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Juvenile Probation Officers' Perspectives on the Success Factors of Youth Diversion Programs

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Abstract

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Programs

by

Kya Robertson

MPhil, Walden University, 2021

MPA, South University, 2014

BS, University of Toledo, 2011

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

The goal of youth diversion programs includes reducing recidivism while granting opportunities for youth to refocus their paths. Although juvenile probation officers' role is vital to supervised probation in youth diversion programs, the problem is that there is a lack of literature that assesses the success of the factors of mentoring, education, and mental health treatment that directly connect youth with social services. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the perceptions of juvenile probation officers on the success factors of youth diversion programs as they relate to mentoring, education, and mental health treatment. Becker's labeling theory was used to address the lack of research and to understand juvenile delinquency within the justice system targets both formal theorizing and informal assumptions.The goal was to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the juvenile probation officers' population in mentoring-based diversion resources and explore their voices to improve program effectiveness. All 10 participants were current supervisors of youth offenders in a Midwestern state who completed a semi structured interview on mentoring, education, mental health, and challenges. Using a combination approach of inductive and deductive coding, the findings of the study were that the factors are the most successful when they are addressed in tandem and when the juvenile has adequate family support. This study may contribute to positive social change by reducing incarceration and recidivism while enhancing the success factors that lead youth when re-entering society post probation.

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my daughter; being your mother is special to me, and I hope you know you can do anything in this lifetime. I wanted to obtain this to show you the work ethic that comes along with it. Thank you to my family and friends who supported me and gave me infinite love and encouragement. To my mom, you are the greatest example of a mother, woman, and warrior and I dedicate reaching the finish line to you. To my sister who was my first teacher, thank you for always having my back. To my niece and nephews, I hope you all know that you all showed me, real love, early in this lifetime and for that, anything you need, I will always be there for each of you.

I dedicate this to the love of my life; thank you for coming on this doctoral journey with me. It was a lot of sacrifices, anxiety, and overall worry on my part and with your support, it becomes more obtainable by the day. The love you pour into our family is appreciated and fuel to my motivation and dedication to finish. To my bonus son, you are a God's gift to this world, never forget you can do anything you set your mind to.

Grandma Eva, I love you! This is for you.

Acknowledgments

First, I'd like to thank God for seeing me through this journey and for guiding me through this chapter of my life. My family and friends who called and texted with prayers and encouragement, you are appreciated.

I would like to thank Dr. Campbell, my committee chair, for your guidance and time that you gave so effortlessly. You provided a gateway to success and your leadership, which became a winning combination, and I am so thankful God crossed our paths. Where there is a WAY, the WILL follows! To Dr. Lee, I started this doctoral journey with you as my chair, and although we did not finish together, your support never wavered, and your resources were plentiful. Thank you Dr. Demeter, my second committee member, for all your prompt responses. The commitment you all shared to make this by far my greatest accomplishment makes saying thank you seem so little. My appreciation is unending.

My mom, Ms. Christina P. Robertson, I just want to make you proud and be a superhero like you when I grow up. I love you, mommy! My big sister, Kistia Robertson, finishing this is a testament to your love; thank you for believing in me. Marrianna, Blake, and Peyton; you guys are my world. Without you three, this was impossible; thank you for your sacrifice, support, and endless love.

I want to thank all the participants for your time and willingness to speak to me about your experiences. You all were essential to the success of me crossing the finish line. Thank you does not feel sufficient for the gratitude I'd like to express – Thank you!

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Supervised probation has become one of the most common dispositions when addressing juvenile delinquency. The goal of youth diversion programs includes reducing recidivism while granting opportunities for youth to refocus their paths. Gray (2015) identified diversion programs as a strategy that creates positive reinforcement for youth offenders to become responsible and accountable for their actions. These programs also address youth patterns before, during, and after interacting with the justice system (Fine et al., 2017). Holloway et al. (2018) explained that case management plans were most helpful after identifying informal risks and needs like education, peers, quality of life, and mental health issues. This study was needed to address the lack of literature on juvenile probation officers' perceptions of the success factors in youth diversion programs.

Although juvenile probation officers' role is vital to supervised probation in youth diversion programs, there is a lack of literature that acknowledges the success factors of mentoring, education, and mental health treatment that directly connect youth with social services. Kretschmar et al. (2018) emphasized that delinquency results from poor social support and that a mentors' role was to assist in navigating obstacles, teaching life skills, and supporting moral behavior. This finding indicated that access to organizational stability, such as school or sports, helps to reduce delinquency. This study's social change implications were to identify the practices in youth diversion programs within the justice system when delinquency occurs in social settings. The justice system encompasses individual needs that factor into a tailored system that cannot thrive without identifying the environment that encourages delinquent behavior. This chapter includes sections on

the background of the study, the problem and purpose statements, the research question,

theoretical framework, nature and significance of the study, and the scope, limitations

and assumptions of this research.

Background of the Study

The criminal justice system has to identify, assess, monitor, and manage

individuals who threaten themselves or others. Juvenile diversion programs are assumed

to create long-term development by avoiding formal court proceedings. Loeb et al. (2015)

emphasized that youth are more likely to learn new criminal behaviors in the system

compared to youth who are remanded to community-based programs. In a quasi-

experimental research design, Tolan et al. (2014) concluded improvement in outcomes of

youth who were in a probation program was significant when effective mentorship mixed

well with professional development and emotional support. Resources that offer informed

approaches to address the youth, especially those who experienced the various quality of

life issues, were assumed to be a stable requirement for these programs to be effective.

Dir et al. (2019) also believed that juvenile probation officers were the focal point of

diversion programs because of needed services.

The juvenile justice system is designed to grant a holistic approach to addressing

decision-making empowerment within the system. During the 19th and early 20th

centuries, there was an organizational plan to address delinquent youth and essentially

create a determining factor to distinguish children from adults (Loeb et al., 2015). As a

result, there has been a growing need to use probation programs to address juvenile

delinquencies. Aalsma et al. (2017) asserted the juvenile probation officers' role is vital to

the programs' success when the probation officers addressed decision-making with multi

dimensional factors, such as race or gender. Namely, a gap in literature this study

addressed the perceptions of juvenile probation officers' decisions that have both

immediate and lasting effects on young offenders related to mentoring, education, and

mental health treatment.

Subsequently, a juvenile probation officer supervises youth offenders while

managing their needs to other social services. There is a need for them to be trained in,

awareof , and knowledgeable about the issues youth face. Although there is literature

around youth diversion programs, this study is needed to address juvenile probation

officers and their role as mentors, their ability to link youth to educational assistance, and

how they identify and use resources available for mental health within youth diversion

programs.

Problem Statement

Juvenile probation officers represent the community and family to make a

positive change among young offenders. Youth diversion programs address youth

patterns before, during, and after interacting with the justice system (Fine et al., 2017).

Vidal and Woolard (2017) discussed the importance of maintaining a positive and

supportive relationship outside of the family, and the community serves as a critical

component for deterring criminal behavior. Although juvenile probation officers play an

essential role in the positive change among young diversion offenders, the problem is that

minimal research has addressed the perceptions of juvenile probation officers on the

success factors of youth diversion programs. By gaining insight into the influence that

juvenile probation officers have on offenders' success via diversion programs, may provide empirical research to aid probation professionals or judicial officials in reducing incarceration and recidivism rates among juveniles.

Juvenile probation officers hold a high-demand and stressful job because of the related substance abuse, mental health issues, and education barriers youth face before entering diversion programs. As a result, juvenile probation officers act as liaisons to connect youth to the necessary services (Dir et al., 2019). Juvenile probation officers develop case plans that guide strategies for youth to become better. Holloway et al. (2018) explained that case management plans were most helpful after identifying informal risks and needs like education, peers, quality of life, and mental health issues. Thus, with the proper training, juvenile probation officers become equipped to identify the risks and needs that are most relevant to recidivism. Hoge (2016) explored youth diversion programs through mentoring by sampling youth with aggressive behavior and environmental characteristics in a community with a high crime rate. As a result, the improvement was significant when effective mentorship mixed well with professional development and emotional support. Unfortunately, the perspective of juvenile probation officers on the success factors of mentoring in juvenile diversion programs is not common in research.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of juvenile probation officers on the success factors of youth diversion programs as they relate to mentoring, education, and mental health treatment. Interviews helped examine the

juvenile probation officers' perception of their role while utilizing mentoring success factors. Addressing these specific factors could enhance youth diversion programs and the role of mentoring by using their expertise to allow scholars to be more productive in future research. Findings from this research may provide an improvement in youth diversion programs. There was a lack of research that focuses on juvenile probation officers' perspectives within youth diversion programs. These potential findings may help administrators of youth diversion programs analyze these factors to scope the success in such programs when reducing incarceration and recidivism.

Research Question

For this qualitative study, an exploratory examination of juvenile probation officers' perspective on the effectiveness of youth diversion programs addressed the following research question:

Research Question (RQ): What are the perceptions of juvenile probation officers on the success factors of youth diversion programs as they relate to mentoring, education, and mental health treatment?

Theoretical Foundation

Labeling theory is an individual's behavior reflecting how others label them and how being labeled as a criminal can lead to deviant conduct. According to Becker (1963), labeling theory allows one to understand the processes of being labeled as abnormal to assess the reasons for an explanation. I employed Howard Becker's labeling theory to address the lack of research that offers a voice for the probation officer population within youth diversion programs. Juvenile delinquency within the justice system targets both

formal theorizing and informal assumptions. Labeling theory implies that formal judgment through the courts first stabilizes then increases deviant behavior (Downs et al., 1997). Court proceedings and engaging social agencies magnify the effects of this labeling. Formal labels put youth at risk of being labeled delinquent (Lee et al., 2017). This research addressed the literature gap on juvenile probation officers' perceptions on the effectiveness of mentoring, education, and mental health treatment within youth diversion programs.

Addressing the limited population of juvenile probation officer voices could assist in better practices to avoid or face labeling after formal involvement in the justice system. Adams et al.'s (2003) study showed that juveniles who have contact with social control agencies are more likely to be stigmatized or negatively labeled and they reported high delinquency. The work of Howard Becker (as cited in Pollner, 1978) suggested that not all people who are labeled deviant remain deviant. However, the label of being deviant makes the likelihood of engaging in criminal behavior higher. This theoretical framework around formal labels from social control agencies showed that juveniles were more likely to be stigmatized or labeled negatively. This study used this framework to understand how probation officers perceive juveniles including the role of labeling and how diversion programs might mitigate experiences of labeling.

Nature of the Study

The qualitative methodology provides researchers with tools to study complex attitudes or opinions, generalize results, evaluate programs, and develop interventions (Baxter & Jack, 2008). For this study, a qualitative approach addressed individual

experiences that act as an appropriate response to identifying juvenile probation officers' opinions and attitudes who work directly with the diversion programs. Qualitative studies on diversion programs mostly target youth and parents to explore their program experiences, rather than the probation officers. The qualitative case study approach to research allowed multiple facets to be explored and understood by various data sources. An exploratory case study was appropriate for this study as it explored interventions that evaluate with no one clear outcome (Yin, 2017). By using a case study research design, I aimed to fill the literature gap on youth diversion programs from juvenile probation officers' perspective. The goal was to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the juvenile probation officers' percpetions in mentoring-based diversion resources. This research objective explored juvenile probation officers' voices to improve their effectiveness through a case study design.

