitation and

recidivism, in which case young female juvenile delinquents may grow into adults who never successfully reintegrate into society. Learning about the experiences and ideas of their peers in similar situations may help caseworkers incorporate new ideas and treatments in their practice. The 12 caseworkers interviewed in this study provided lessons learned over many years of practice, information that may be extremely valuable for caseworkers just starting out and seeking guidance. Facilities that primarily offer group treatment for female juvenile delinquents may be inspired by these findings to conduct a systematic review of cases. Subsequently, they could draw upon the findings of their review to implement and measure results, thus improving the outcomes for female juvenile delinquents.

Conclusion

Although juvenile delinquency overall is in decline, rates of offending among female adolescents have increased (Pusch & Kristy, 2017). The majority of existing research, however, pertains to male juvenile offenders, with limited knowledge about rehabilitation programs suitable for female youth (Yeater et al., 2015). Despite adolescent girls' susceptibility to criminal behavior, the population overall remains understudied (Yeater et al., 2015). In addition, the literature review failed to return any research specific to age-differentiated rehabilitation programs for female juvenile delinquents. This study, therefore, was a means to address the knowledge gap regarding rehabilitation programming for female juvenile delinquents.

Three themes emerged from an analysis of the data collected from semistructured interviews: (a) there are distinct developmental and situational differences between

younger and older adolescents, (b) caseworkers provide more individual than group treatment to female juvenile delinquents to personalize services according to each female's age-specific needs, and (c) specialized rehabilitation programs are available to provide female juvenile delinquents of all ages with appropriate treatment. The perceptions of these 12 caseworkers provide information relevant to the practice, which other caseworkers or facility leaders could take into account when creating and implementing rehabilitative treatment plans for female juvenile delinquents. The key takeaway is that age-differentiated rehabilitation programs are necessary for the productive treatment of female juvenile delinquents. Future scholars can build upon these findings to further explore the topic to promote and deliver improved rehabilitation program offerings and rehabilitative success for adolescent female offenders.

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Appendix: Interview Protocol

Opening Statement

Thanks for participating in my research study. The interview will be audiotaped and then transcribed, after which you will be welcome to make any modifications or additional comments to the interview. Do you have any questions, comments, or concerns about what I just stated? If you need to take a break, please let me know. May I begin the interview?

Research Question

What are the perspectives of caseworkers on rehabilitation programming for female juvenile delinquents, taking into account the age differences among the incarcerated youth population?

Interview Questions

1. How long have you worked with female juvenile delinquents?
2. How would you describe your role as a caseworker working with female juvenile delinquents?
3. Tell me about your experiences as a caseworker in regards to working with difference age groups? (e.g., 11-13 age groups and so on)
4. What are some of the rehabilitation programs that you have in place for female juvenile delinquency?
5. How would you describe the rehabilitation programs created for female juvenile delinquents?

6. How do rehabilitation programs make a difference in the lives of female juvenile delinquents?
7. What changes would you make to the rehabilitation programming for female juvenile delinquency?
8. How are the age differences identified in the rehabilitation programs? Are they represented in an individual setting or is it a group setting?
9. What is the expected time limit for each female juvenile delinquent to complete her rehabilitation programs?
10. What kind of environment is best to produce an effective result in regards to the rehabilitation programs?