Definitions

Formal labeling: labels formed from authoritative agencies like schools or the justice system (Kavish et al., 2016).

Informal labeling: non-authoritative labels from peers or parents (Kavish et al., 2016).

Juvenile delinquency: youth under 18 who endanger others in the community and violate the criminal code (Ajah & Ugwuoke, 2018).

Juvenile probation officer: persons who supervise youth offenders upon entering the justice system and placed on probation. Juvenile probation officers often deal with external social control agencies to address juvenile needs (Aalsma et al., 2017).

Labeling: negative societal perceptions that leads to negative self-reflection (Adams et al., 2003).

Mentoring: One on one relationship with a provider and recipient that benefits the recipient (Tolen et al., 2014).

Recidivism: Continue to offend or reoffend (Ryan et al., 2013).

Youth diversion program: alternative for formal court proceedings that allows supervised probation (Wylie & Rufino, 2018).

Juvenile probation: promoting accountability and rehabilitation to youth offenders in a supervised setting (Vidal & Woodlard, 2017).

Assumptions

Assumptions are essential in research because, without them, the study becomes irrelevant. Simon (2011) defined assumptions as things that are out of the researcher's control. This study is based on four assumptions. First, I assumed that all participants had supervised youth through a diversion program. Second, I assumed that all participants would participate in in-depth interviews, honestly and openly. Thirdly, I assumed that the interview process would capture juvenile probation officers' perceptions and provide an understanding of this study. Another assumption was that the juvenile probation officers' would understand the youth diversion programs processes and goals. Lastly, I assumed that the findings could successfully identify the success factors in youth diversion programs.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of this qualitative case study included the use of in-depth interviews to analyze the experiences of juvenile probation officers who directly supervise youth offenders in diversion programs. This study focused on the perceptions of juvenile probation officers' experiences with mentoring, education, and mental health treatment within youth diversion programs. The participants of this study were limited to juvenile probation officers in a Midwestern state. Therefore, the study's delimitation was only current juvenile probation officers were asked to participate, and other staff or faculty members were not. Understanding the processes within youth diversion programs and implementing probation standards made labeling theory the most appropriate for this study. To assist with addressing transferability or external validity, I used the definition of labeling theory while other variables were considered outside the scope of this study.

Limitations

The limitations of qualitative methods made it difficult for me to generalize data into categories. However, with the qualitative approach, this study provided detailed information on youth diversion programs' complexities. In choosing the case study approach for this research, it is also essential to acknowledge the disadvantages. Yin (2017) asserted the limitations of the case study strategy could be time-consuming, a lot of data collecting, and difficulty keeping the objective view when assessing and representing the findings. I assumed open interviews would allow juvenile probation officers to be honest about their experiences and concerns about the program's effectiveness and recidivism. I also explored the definition of labeling and revealed how

it factors into the success factors of the program. Using interviews to determine their perceptions became a challenge when reflecting if the data accurately matches the participant's perceptions.

This study was limited to juvenile probation officers in a Midwestern state. Juvenile probation officers could provide inaccurate answers in the interviews about their perceptions to represent what they think I might want to hear, versus their internal dialogue and beliefs about the topic. This study solely focused on juvenile probation officers' perspectives and not on the youth or their parents' personal experiences.

Significance of the Study

This study's significance was to fill the gap in the literature of juvenile probation officers' perceptions and their experiences with the success factors of mentoring, education, and mental health issues within youth diversion programs. By gathering their perceptions and understanding of the role that monitors and enforces order, juvenile probation officers can provide sustainable social change to youth. This research was relevant to acknowledge because these factors inside youth diversion programs make juvenile probation officers inclusive and accountable (Holloway et al., 2018). The relationship and role of juvenile probation officers include engaging other external factors such as community service, education system, or parents and providing the opportunity to complete an improvement strategy. This study may contribute to positive social change by reducing incarceration and recidivism while enhancing the success factors that lead youth when re-entering society post probation.

This study can assist probation officers and other key staff in the judicial system in implementing youth diversion programs. By gaining insight into juvenile probation officers' experiences, future research can establish a relationship between the success factors and how the perceptions used when evaluating the programs. A lack of appropriate community-based care and programs to address youths' unique needs plays a role in their access to criminal justice services (Dir et al. 2019). As a result, the criminal justice system needlessly entangles many youth.

The theory's significance in this study addressed the lack of literature in youth diversion programs from juvenile probation officers' perspectives on the success factors of mentoring, education, and mental health treatment. The use of labeling theory implored to understand its effects on decision-making within the juvenile justice system. Furthermore, labeling theory proposes a distinct sociological approach that focuses on social labeling's role in development and deviation (Becker, 1963). The theory suggests that while deviant behavior can initially emerge from multiple reasons after youth are labeled deviant, they frequently encounter new problems resulting from themselves and others' responses to damaging stereotypes attached to the label. Understanding the needs of juvenile offenders and understanding the role labeling may play in case management can improve youth diversion programs' quality in the future. Social change can be achieved by understanding the social processes, social patterns, and social relationships between juvenile probation officers and juvenile offenders to bring social order to juvenile offenders when re-entering the community.

Summary and Transition

Identifying the success factors of mentoring is vital in understanding the roles of juvenile probation officers. In addition, it is essential to understand juvenile probation officers' perceptions to evaluate the effectiveness of youth supervised probation. There was a lack of literature that provided juvenile probation officers' perspectives related to mentoring, education, and mental health treatment. I used a qualitative approach to understand the success factors of youth diversion programs. In Chapter 2, I review literature related to this topic.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this study was to understand the perceptions of juvenile probation officers regarding their direct experiences with mentoring, education, and mental health treatment within youth diversion programs. Currently, there is a lack of literature on the perceptions of juvenile probation officers and their part in contributing to the success factors of youth diversion programs. Previous research from Dir et al. (2019) found that probation officers were the focal point of evaluating the factors of stress, mental health, and substance abuse issues for juveniles assigned to them. Wylie and Rufino (2018) and Aalsma et al. (2017) found that the perceptions of probation officers' roles are vital for program success. Since probation officers make decisions that have both immediate and long-lasting effects on young offenders, it is essential to understand these success factors from their perspective.

This chapter reviews the literature search strategy and explores the history of youth diversion programs directly related to the juvenile probation officers' roles. Chapter 2 also includes a review of the labeling theory and the variables of formal and informal labeling. Finally, the literature addressed the success factors of mentoring, education, and mental health treatment, concluding with a summary.

Literature Search Strategy

I retrieved peer-reviewed articles, reviewed books and dissertations from Walden Library Databases and Google Scholar. Within the Walden Database, I used the following search engines: Academic Search Complete, Criminal Justice Database, SocINDEX, Political Science Complete, and Proquest Criminal Justice. These search

engines were limited to only academic peer-reviewed and full-text articles. Keywords that were in the listed databases included: *youth diversion programs, youth diversion, youth development* and *probation, juvenile justice* and *diversion, youth diversion* and *mental health, youth* and *diversion, diversion* and *mental health, youth* and *delinquen*, education* and *youth probation, diversion for delinquent behavior, juvenile* and *delinquent, recidivism, probation officers/faculty, labeling* and *diversion programs*. The search engine keywords varied depending on the results of the search engine.

The keywords provided peer-reviewed articles for the past 5 years, 2015-2020. The search results of the articles provided 80 articles. The articles used for this study highlight the topic of juvenile probation officers' experiences within youth diversion programs. Articles excluded from the youth diversion programs search if the juvenile offenders or their parents were the research participants. To review the history of youth diversion programs and the labeling theory, the dates of literature ranges from the year 1997 to 2018.

Theoretical Foundation

The theoretical foundation to support the lack of participation from juvenile probation officers is the labeling theory. The labeling theory allowed an assessment of the process of how formal and informal labels were hypothesized to affect behavior (Downs et al., 1997). Labeling theory suggests that an individual's behavior reflects how others label them, and being labeled as a criminal can lead to deviant conduct (Becker, 1963). Therefore, these reflective labels under the supervision of juvenile probation officers' can interfere with the effectiveness of providing necessary needs. Throughout this research,

the labeling theory helped understand relevant concepts, key components and identifying formal and informal labels.

Labeling Theory

Labeling theory shows how individuals' behavior fluctuates based on how others label them and how being labeled as a criminal can lead to deviant conduct. Howard Becker's approach to labeling deviance suggested that deviance was the making of social groups (Becker, 1963). Labeling theory also suggested that formal judgment makes it more likely to produce offenders' substantial stigmatization (Loeb et al., 2015). Downs et al. (1997) used control theory to counter labeling theory and suggested that social services decreased deviant behavior. Ultimately, this approach assumed that no bad behavior is done inherently but instead focused on society's reaction to bad behavior. The labeling theory implies the reverse; formal judgment through the courts would first stabilize and then increase deviant behavior.

The idea of labeling increasing deviant behavior stems from the two internal processes of interactionism. Lee et al. (2017) defined interactionism as the principle that links social organizations through commitment and responsibilities. The first internal process deals with the experiences individuals have with others after being labeled and how they lead to deviant conduct. The second internal process explored crime over a life span through a lens of social exclusion (Lee et al., 2017). Lee et al. (2017) implied that resistance to the community after being viewed as delinquent directly reflects society's weakened bonds. Heimer and Matsueda (1994) inferred that the symbolic interactionist perspective asserted that delinquency was affected by the elements of self-judgment and

judgment of peers. Therefore, the objective judgment of the youth frames how they think of themselves.

Addressing the limited population of juvenile probation officer voices could help avoid or address labeling after formal processes. Adams et al.'s (2003) study showed that juveniles who have contact with social control agencies are more likely to be stigmatized and negatively labeled, reporting subsequently high delinquency. The work of Becker (as cited in Pollner, 1978) suggested that not all people who are labeled deviant remain deviant. Distinctions between formal and informal labels were applied in other settings aside from juvenile justice (Kavish et al., 2016). Educational agencies, parental figures, and peers also create labeled environments. However, the label of being deviant makes the youth more likely to engage in criminal behavior. This theoretical framework around formal labels from social control agencies showed that juveniles were more likely to be stigmatized and labeled negatively.

Scholars explored the labeling theory following Becker's work. Mead's labeling theory (as cited in Kavish et al., 2016) indicates that a person's development extends beyond childhood years. Findings suggested that parents' labels tend to have the most substantial impact on adulthood (Lee et al., 2017). Labeling theory assumes that malicious negative behavior in society leads to negative self-conceptions that result in felonious behavior (Adams et al., 2003). Vidal and Woolard (2017) explained that juvenile probation officers' discretion was imperative to their daily work with troubled youth. The effects labeling has on juvenile behavior was pronounced by theorists (Adams et al., 2003) that once youth begins to believe the negative labels, self-rejection occurs.

Juvenile probation officers' duty assumed the role that young offenders, through intervention, become productive members of the community. In this study, the labeling theory framework is used to understand the population of juvenile probation officers' perceptions of youth diversion programs' and their success factors.

Despite criticism of earlier scholars, recent studies using labeling theory found that police and mental health inventions combined increased delinquency. Studies found that formal labeling of adolescent youth males was more likely than young girls to self-label deviant behavior (Downs et al., 1997; Kavish, 2016). Those who are formally labeled are assumed to be deviant again. Becker (1963) internalized rejection as people suffer from lower self-esteem resulting in more unusual behavior. Using this theory provides a foundation of how labels formulate as youth go through diversion programs. The attitudes towards rehabilitation are no longer fundamental by definition. The idea is to implement change in moving forward once they complete the diversion program to reduce recidivism.

Formal and Informal Labeling

Formal judgment through the courts would first stabilize and then increase deviant behavior. Schlesinger (2018) explored disproportionate minority contact (DMC) as one of the justice system's main barriers. DMC is defined as the decisions made with less oversight; for example, young black youth are twice as likely as white youth to be arrested. To assist in railroading the notion that time spent in confinement creates a deterrent, Kavish et al. (2016) found it is more likely to increase delinquent behavior in formal court proceedings. Kavish et al. (2016) explained formal labels when a person

comes in contact with correctional and educational authority agencies. Lee et al. (2017) asserted that understanding formal and informal labels could contribute to criminal behavior into adulthood and has implications on how social agencies interact with the youths and their parents. Some effects of being formally labeled in the justice system are it strips the offenders' right to vote, own guns, serve on juries, or hold public office. Kavish et al. (2016) argued that perhaps such impediments do not directly impact recidivism. Still, it is possible to indirectly affect deviance by not allowing access to opportunities to feel like a legitimate upstanding citizen again. The role of labeling transforms for an individual after being formally identified as deviant, contributing to the likelihood of criminal or deviant behavior.

Formal labels like arrest or prosecution involve similar organizational barriers, and self-labeling becomes a negative reflection. The findings of Huizinga and Henry's (2008) study suggested that arrests increased delinquency and have little influence on deterrence for future arrests. Lopes et al. (2012) determined that a recharged interest is essential when examining the effects of non-criminal labeling has on outcomes that lead to delinquency. The labeling process carries out the stigma of being assigned to a category that attaches to an offender, which can be informal or formal (Kavish et al., 2017). Gwernan-Jones et al. (2016) described that informal labeling occurs from those with no professional or official authority to differentiate criminal from non-criminal behavior. Being informally labeled by parents or peers affects an individual's self-esteem and self-concept. Formal labeling during adolescent years indirectly affects both criminal

and non-criminal outcomes. Juveniles on probation is a formal process as the courts directly supervise the youth.

Literature Review

History of Youth Diversion Programs

The criminal justice system has a duty to identify, assess, monitor, and manage individuals who pose a threat to themselves or others. Youth diversion programs are assumed to create long-term development by avoiding formal court proceedings. Each year many youths enter the justice system with nonviolent offenses (Loeb et al., 2015). For many youth, they are dealing with needs that can be better addressed with other agencies and services. Diversion programs offer an alternative to the traditional incarnation by introducing accountability with an option to avoid negative consequences (Bynum & Thompson, 1996). Diversion programs result from the Commission of Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice in 1967 to provide first-time offenders an opportunity to rehabilitate in a community-based environment to avoid formal judicial involvement (Schwalbe et al., 2012). Loeb et al. (2015) emphasized that youth are more likely to learn new criminal behaviors in the system than if dealt with through community-based programs.

International studies on diversion programs offered a perspective of different democratic objectives to youth development within the juvenile justice system. In South Africa, The Child Justice Act of 2008 played a significant role in child legislation worldwide (Gray, 2015). This approach to restorative justice seeks a partnership among the offender and friends, family and the community to address needs and assume

responsibility (Gwatimba & Raselekoane, 2018). In evaluating the program in South

Africa, interviews with the facilitator were conducted to evaluate short and long-term

goals; however, the facilitator's interviews did not act as a variable to evaluate the

program's effectiveness as a whole. The recommendations of an evidence-based program

lacked in South Africa because service providers do not pay close attention to the

outcomes of these types of programs to place adequate contrivances to produce

efficiency.

History of Juvenile Probation

Present policy efforts encourage improvements that highlight youth's talents,

greater use of diversion for youth who do not need interventions in the justice system,

and more effective methods for youth on probation. Juvenile probation has seen several

waves of delinquency influenced by policy change and social perceptions. In 1825,

houses of refuge, reform schools, and different institutions started to be developed

throughout the country to train and treat children (Schultz, 1973). In 1840, John

Augustus, a Boston native, began to bail youth out based on their past characteristics,

age, and factors that impacted their future behavior (Weiss, 2013). Thus urging the courts

to continue their cases on the strength of the youth's promises, and by 1878 the state of

Massachusetts adopted probation laws for juvenile offenders (Taylor et al., 2020).

The first wave was a rehabilitative approach and was introduced by the first

juvenile court, founded in 1899 lasting until 1925, where the National Probation

Association developed the first Model Juvenile Court Act (Schultz, 1973). The first

waves principles underlines today's changes: youth are different from adults; they are less

liable for their actions and thus do not deserve adult punishment. The second wave of delinquency was from 1966-1983, where the Supreme Court granted for the first time minors civil immunity from self-incrimination, the right to face jurors, and the right to counsel (Weiss, 2013). The third wave began as a reaction to the increase in the volume and severity of youth violence, along with increasing public concern that juvenile courts were lenient in reacting to youth and altered the climate and roles of probation officers (Taylor et al., 2020). Nearly every state passed harsh, punitive laws, and many dropped the emphasis on recovery due to the increase in gun violence. In the early 1990s, zero-tolerance policies were developed to respond to the increase in school shootings, passing the Gun-Free Schools Act in 1994 (Taylor et al., 2020) that required schools to expel students who bring guns to campus.

As a result, recidivism has been a focus and research found that children of color suffer the brunt of the harshest measures (Weiss, 2013). The crime surge subsided in the 1990s, and by the turn of the century, mayors, governors, and lawmakers around the country started to realize the high fiscal and social costs of incarceration (Taylor et al., 2020). It was ensuing in legislation made to make young offenders responsible for their actions. Luna and Wright (2016) suggested that experiences such as trauma, social factors, and environmental influences can interrupt typical trajectories and contribute to crime that can be taught with supportive experiences to correct the effects of maladaptive experiences.

Current Literature of Youth Diversion Programs

The criminal justice system must identify, assess, monitor, and manage individuals who threaten themselves or others. Each year many youths enter the justice system with nonviolent offenses (Loeb et al., 2015). Many youths have needs that can be better addressed with other agencies and services. Diversion programs offer an alternative to the traditional incarnation by introducing accountability with an option to avoid negative consequences (Bynum &Thompson, 2007). Diversion programs resulted from the Commission of Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice in 1967 to provide first-time offenders an opportunity to rehabilitate in a community-based environment to avoid formal judicial involvement (Schwalbe et al., 2012). Loeb et al. (2015) emphasized that youth are more likely to learn new criminal behaviors in the system than if dealt with through community-based programs. Youth diversion programs are assumed to create long-term development by avoiding formal court proceedings.

Youth diversion programs have grown to have many projected outcomes. The main goal is to create a program that prevents youth from reoffending. Other goals include reducing the negative stigma of being labeled deviant, teaching youth to be accountable, connect to necessary services, and improving relationships (Mears et al., 2016). Diversion programs vary based on the direction of contact, structure, population, and other factors that can change at state lines (Cotter & Evans, 2017). Alternatives to court interactions are generally more cost-effective and allow resources aside from traditional incarceration (Gray, 2015). During the 19th and early 20th centuries, there was an organizational plan to address delinquent youth and essentially create a

determining factor to distinguish youth from adults (Loeb et al., 2015). The juvenile justice system internationally was designed to grant a holistic approach to addressing decision-making empowerment.

Roles of Juvenile Probation Officers

Juvenile probation officers are essential in the juvenile justice system because of their decision-making and influence on youth offenders (Aalsma et al., 2017). The probation population makes up two-thirds of Americans, which has prompted research on the challenges probation officers face, such as mental health issues and supervising practices (Kaeble et al., 2015). Probation is an essential tool when addressing delinquent youth in different phases of their process. Juvenile probation officers manage youth through diversion from formal court proceedings, community endorsements, and aftercare (Holloway et al., 2018). As the cycle, juvenile probation officers supervise the connection and teach the difference between punishment versus custody and rehabilitation versus freedom (Dir et al., 2019). The juvenile justice system works through the premise of providing an intervention of troubled youth before approaching the system as an adult.

There is a discretionary charter given to law enforcers, specifically, to probation officers who hold a platform with a position that can alter offenders' success through formal court proceedings (Mears et al., 2017). The intake process from juvenile probation officers requires investigating the youth's circumstances to create the most effective treatment plan (Wong et al., 2016). According to Vidal and Woolard's (2017) study, parental support, youth-probation officer relationships, and youth motivation are key

success components. Positive, supportive, and respected perceptions of probation officers linked to fewer probation violations but not delinquent offenses (Vidal & Woolard, 2017). Supportive relationships between parents and juvenile probation officers can help create a collaborative effort to supervise youth diversion programs successfully.

Juvenile probation officers often take on a rehabilitative role. This role highlights offenders' need to be successfully complete probation requirements, provide treatment, and extend support services (Hafoka et al., 2017). The rehabilitative role supports the notion that juveniles change their behavior when juvenile probation officers focus on rehabilitation, employment, and housing to restore the youth's role in the community (Kaeble et al., 2015). Juvenile probation officers also assume the role that addresses criminal behavior decreases the statistics in reoffending and rehabilitation (Schwartz et al., 2017). Hafoka et al. (2017) referred to juvenile probation as the 'workhorse' of the juvenile justice system because of the complexities and challenges that spread across juvenile probation officers' many responsibilities. Juvenile probation officers use two main methods under the Desktop Guide: balanced approach and restorative justice (Hafoka et al., 2017). The balanced approach suggests that law enforcement agencies and rehabilitative agencies merge to maintain the balance between both. Schwartz et al. (2017) asserted that juvenile probation officers were more likely to use a balanced approach to reach a range of functions to benefit the offender. Functions include tools needed for success, such as treatment, intervention, risk assessments, and then focusing on getting the appropriate services (Hsieh et al., 2016). In comparison, the restorative justice approach underlines remedying injury to victims, which requires expanded

community participation intending to limit the chances of reoffending by addressing the offended (Schwartz et al., 2017). The roles differ among juvenile probation officers as well as strategies associated with probation.

Law enforcement, social care, and resource broker are the most common probation positions. The law enforcement model to probation entails emphasizing facets of the supervisory responsibilities connected with probation in the legal authority and enforcement perspective (Clear & Latessa, 1993). Law enforcement-oriented juvenile probation officers mainly approach the idea that controlling the offender would protect the community and deter punishment (Hafoka et al., 2017; Hsieh et al., 2016). The social service role, also known as case management, emphasizes the need and treatment of inspiration, encouragement, and support with addressing barriers that assist in navigating the transition back into the community with help from community-based services (Hsieh et al., 2016). The resource broker's primary purpose is to determine the probationers' needs and coordinate relevant resources to meet those needs, rather than actively alter the probationer's actions (Rudes et al., 2011). Resource broker juvenile probation officers identify the needs and connect to relevant services.

Juvenile Delinquency

Juvenile delinquency is a significant social issue. According to Cacho et al. (2020) 80% of teenagers commit at least one illegal act in their lifetime; however, different factors were considered when associating criminal behavior. Factors such as peers, school, or family. Juvenile offenders often deal with social issues, emotional deficits, and inadequate coping strategies (Cacho et al., 2020). Vitopoulos et al., (2019)

indicated that almost all juvenile offenders experience at least one traumatic event in their

lifetime. Research shows that formal encounters with the justice system are correlated

with low social, economic, and health effects for youth, including the increase in drop-out

rates, unemployment, substance abuse, and poorer mental health outcomes (DeFosset et

al., 2017). Recognizing such negative implications, policymakers and activists

emphasized the need to establish diversion programs that encouraged early intervention

to prevent formal involvement through an alternative method.

A juvenile is perceived to be morally vulnerable, specifically to environmental

influences that are assumed to contribute to delinquency. Regenerative interventions are

carried out in prisons and rehabilitation centers by rebalancing behavior through

educational, psychological, and sociological assistance (Boboc, 2017). Several programs

are established to rehabilitate juvenile offenders by identifying their needs and providing

service. McCollister et al. (2018) suggested that although these programs exist, there is

little evidence reflecting implementation in the juvenile justice or behavioral facility

settings due to budget constraints, unavailable resources, and safety for the staff. These

issues create a disconnection between justice agencies and community treatment

providers, resulting in reduced care for substance abuse or mental health needs.

McCollister et al. (2018) advocated that improving the juvenile offender population's

unmet needs requires coordination between all agencies to support assessments, training,

referral processes, and the direct care. Juveniles enter the system with many behavioral

and clinical health issues. Agencies and staff need to take responsibility to integrate

services effectively.

Success Factors

Mentoring

A mentor is someone who advocates and provides resources in various aspects to youth. McGee and Lin (2017) asserted that a mentor's work includes guidance into their behavior, attitude, and life events. In some programs, the employees are natural mentors for logistical and liability reasons. Newman and Ugwudike (2013) endorsed the idea that offenders needed allies within the justice system. The term ally is described as lawyers or probation officers who encourage freedom and help address offenders' needs (Newman & Ugwudike, 2013). Sanders et al. (2018) explored the scope of diversion programs through mentoring by sampling youth with aggressive behavior and environmental characteristics in a community with a high crime rate. Lawing et al. (2017) tested the idea that probation officers could be trained using a risk assessment method for adolescent offenders solely reliant on probation professionals' judgment. However, Harrison et al. (2017) emphasized that delinquency resulted from poor social support. The role of mentors was to assist in navigating obstacles, teaching life skills, and supporting moral behavior.

The Structured Assessment of Violence Risk for Youth (SAVRY) was assessed over 12 months and differentiated violent offenders from nonviolent and aided in predicting recidivism (Lawing et al., 2017). The assessment indicates how to theoretically, empirically, and strategically approach estimating a young offender's level of risk or future risks. Subsequently, the probation officer supervises youth offenders while managing their needs for other social services. There is a need for them to be

trained, aware, or knowledgeable about youth issues. Methods such as SAVRY becomes prevalent instruments within the juvenile justice system. Trained probation officers administered the SAVRY assessment to youth in hopes of testing the validity of this method. However, suggested future researchers seek if using risk assessments results in diversion opportunities that effectively reduce recidivism.

Some research identified the scope of diversion programs through mentoring. Tolen et al. (2014) explored mentoring by sampling youth with aggressive behavior and environmental characteristics in a community with a high crime rate. In a quasi-experimental research design, Tolan et al. (2014) concluded that improvement was significant when effective mentorship mixed well with professional development and emotional support. Resources that offer informed approaches to address the youth, especially those who experience social determinants, were assumed to be a stable requirement for these programs to be effective. Although there is literature around youth diversion programs, minimal research addresses juvenile probation officers and the role of mentoring being a success factor within diversion programs.

Education

Young offenders need direction that allows opportunities that provide education. Research supporting educational programs in the juvenile system (Miner-Romanoff, 2015) asserted that school administrators had recognized the requirement for instructive projects on criminal equity training. Criminal equity training refers to an impediment of wrongdoing, including misbehavior in school. Allowing school programs to merge with legal standards can be impressionable as deviant standards as they can be taught and

encouraged through an educational plan. Obtaining high school completion is a critical

factor in successfully transitioning to adulthood (Sanders et al., 2018; Slaten et al., 2015).

Another critical factor of education is social and emotional learning. Alternative

education provides opportunities to develop alternate students that cannot oblige in

traditional schools. Options for instructing youth isolated from societal norms can

incorporate non-traditional subjects like art schools, exchange programs, or trade schools.

Providing guidance, comfort, and organization to youth at risk because of poverty, peer

pressure, family issues, mental health concerns, or special education is the goal.

Youth on probation face even more complex issues that hinder the consistency

and effectiveness of education programs. One-third of youth incarcerated receive special

education services (Leone & Wruble, 2015). Those who are on supervised probation with

learning disabilities are more likely to become more deviant. Long-term criminal

trajectories in school-based research suggest a school-to-prison pipeline, a pervasive

phenomenon in a school associated with risk factors such as behavioral issues, struggling

academically, drop out, or face suspension (Yoder et al., 2016, Hirschinger-Blank et al.,

2019). Factors that counteract those risks include accomplishment, valuing the

importance of education, school achievements and connectedness, and supportive

environments from parents, peers, and teachers to create an overall positive nature (Yoder

et al., 2016). Supportive environments are especially important for juvenile offenders that

struggle with disabilities.

Students with disabilities face more substantial obstacles to fulfilling their needs.

Hirschinger-Blank et al. (2019) informed that complying with students' individualized

education plans (IEPs), despite more students qualifying for special education in the juvenile justice system, creates opportunities for agencies to work together to improve results while providing quality education. Burke and Dalmage (2016) explored the lobbying methods employed by juvenile probation officers and their challenges in ensuring adequate educational assistance to justice-involved youth. Advocacy tactics included reporting, cooperation with partners, direct but not hostile communication, and barriers that include weak working relationships and family involvement obstacles Haines et al., 2015). The factors associated with intellectual disabilities include poor verbal intelligence, low achievement, and low social engagement (Burke & Damage, 2016). The education system struggles with disproportionally impoverished youth, leading to the need for mental health support to address social and emotional needs.

Education programs have been in correctional facilities for years, yet there are many unknown factors that result in various challenges. McCray et al., (2018) asserted the protection of students' civil right to quality education stemmed from the federal Civil Rights of Institutionalized Persons Act (CRIPA) in 1980. McCray et al.'s (2018) study were based on juvenile offenders' struggles regarding reading intervention in correctional settings. They concluded that many factors, such as environment, mentors, leadership, personnel, and the offender's needs, all contribute to reading intervention implementation success. In addition, personnel in juvenile correction facilities are trained to interact and respond to various behavior types from students to ensure suitable de-escalation actions.

Mental Health

Juvenile offenders under probation supervision have been found to exhibit higher risk levels of mental health issues. Measures that identify severe trauma symptoms include emotional or physical neglect or abuse through self-reporting tools like questionnaires (Whittington et al., 2015). Wylie and Rufino (2018) informed that studies show that youth who experience victimization lead to mental health issues, and victimization and mental health lead to becoming justice-involved youth. Studies containing interviews with detained juveniles compared to juveniles, in general, were more likely to experience mental health problems that include conduct disorder, psychosis, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, and major depression (Wylie & Rufino, 2018). One study finding showed that conduct disorders and anxiety disorders increased recidivism risk, whereas psychosis was not a risk factor. On the other hand, Wylie and Rufino (2018) showed that substance use disorders and behavioral disorders were recidivism factors. While the high prevalence of mental health issues with justice-involved youth has been well recorded, prior findings have been mixed concerning mental health issues predictive of reoffending.

Using screening instruments to identify juvenile offenders entering the system is designed to assess the needs and identify the areas of concern. Sullivan et al.'s (2017) study indicated that most juveniles detained experience exposure to trauma, and 75% of this population deal with depression or anxiety, and one-third of those juveniles report feelings of suicide. The National Commission on Correctional Health Care (NCCHC) requires juvenile services to provide screening for "substance abuse, mental disorders,

violent tendencies, suicidal risk, and other social/emotional needs within 14 days of admission" (Sullivan et al., 2017, p. 335). Juveniles diagnosed with mental illness have a 40% greater risk of recidivism in the first three years upon release (Sullivan et al., 2017). Juvenile probation officers intervene in juvenile offenders facing issues and offer an alternative to specific needs. Mental health influences a stigma that is a relevant factor of decision-making to access the appropriate care.

Mental health competence is another component that could influence individual decision-making relating to referrals or access to care. Psychological state competency is a vital individual-level factor that assesses one's self-rated ability to initiate an association with appropriate mental health care (Holloway et al., 2017). Juvenile probation officers are unambiguously positioned inside the juvenile justice system to act as entrance suppliers since they interact with the bulk of the justice-involved youth population with a high occurrence of mental illnesses. Holloway et al. (2017) concluded that juvenile probation officers who do not feel competent to handle mental health issues are less likely to utilize treatment methods. Thus, mental health competence can change juvenile probation officers to improve treatment for juvenile offenders. Educating juvenile probation officers in mental health could increase knowledge about disorders and improve the likelihood of becoming a well-rounded provider.

Summary and Conclusions

This study examined a literature gap that shows juvenile probation officers' perceptions of mentoring, education, and mental health. The literature demonstrated that juvenile probation officers play a vital role within the juvenile justice system (Aalsma et

al., 2017Wylie & Rufino, 2018). Still, no specific factor leads to recidivism (Yoder et al., 2017). The literature did not identify if understanding juvenile probation officers' perceptions of mentoring, education, and mental health treatment is necessary when evaluating the success factors in youth diversion programs. Therefore, these reflective marks may conflict with the efficacy of fulfilling the required needs under the oversight of juvenile probation offers. The labeling theory helped to understand related principles, core elements, and the recognition of formal and informal labels in this study.

Interacting with the justice system and engaging in formal court processes was found to increase deviance. Schlesinger (2018), Kavish et al. (2016), and Lee et al. (2017) claimed that knowledge of formal and informal labels could potentially lead to criminal activity. Repercussions of being formally branded as deviant going into adulthood take away privileges within the justice system such as voting or the right to bear arms. Diversion programs are implemented within the justice system to offer an alternative to conventional incarceration by introducing accountability with options to access additional resources. The literature determined that youth diversion programs differ depending on the direction of communication, structure, demographic, and other variables that can alter between different municipalities (Cotter & Evans, 2017; Mears et al., 2016). Youth diversion programs serve as a bridge to the juvenile justice system and is vital to meeting youth offenders' needs early.

Juvenile probation officers hold a difficult yet leading position in criminal justice; their perceptions of how youth diversion programs implement services that address mentoring, education, and mental health treatment warrants future research. The

experiences of juvenile probation officers provided insight into juvenile offenders' progress and aid practical research. As a result, it is relevant to acknowledge that juvenile probation officers act as liaisons to connect youth to the necessary services (Dir et al., 2019). In turn, this knowledge can aid juvenile probation officers or judicial officials in reducing recidivism.

Overall, this literature review summarizes youth diversion programs' current and historical literature, juvenile probation officers' roles, and the impact of success factors mentoring, education, and mental health treatment. Additionally, Chapter 2 consisted of the theoretical foundation and revealed support to the assumption that due to juvenile probation officers' critical role, their perceptions in gauging success factors is essential in future research. Finally, Chapter 3 explains the data collection methods, details the participants' rationale and the data analysis strategy for this study.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of juvenile probation officers on the success factors of youth diversion programs as they relate to mentoring, education, and mental health treatment. The social change implications for juvenile probation officers in youth diversion programs that supervise youth offenders were to understand better the social processes, social patterns, and social relationships. Understanding the relationship between juvenile probation officers and juvenile offenders can bring social order to juvenile offenders when re-entering the community and providing information to enhance the judicial process.

Chapter 3 discusses the methodology and research design of this study. Additionally, this chapter discusses the research rationale, the researchers' role, participation selection, data collection instruments, trustworthiness issues, and ethical procedures, concluded with a summary and preview of Chapter 4.

Research Design and Rationale

Research Question

This study employed a qualitative case study design, which was appropriate for understanding juvenile probation officers' perceptions to identify success factors from their personal experiences. This qualitative study was an exploratory examination of the juvenile probation officers' perspective on youth diversion programs' effectiveness. I addressed the question: What are the perceptions of juvenile probation officers on the success factors of youth diversion programs as they relate to mentoring, education, and mental health treatment?

Research Rationale

This qualitative study, I used a case study design to understand juvenile probation officers' perceptions of youth diversion programs. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) advised a qualitative method is applicable when analyzing personal experiences for comprehensive understanding. Merriam (1998) defined case study research as an assumption that reality is built through learning that is established socially. The juvenile justice system has implemented youth diversion programs to help first-time offenders redirect the behavior by providing resources. This study's phenomenon is the perceptions of juvenile probation officers of mentoring, education, and mental health treatment within youth diversion programs. Although juvenile probation officers play an essential role in the positive change among young diversion offenders (Aalsma et al., 2017), the problem is that minimal research addresses the perceptions of juvenile probation officers on the success factors of youth diversion programs.

Qualitative research allows the researcher to understand the perspectives that examine people's experiences (Patton, 2015). Ravitch and Carl (2016) asserted a qualitative methodology reflects various viewpoints from the phenomenon to understand when evaluating the outcomes of those experiences. The data collection method was semi tructured interviews with juvenile probation officers. An in-depth interviewing approach allows this phenomenon by portraying ongoing social processes (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Therefore, the qualitative method was necessary while exploring the experiences of juvenile probation officers' perception of mentoring, education, and mental health access in youth diversion programs.

Research Design

An exploratory case study explored interventions that evaluate no clear outcome (Yin, 2017). I employed a case study to address the gap in the literature on youth diversion programs from juvenile probation officers' perspectives. The goal was to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the juvenile probation officers' population related to mentoring programs, educational programs, and mental health treatment. In addition, this research objective explored juvenile probation officers' voices to improve related effectiveness through the case study design.

Juvenile probation is a tool used in the criminal justice system that influences juvenile offenders through intentional supervised programs. Juvenile probation officers assume the role that addresses criminal behavior decreases the statistics in reoffending and rehabilitation (Schwartz et al., 2017). A case study approach allowed an understanding of juvenile probation officers' personal experiences in youth diversion programs. Case study design offers an understanding of information beneath the surface into personal meaning (Zach, 2006). Other research designs can help enhance the juvenile justice system; however, the experiences of juvenile probation officers as the sole providers of rehabilitation are essential to understand, implement, and evaluate programs effectively.

Role of the Researcher

My role, as researcher, was to conduct semistructured in-depth interviews while ensuring no bias in the interviewing process. In a qualitative study, in-depth interviews allow researchers to gather descriptive data about how individuals behave and think while

addressing complex processes (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). For this study, semistructured in-depth interviews gave the freedom to explore follow-up points and change direction, if needed. My tasks were to listen to the participants interpret and report the data for others to learn. Rubin and Rubin (2012) explained that in-depth interviews are typically face-to-face to establish a relationship and rapport. This approach to collecting data also relies on observing body language, nonverbal, and social cues while analyzing the results. I actively participated as an observer to develop themes and categories for interpretation as a human instrument to collect data.

I hold a bachelor's degree in criminal justice and have 10 years' of experience in the criminal justice field, which allows me to understand perspectives, terminology, and feelings. Despite my education and professional backgrounds, this study's focus remained on the participants of this phenomenon. As the researcher, I was aware of the definition of labeling to address preconceived notions about the spectacle and the assumptions of the study. Ravitch and Carl (2016) suggested positionality refers to the social and political views that can compromise a researcher's perspective. Bracketing is a strategy used in qualitative study's that allows the researcher to set aside any beliefs about the phenomena (Chan et al., 2013). Bracketing is a way of displaying the validity of the process of data collection and analysis. I set aside my personal views, values, and experiences to adequately characterize participants' life experiences. Reflexivity requires the honest realization from the researcher to identify any beliefs that would influence the researcher (Chan et al., 2013). By bracketing them, it is important to recognize places of

possible prejudice and minimize the effect. I managed biases by communicating observations with my committee chair.

Methodology

Participation Selection Logic

The participants' criteria included juvenile probation officers who currently supervise juvenile offenders in a Midwestern state from a sample size of 20 or until saturation (Yin, 2017). Using a constructivist approach helped address this research by understanding success factors from juvenile probation officers. This study used a purposive sampling strategy to gather an in-depth understanding of juvenile probation officers' perceptions. According to Patton (2015), purposive sampling allows the researcher to select cases that offer clear and specific information about the research's purpose. The recruitment process included public access to probation officer groups or organizations on social media platforms LinkedIn and Facebook. Then a follow-up email with an invitation was sent to those who agree and meet the criteria. Guetiteman (2015) suggested purposive sampling is to explore particular groups' experiences within a broader population. Purposive sampling assisted the researcher in rejecting any individual who did not meet the criteria of being a current juvenile probation officer in a Midwestern state and supervise juvenile offenders in a youth diversion program. In addition to purposive sampling, the recruitment process included snowballing sampling. Snowball sampling allowed participants to assist the researcher in seeking participants by identifying other potential subjects (Patton, 2015).

Instrument

This study used the data collection instrument of interviewing to conduct this qualitative research that explored juvenile probation officers' perceptions of the success factors of youth diversion programs. Interview questions were created based on the research question (see Appendix B). Walden University experts reviewed the questionnaire for content validation, and changes were made. Upon approval the interviews transcribed, coded, and observed were analyzed for relevant themes and categories (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). This instrument aligns with the study topic and concepts of understanding the perceptions of juvenile probation officers.

Interviews provide knowledge from the research participants about the information that pertains to their experiences (Patton, 2015). Opdenakker (2006) informed that the most common form of interviews is face-to-face; however, technology has enhanced research. Due to Covid-19, interviews were conducted via Zoom conference calls. The use of technology allowed the researcher and the interviewee flexibility to meet safely and comfortably. The use of Zoom also allowed the researcher to audio record the interviews. Each interview was transcribed using NVivo Transcription software. According to Rubin and Rubin (2012), coded data separated into themes helps understand the different angles of reality.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

First, approval from Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) was required, approval number 03-05-21-0612219. Upon IRB approval, recruitment of juvenile probation officers on social media pages solely for probation officers. I asked

permission to join existing groups of probation officers commenced. Upon approval, I posted the purpose of the study, along with criteria and that participation was voluntary and confidential. Contact information was attached for those interested to reach out; in return, I sent an invitation email to those who met the criteria. Second, searched for youth diversion programs operating in Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois to recruit 20 current juvenile probation officers. The primary method to collect data was semistructured in-depth interviews utilizing technology to understand the perceptions of the youth diversion program's success factors. Interviews aligned to investigate this phenomenon of interest and understanding their experiences and the effect those experiences had on success factors related to mentoring, education, and mental health treatment.

Collecting data through interviews, allowed me to gather data and create themes and categories for analysis. Rubin and Rubin (2012) suggested interviews offer a chance to get specific details and follow up for additional information. The study was guided by semistructured interviews with a preset of open-ended questions probing subsequent questions that arose while engaging the interviewee. As the researcher, the goal was to understand the experiences of juvenile probation officers therefore, seeking permission to record, getting contact information if additional information was needed, and go over the interview process were all essential components to reaching that goal. Prior to the interview process, an explanation was given that it was voluntary and confidential and that there was no penalty for honest answers or withdrawing after the interview began.

The interview process took approximately 30-45 minutes, consisting of six demographics and eight questions to guide the interview.

Data Analysis Plan

As the researcher, I reviewed and read the data multiple times to determine a coding strategy. The coding process allowed me to identify themes as theories emerge from the transcripts. Urquhart (2013) asserted that the emergence of data is how the coding is created in the research to assist with analysis. Coding helped not to overemphasize the significance of any single aspect of the data collection process and ensure a detailed review of the interviews (Saldana, 2009; Stake, 2010). This study used a combination approach of inductive and deductive coding. Inductive coding is data extracted from the responses, whereas deductive coding begins with themes based on the research question (Stake, 2010). With descriptive coding, the first step is reading through the data and assigning codes according to the topic; then continue to read through and create a descriptive word or phrase for each topic. In addition to analyzing the data through a coding method, I monitored a reflective journal to remove bias and provide validity.

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Issues of Trustworthiness

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Lincoln and Guba (1985) noted that establishing trustworthiness, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability are essential. Reliability should be found at the start of research and should remain throughout the study (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). To develop trust, I set clear boundaries of the interview process's rules and expectations and remained consistent throughout all the interviews until saturation.

Credibility refers to honesty in the outcomes of data analysis (Macnee & McCabe, 2008). The results of the research findings reflect the accounts of the study participants. By reflexivity, participant checking, and peer review, credibility was developed. A journal's use allowed me to separate the phenomenon of interest from personal views, values, and opinions. Therefore, the study results were the primary focus to gather how participants observe and experience the phenomena. Through peer review with my committee, credibility was established by receiving professional advice to increase consistency.

Transferability develops by supplying readers with evidence that the research results extend to other circumstances, conditions, and populations. My task was not to prove the research results were applicable but rather to provide evidence that it could be. Lincoln and Guba (1985) claimed that it is not the researcher's responsibility to provide a transferability database, but an obligation to provide knowledge that makes data transferable to their settings. Transferability developed by providing a comprehensive explanation of the purpose of study, methods, data collection, and data analysis. Also, purposive sampling ensured the participants could offer an abundance of knowledge related to the phenomena to establish themes. The use of purposive sampling helped provide a thorough overview of the study that allowed people from other environments who do not engage in the research to interact with the study's results.

Dependability requires the assessment of the analysis results by the researchers to have stability while observing over time. According to Korstjens and Moser (2018), dependability requires consistency, whereas confirmability requires neutrality. The strategy to achieve dependability and confirmability is known as an audit trail. Coding

and documenting are essential in the qualitative data analysis phase to assess reliability
(Lacye & Luff, 2009). I used a code agreement to determine whether the same themes
occured. Korstiens and Moser (2018) suggested that dependability is improved if there is
consistency in the codes. In comparison, I used an audit trail's methodology to develop
trustworthiness.

Ethical Procedures

The IRB committee of Walden University obtained notice of my plan to
undertake the study and permitted to proceed with data collection. I contacted group
administrators to existing probation officer-related groups on Facebook and LinkedIn to
seek permission to post for recruitment. To endorse the participants' decision to engage in
the study, participants had an opportunity to ask questions. The informed consent method
contained the following: the purpose of the study, the study process, declaration of
privacy, voluntary nature of engaging, and contact information. To keep all
communication private, I recommend participants to correspond in confidence. During
the research study, names and employer were masked with a participant ID to ensure
participant confidentiality. Before the interview commenced, the informed consent form
was read and agreed upon by each participant. All participants were 18 years of age and
older, current juvenile probation officers in a Midwestern state. Only specific information
and demographics of juvenile probation officers must obtain confidentiality to ensure
consistency with the research requirements.

Summary

Chapter 3 clarified an overview of the proposed research process, design, and rationale to address the research question. Also discussed were the procedure, participation selection, data collection, and data analysis. All participants contributed to this research by sharing their knowledge about the success factors of mentoring, education, and mental health treatment within youth diversion programs. Chapter 4 aims to include the analysis results and provide accordance with the protocol mentioned in Chapter 3.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the perceptions of juvenile probation officers on the success factors of programs that connect juvenile offenders to services specific to mentoring, education, and mental health treatment. The theoretical framework was based on Becker's labeling theory, which affirmed the idea that informal versus formal probation methods are recidivism factors. Interviews were conducted with 10 current juvenile probation officers located in a Midwestern state where they shared their experiences. In addition, they provided information that was used in the data analysis process to address this research question: What are the perceptions of juvenile probation officers on the success factors of youth diversion programs as they relate to mentoring, education, and mental health treatment? Factors explored were related to the purpose, outlined responsibilities of supervision, and recommended processes of their experiences when connecting youth to needed services for mentoring, education, and mental health. This chapter includes detail on the qualitative method and the analytical strategy used to examine data and derive results.

The data collected is described and interpreted in this chapter, along with detailed descriptions of the data collection instrument and any challenges faced during the data collection process. The data was collected through semistructured interviews, then transcribed and analyzed by the researcher. Themes emerged from the interview participants' responses and revealed patterns that align with the research question. I used direct responses from the participants to explain the themes that emerged during data

collection and data analysis. This chapter concludes with the researcher's comments on the findings and the relationship of those findings to the research question.

Setting

The setting for data collection was through in-depth, semistructured virtual interviews. The interviews were conducted through Zoom, where each participant had a unique meeting ID and password to participate. The use of Zoom allowed both the researcher and the interviewee to comply with COVID-19 safety protocols. Some participants were willing to share their experiences on video where I could notate body language and social cues. For those who did not want to share the video, I could not observe body language; therefore, I observed their tone and voice inflections when interpreting the results. To maintain confidentiality, the participants were named Participant 001 throu Participant 010, which I refer to for the remaining of the study. Direct quotes were used to connect direct experiences to the participants (Creswell & Crewell, 2017). In this study, the participants were not influenced by organizational or personal conditions that could have affected the results at the time of the study.

Demographics

Ten juvenile probation officers were interviewed for this study. Each of the participants completed a six-question demographic questionnaire just before conducting the interview. First, all participants were asked to confirm they were current juvenile probation officers in a Midwestern state. Once receiving confirmation, participants were encouraged to filter employment specifics to maintain confidentiality. The demographic

questionnaire (see Appendix A) asked participants for their gender, race, age group,

education completion, years of experience, and the number of caseloads in their career.

The table below shows the questionnaire results from each participant. There were

50% female and 50% male, 10 participants total. Out of all 10 participants, 90% (9)

identified as White not-Hispanic (henceforth referred to as White), and 10% (1) identified

as Latino or Hispanic. In addition, 30% (3) reported their age range of 25-34 years old,

50% (5) were between 35-44 years old, and 20% (2) participants were 45 or older. All 10

participants had received a college education, 40% (4) had received a bachelor's degree,

and 60% (6) had completed a master's degree. Lastly, 90% (9) of the participants had

experienced supervising over 100 youth in their career, and 10% (1) had supervised 10-

40 youth in his career.

Table 1

Demographic Questionnaire Results

Participants	Gender	Race	Age	Education	Experience	Career Caseload
001	Female	White	45 +	Bachelors	10 years +	100 +
002	Female	White	35 – 44	Bachelors	10 years +	100 +
003	Male	White	45 +	Bachelors	10 years +	100 +
004	Male	White	25 - 34	Masters	2 – 5 years	10-40
005	Female	White	35 – 44	Masters	10 years +	100 +
006	Male	White	35 - 44	Masters	5–10 years	100 +
007	Female	White	25 – 34	Bachelors	5-10 years	100 +
008	Female	White	35 - 44	Masters	10 years +	100 +
009	Male	White	35 – 44	Masters	5-10 years	100 +
010	Male	Latino	25 – 34	Masters	5-10 years	100 +

Data Collection

After receiving IRB approval from Walden University, I recruited participants using snowball sampling and existing social media groups on platforms such as LinkedIn and Facebook. The primary method of recruitment was snowball sampling to find participants to meet the research criteria. During recruitment, I attempted to recruit 20 juvenile probation officers; however, it was challenging to find participants that met the study's criteria. The recruitment duration was 10 weeks; where the recruitment was posted once a week on a Probation Officer Association page on Facebook and LinkedIn. There were six additional juvenile probation officers that expressed interest but did not meet the study's criteria due to not being in the Midwestern geographic area or not working directly with youth diversion programs.

The plan described in Chapter 3 was to interview 20 participants or until saturation was reached. Saturation was reached at 10 participants due to the snowball method, there were participants from the same municipality and the resources became repetitive. I conducted semi structured interviews with 10 participants who were current juvenile probation officers in a Midwestern state and directly supervised youth. Before the interview, the participants read, reviewed, and returned the consent form by replying 'I Consent' via email to participate in the study. The participants were allowed to withdraw at any time during the interview. Each participant was communicated individually through email to schedule a date and time, receive their unique Zoom meeting ID and password to maintain confidentiality so that the interview could be conducted in their own homes due to COVID-19 safety protocols. All participants were

asked permission to be audio recorded, and all participants consented to be recorded. The interviews varied between 24-42 minutes long and were conducted over 10 weeks.

Data Analysis

All audio from the recorded interviews was transcribed using NVivo Transcription. I carefully transcribed and read each interview to ensure accuracy coding the data using inductive and deductive coding. I was able to identify the experiences and keywords linked together to provide a detailed overview of success factors—allowing me to use the success factors as deductive themes and for inductive subthemes to come from the responses from the participants. Patton (2015) asserted that transcribing interviews provides the researchers with the opportunity to absorb the data. Therefore, this study included the experiences of each participant to understand their perspective on the success factors and challenges of providing services for youth. After the interviews were accurately transcribed by removing repeated words or fillers like um, I read and re-read the transcripts to establish more cohesive themes. This allowed me to explore the similarities and differences in each case with the success factors of mentoring, education, and mental health treatment.

I used a semi structured interview to guide the conversation, and each interview probed additional sub-questions for any elaboration that was needed. The deductive codes from the research question were mentoring, education, mental health treatment, and challenges. These codes produced a series of keywords in each interview that categorizes how the participants experience those factors. The inductive approach was used to analyze the participants' responses while identifying patterns and themes. The

demographic questionnaire gives the participant responses in terms of experience specific to the three success factors.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness was established in the beginning and maintained throughout the study. I used an audit trail methodology to develop trustworthiness. Developing trustworthiness in a qualitative methodology requires credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility refers to honesty in the outcomes of data analysis (Macnee & McCabe, 2008). Through peer review with my committee, credibility was established by receiving professional advice to increase consistency. Transferability was established at the beginning of the study by providing details of the study's purpose and the data collection and analysis plan. Finally, dependability was established by assessing the data using a combination of inductive and deductive coding. Inductive codes were extracted from the responses, whereas deductive began with themes based on the research question (Stake, 2010). The deductive themes were mentoring, education, mental health resources, and challenges.

Descriptive coding requires the researcher to read through the data assigning codes according to the topic, then continue to read through to create codes for each topic. In addition to analyzing the data through a coding method, I monitored a reflective journal to remove bias and provide validity. According to Korstjens and Moser (2018), dependability requires consistency, whereas confirmability requires neutrality. The strategy used to achieve dependability and confirmability was an audit trail. Coding and

documenting are essential in the qualitative data analysis phase to assess reliability (Lacye & Luff, 2009). I used a code agreement to determine whether the same themes occurred.

Results

The juvenile probation officers were asked approximately eight questions in a semi structured interview process. Ten participants shared their experiences supervising juvenile offenders and connecting juveniles to resources specific to mentoring, education assistance, and mental health treatment. The findings of this case study include a summary of the perceptions of juvenile probation officers with a focus on mentoring, education, and mental health treatment in a Midwestern state. The interview was used to gather participant perceptions and responsibility factors regarding options for treatment. The data received from the interviews were consistent with the practices of the labeling theory discussed in chapter 2. These pre-determined and probing questions were designed to elicit personal experiences from juvenile probation officers.

I began with deductive codes derived from the research question of mentoring, education, mental health assessments, and challenges. Next, I analyzed the data from the interviews with 10 juvenile probation officers in Midwestern states according to codes, categories, and themes linked to both the research question and the theoretical framework. Those broad themes were explored and condensed based on similarity to create more cohesive themes of each category. Finally, I used the study's research question to organize the interview questions: What are the perceptions of juvenile probation officers on the success factors of youth diversion programs as they relate to

mentoring, education, and mental health treatment? Each interview question was analyzed through inductive and descriptive coding.

Deductive Coding

The deductive codes for this study were determined during the literature review before data collection began. The codes were developed based on the research question and reflects the structure of the data. Figure 1 provides a visual representation of how these themes intertwine.

Mentoring

The Juvenile Probation officers all perceived mentoring as a series of descriptors that are needed as a combination to achieve successful mentorship relationships with the youth. In addition, all participants referenced that mentorship was a positive adult example and resource to the youth they supervise.

Education

Resources were primarily described as a partnership with the local schools. There was a primary focus to assist in making the educational goals obtainable.

Mental Health

All participants felt that access to mental health issues is essential for their program goals. In addition to mental health assessment, 6 out of 10 participants also assessed for trauma-specific female probationers.

Challenges

All participates identified challenges they face daily and challenges that youth face when being on probation. However, most of the participants referred to one of the

biggest challenges: youth willingness to engage in suggested programs and family support being the two most significant barriers when connecting youth to suggested resources. Often, the youth and their family do not need a proposed service like therapy and will not participate, which creates a challenge for the juvenile probation officers as they will need to decide to violate or re-assess different treatment options.

Figure 1

Deductive Themes
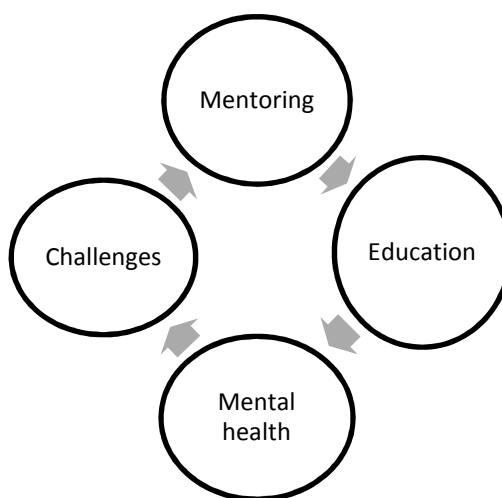
Inductive Coding

The process was to move the deductive codes from coded units to categories and subthemes gathered from the transcriptions. Each interview question addressed the research question on the success factors in youth diversion programs related to mentoring, education, and mental health treatment. Four deductive themes required a more in-depth understanding and were broken down into six descriptive subthemes.

Theme 1: Mentor Roles

All participants answered with a series of descriptors of what mentoring means to them personally. Overall, some critical descriptors were consistency, relationships, goal-oriented, guidance, professional, appropriate, and adult role model. For example, participant 001 indicated the role of a mentor is "by being a teacher and demonstrating how you handle different situations or juggle certain things while being positive and finding problem-solving solutions when things do come up." Participants 002 described her role as a "leading example in regards to a positive, and appropriate, relationship building…ensuring that you are providing programs and resources for the juvenile to be successful in the community."

Participants 003 and 010 placed the most emphases on mentoring resources as a primary component to all connections. For example, Participant 003 stated,

> In my job, I view mentoring as the main goal of it, and that in all areas in life, whether it is educational, or mental health, or in their home life, it gives the kids someone to talk to and be there for them. I like that role. I think you form a better relationship with kids, and they are more willing to approach you and talk to you when issues come up. They do not just see you as someone who gets them in trouble or another adult in their life that does not listen to them, and that is extremely important, and as I said, it covers all areas of a kid's life.

> Participants 004 and 005 used keywords like consistency, goal-oriented, and positive. Participant 005 stated, "mentorship and teaching are a huge part of what we do." He explained that probation holds the stigma of having a list of things to complete before you are no longer on probation, but it is much more than that. Participant 005 also stated,

There is a lot of teaching and identifying areas where kids struggle with positive
decision making and trying to help them understand and consider other ways to
can make different choices. So not necessarily telling them what to do, but having
them think about ways to make different decisions that might get a better result
for themselves. For me, when I think of mentorship, I think that is the most
powerful way that an adult can mentor a youth is by guiding them in a way and
identifying areas that they want to see things differently for themselves and then
helping them brainstorm the ways they want to try and do things different…and
its integrated every day and a great way to see behavior change.

Participate 006 indicated that one of the most important aspects of being a
juvenile probation officer is developing relationships. It was noted the emphases placed
on the type of relationship.

…a client relationship, as someone who is offering services, and those who are
participating in the services, I think by the very nature of developing those
relationships puts you in a mentor role. Additionally, I think it is really important
to role model the appropriate behavior and decorum of a well-adjusted pro-social
individual to the families and individuals we serve.

Participant 007 explained the importance of boundaries when building relationships with
youth as a mentor and probation officer. Participant 008 explained,

When I inherited the youth diversion program, the model was once a month
contact. Any child, regardless of their zip code, can benefit from a weekly touch
point to talk through things if we want to foster success, in my opinion, a

relationship and knowing what is happening is the way in which to do that from the courts perspective, so I changed that contact standard myself.

Participant 009 stated,

My role as a mentor is just basically giving them a place to vent. I was a semi counselor to them, but I also try to be a role model and give a different perspective on life and a different way to think. Many times, I did not try to be their parent. I think that some people try to do that. And I don't think that's a great approach because you are not a parent at the end of the day. I tried to empower them or tried to find somebody that I knew was going to be a good support for them.

Participant 010 indicated, "my role as a mentor is my primary role being a probation officer." In addition to mentoring, Participant 010 emphasized supporting the youth and their families by providing resources and encouraging a new direction.

Theme 2: Education Resources

Educational resources varied from participants over different states and more specifically, different counties. Participants 001, 002, 005, and 006 all experienced the same educational resources available to their youth, a day treatment program encompassing more than education services for youth without any other school programs. Participate 002 informed that "additionally, it would just be the resources through the community, so their school district, and on-line schooling programs and we would help to facilitate them getting into those programs". Participate 003 asserted that they rely on the partnership with the schools for education assistance. He stated, "what can the school

provide and how can we help this kid get it". With the partnership with schools the juvenile probation officer assists in mitigating barriers. Participate 003 also stated,

> We attend IEP meetings, Individual Educational Plans, for kids that require those school resources, and we will help the kid, and help the parent to speak with the school about making sure the plan is being followed or making sure the plan is a good, that it is effective, that it addresses their needs. It also helps us look at the kid and say, hey, you are not participating enough, or sleeping in class. We will try to help get that stuff figured out as well…Some of our older kids that are behind in educational credits, if their too far behind, there seems to be a push for them to complete high school, usually by the parents, the traditional way would mean that their kid has to pass every single class for the next three years and they would be 20 years old by the time they graduate. That's great if that can happen, but they may not go to school until 20 years old, so we try to look for other areas that could maybe more obtainable. There's an online program we have in the community, where a kid can actually go to a physical building and do their classes there. They have staff to help them. So we look at programs like that as a way to form a better plan to ensure they complete high school.

Participant 004 stated that they would intervene if a kid has an IEP,

> We just work with the school district when they do the individual educational plan and help dictate whether the kid needs to be in a behavioral school, if the individual needs specific focus for special education, or if they need to be placed

in a therapeutic day school where they can get life skills and training based on
their cognitive abilities.

Participate 005 and 006 described day treatment as a village of resources. Participant 006

It's behavior text, its para-professionals, its teachers, its probation officers, it is
family workers, and administrative staff all working together to reel a kid in and
help them invest in themselves and their education by identifying barriers that a
kid has academically and working through those things.

Participant 007 asserted that they rely on the schools in the county as well as GED
programs. In addition to that, they use evidence-based practices that are used as
educational tools. Finally, participant 008 explained how lucky the county is when it
comes to educational resources.

There are several of nonprofit tutoring options, and we have the student advocacy
center, which provides advocacy as it pertains to special education needs or long-
term suspension or expulsion. Every district here has countless identified people
within their district to help facilitate academic needs and engagement.

Participant 009 stated,

There's so many different schools, and there's so many different charter schools
and alternative schools and all that. So even if you screw up pretty much all
through high school, you can go to these different places to get back on track. So
we can always refer you to alternative programs if we're talking like tutors and
things of that nature; Student Advocacy Center is something that we refer them to.

Participant 010 also referred to the student advocacy center.

It's a nonprofit organization…I always refer and push people back to that

organization. I am certified as a school social worker too, so I can better

understand what needs to happen in the schools and what services a school can

provide for the youth and their families.

Theme 3: Mental Health Importance

All participants put assessing for mental health issues as a primary component of

youth diversion programs. Participate 003 and 008 indicated it is the first initial thing

upon contact with the youth. Participants 001, 002, 005 and 006 said they have a self-

reporting method and follow up with an agency assessment after three months.

Participants 007, 009, and 010 advised that mental health assessments happen a few times

throughout their contact with their youth. Participant 001 explained,

One of the main things we do is…a risk assessment that addresses the following

eight areas: prior offenses, education, leisure and recreation, peer relationships,

family and parenting, substance abuse, attitudes and orientation, and personality

and behavior. So what is your offense, history? What is your school history? And

then, when you get to attitudes in orientation, it is more about system questions.

The personality and behavior part is about, do you think you have a problem

along the lines of keeping attention like ADHD? It also talks about the level of

tolerance, verbal aggression, and physical aggression. And so in all those things

makes up our risk assessment. And the higher your score, the more likely you are

to recidivate. And so what I didn't say in all those eight categories is mental

health. So we have a separate mental health screening… that's a two-page

questionnaire that you are supposed to fill out with the child when you're first

meeting them and then every 90 days after.

Participant 002 answered,

I think it's extremely important. Mental health issues are something that

continuously needs to be addressed with continued education. I think that changes

based on their mental health needs can really change what the case supervision

looks like and what the goals might be.

Participant 003 stated,

It's very important. In the past, we had staff from Community Mental Health

come out and assess every kid who entered our juvenile system. That has not

happened in a few years, I think because of funding and resources, but we always

look to that for every case to see if there's a history there, if there is, what is the

current status of it, are they taking medication as prescribed, if counseling ended

and why, was it because there was no longer a need, or was there transportation

barriers, or did they not want to go anymore. So we look at all of those things to

make our best judgments… we look for patterns and encourage them to a new

route.

Participant 004 indicated that their assessment has,

 two questions related to mental health asking if they have been medicated, seen a

counselor, or been to the doctor. If they answer no, it is vague because it depends

on how the officer perceives it because it gives us the ability to refer for

psychological or psychiatric testing. However, even then, I don't think it fully

captures the scope of what is going on with the kid where it focuses on the criminal standpoint and not as a whole.

Participant 005 stated, "mental health, trauma, and assessments of stability and safety are the nuts and bolts of what I do every day". Participant 006 also stated the extreme importance of assessing for mental health issues.

It is extremely important, as a part of every dispositional investigation. So what happens is, the kid comes into the court and we assess them for risk, mental health needs, and we assess our young ladies for trauma or trafficking. And we have a risk assessment for all three of those things.

Participants 007 and 008 both indicated that assessing for mental health is important to assess the youth to create the best practices individually. Participate 008 stated, "it's our job to look at the whole child and not just check boxes that pertain to court orders but to truly foster and facilitate meaningful relationships and opportunities in their lives". Participant 009 mentioned, "it is to make sure the kids are taken care of and safe, so it is very important. I would say it is fundamentally something you should do every single time if you are not checking on that, you're not doing your job". Participant 010 answered, "I think it's very important. It determines how you're going to work with the case".

Theme 4: Connecting Services

I found that most of the responses reflected that the connection of services was mainly at the discretion of the juvenile probation officers. Participant 001 asserted, "I think some of it is based on the juvenile probation officer, what amount of effort and buy-

in that they have into these programs and the kids, I definitely say there is fatigue on our end." Participant 002 indicated that overall service connection is done well, however, "more recently what I found, when it comes to being culturally sensitive and even sensitive with religion and backgrounds and things like that, that we lack some". Participants 003 and 006 indicated that connecting youth to necessary services is good and then shared a story of gratification where connecting services lead to success. Participant 004 stated when asked about evaluating the program's success on connecting to services, "the mentoring, luckily we do have an outside provider who provides mentoring services, and they do a pretty good job."

When asked how participant 005 would evaluate the program's success in connecting juveniles to services related to mentoring, education, and mental health treatment, she stated,

> we use a treatment team approach, and there is strict accountability for ensuring that our kids have things that they want and need. It's great if I think somebody needs a mentor, but if the kid has no interest in having a mentor, then why would we assign one…but one of the things that I really like about this program is that we work with our youth that we are assigned to and discover what they need and maybe provide some education around what resources are available.

Participant 007 answered, "I think we are pretty successful because sometimes we will have to strong-arm them into doing it, just to get them there but as far as getting them to follow through or complete, I would say over 50%". Participant 008 explained that a very few of her caseload have recidivated but unknown about the transition into

adult court; therefore evaluates the diversion program as successful. "In my opinion, it is an effective program because I meet with them weekly, there is a community service factor…we create a contract instead of court orders, and are individualized as are the community service opportunities". Participant 009 stated, "I think we do pretty well, but you can lead a horse to water, but you can't make them drink. Right now, we can't enforce anything because of Covid, so it's been difficult" Participant 010 said he could not gauge the success. However, he explained his personal goals of connecting not only youth but families to needed services.

Theme 5: Benefits – Successful Components

Each juvenile probation officer was asked what they considered the most successful component in youth diversion programs. Participant 001 indicated that kids who are willing to engage are the most successful piece, "you need kids willing to engage, and parents buy into the program, without both of those pieces, it is off." Participant 002 referenced an educational component as the most successful;

> "Definitely our court day treatment school program is huge, being able to get these kids an education, get them graduated and providing hat resource for them has been beneficial along with the career academy portion that gives them job skills, find drivers education programs, getting their state IDs, birth certificates, records that they might need, and even certificates sometimes and I think we are fortunate to be able to provide those things."

Participants 003 stated, "I think the most successful component is not having to live within a structure that uses an assessment that just checks boxes and that allows me more

room to make decisions on a case." Participant 004 said the most successful component

"is the amount of contact we have with the youth and everyone a part of their life."

Participant 005 stated,

> "I think a treatment team approach is this helpful. I also think that the treatment
>
> services provided to our youth help them heal from their experiences and work
>
> through their kind of avoidance and struggles is critical. I think that there is not
>
> one thing, the treatment is probably the most important, but outside of that, it
>
> becomes a collective effort, because when you have a piece missing if a kid does
>
> not have a good educational plan or does not have really good stability at home, it
>
> is great to connect youth to services that make the kid feel like someone cares,
>
> goes a long way".

Participant 006 said the diversion program works well. "We work with a teen

Corps through Child Family Charities, where the kids have to do a group therapy,

community service, write apology letters, and address the restorative justice

components." Participant 007 indicated that the most successful component is Evidence-

Based Practices which are series of trainings for different tools that target skills in

cognitive restructuring to behavior change. Participant 008 stated, "I think it is the

collaboration with community partners is probably one of the most successful factors, I

also think it's motivating that the charges can be dismissed". Participant 009 answered by

expressing his appreciation for his ability to interact with the youth. Participant 010 "one

thing I think that works well with probation is the ability to plant seeds to get youth to

understand their potential."

Theme 6: Challenges - Least Successful Components

Overall, the common themes in the responses were funding, consistency/turnover, and participation from the youth with support from the families. Participant 002 stated that the least successful mental health component could use more resources "when its case is driven as opposed to enforced." Participants 001 and 002 stated that the parent buy-in and juvenile participation were the main challenges. Participant 003 said one of the least successful components is addressing probation from an all punitive standpoint without considering the social portion. He also said one of the challenges is the youth and family on board. Participant 004 stated,

I think the least successful would be the therapy part because sometimes the kids do not want therapy and view it as a negative thing. So it is kind of hard because they're forced with court orders. It is unfortunate because if they don't want it, is it going to benefit them?...some of the challenges are service providers and funding.

Participant 005 stated,

You have to put away your ego, and you have to recognize and understand what works for one, does not work for another… You are always asking yourself why or what is driving this behavior? That is the question I asked myself 50 times a day. What is the root of whatever it is that you are seeing? You don't ever look superficially because when you look superficially, you're looking at the wrong thing because you're going to get lost in whatever the noises you're seeing are just a byproduct of whatever it is that's going on deeper. And so I think that the challenges are not taking stuff personal because when you hit buttons for people,

it can cause a fire being able to challenge yourself, to take away your own ego,

remembering that their success is theirs, not yours.

Participant 006 indicated therapy is complex "because they recognize it as an

issue and its hard to connect, especially minority therapist, with service providers that are

relatable to these kids." "Family participation is my number one challenge." Participant

007 stated,

The mentoring one is a huge challenge, at least in our county…educationally,

there are many barriers, like truancy…and then for mental health, a barrier is

keeping a counselor. There's a high turn-over rate with counselors around here.

Participant 008 explained the biggest challenge was the professional lack of follow-

through from partners, "it is really hard for me when people don't follow up and the kid

takes the fall." Participant 009 indicated that the least successful component is not having

enough time to have frequent touch bases with his current caseload of over 100 youth. He

stated the challenges were "funding, parent follow-through, and transportation."

Participant 010 asserted in his experience the least successful component "is court orders.

I just think court orders are not effective. It creates distance and further breaks down the

relationship that you try to build with youth in order to help create change within them".

Then asked about challenges, participant 010 stated, "the lack of availability for

mentoring programs …especially for kids of color".

Table 2

Inductive Themes

Themes	Descriptive Themes

1 – Mentoring roles	Consistency	Positive	Goal-Oriented
2 – Education resources	School Districts	Community-Based	Nonprofit Partnerships
3 – Mental health importance	Risk Assessments	Juvenile and Family participation	Court Ordered Therapy
4 – Connecting services	Discretion	Resources	Participation
5 – Benefits/Successful components	Frequent Contact	Connection to Resources	Community Partners
6 – Least successful components/challenges	Funding	Participation	Support

Summary

Chapter 4 presented data collection and discussed data analysis from ten interviews with juvenile probation officers in a Midwestern state. This chapter also covered the data collection strategy and challenges of recruiting participants. I conducted in-depth semi structured interviews to explore the perceptions, experiences, and understanding of juvenile probation officers in youth diversion programs when connecting youth to services. All 10 participants were current supervisors of youth offenders with access to resources during their course of probation. The participants completed a six-question demographic questionnaire and semi structured interview that allowed the researcher to identify codes, categories, and themes. The themes that emerged were related to juvenile probation officers' experiences with the success factors in connecting youth to services specific to mentoring, education, and mental health.

All 10 audio-recorded interviews were transcribed using NVivo Transcription. The study was analyzed used deductive and inductive coding. The deductive codes were mentoring, education, mental health, and challenges. Six inductive codes that were derived from the participant responses. Chapter 5 presents a detailed discussion of the results and conclusion comments for this study. I also include the study's recommendations for future research and the social change implications.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the experiences of juvenile probation officers' perceptions of the success factors in youth diversion programs, specifically related to mentoring, education, and mental health treatment. A qualitative case study was conducted to gather the relevant experiences of juvenile probation officers about connecting youth to services in youth diversion programs. Ten participants who volunteered and met the study's criteria were interviewed. The interview questions were used to stimulate the experiences of juvenile probation officers when connecting youth to services, how they evaluate those processes, and the challenges they face when connecting to services related to mentoring, education, and mental health. Data was collected using semi structured interviews, with eight open-ended probing questions, and then transcribed and coded.

Chapter 5 focuses on the results, which indicated that juvenile probation officers work on a discretionary basis, confirming the theoretical framework showing the effectiveness of service connection. There are many components to juvenile probation; however, I only analyzed the experiences to understand mentoring, education, and mental health treatment. Additionally, this chapter discusses the social change implications that could provide the juvenile justice system opportunities to reduce recidivism, incarceration and enhance youth diversion programs by evaluating the connectivity from the population that works directly with the youth.

Interpretation of the Findings

After analyzing the participant responses, the consensus from the juvenile probation officers was that all three success factors are essential to probation. The research literature on the evolution of probation has become reliant on external services. A gap in the research revealed the lack of literature from the perspective of juvenile probation officers, who work directly with the youth. Addressing this gap in the literature included obtaining the perceptions of juvenile probation officers in a Midwestern state and directly supervises youth in juvenile diversion programs. The experiences of this phenomenon were essential to explore, to understand how the need to connect to services is currently accessible and ways to enhance those factors positively.

This research was structured around the following research question: What are the perceptions of juvenile probation officers on the success factors of youth diversion programs as they relate to mentoring, education, and mental health treatment? The three success factors had similar subthemes; however, participants identified no blanket approach to accessing mentoring services. Participants of this study explained the role of mentoring. An essential part of being successful is awareness of the resource limitations and the resources available. Some participants mentioned that mentoring was a means of personal relationships in the community. Sometimes, they noted it was necessary to outsource these services based on the needs of the juvenile. Another finding, related to mentoring, was the power of discretion that juvenile probation officers have when completing risk assessments.

One of the notable points about education connection was the need to make resources and goals more obtainable. Each student should be addressed with an individualized plan is a key component to education services being a success factor. There were many references in my study where the juvenile probation officers expressed the extreme importance of assessing mental health issues. The availability of resources and programs that address the mental health needs of juvenile offenders were mostly described in alignment with therapy-based practices. Understanding that labeling theory and formal labels can create a stigma for the youth that they then internalize, it was no surprise that juvenile probation officers expressed one of the biggest challenges to be participation.

There were challenges in recruiting participants due to differences in titles. In addition, some municipalities have strayed away from diversion programs and probation officers being used for high-risk offenders and not meeting this study's criteria. For a case study, 10 participants are satisfactory for reaching data saturation (Yin, 2017). All 10 participants volunteered and consented to participate as they met the study's criteria, including being a current juvenile probation officer who directly supervised youth in a youth diversion program in a Midwestern state. An IRB approved list of questions was used to guide a semi structured interview that allowed for follow-up questions to ensure enough data was obtained. The interviews were transcribed using NVivo Transcription for ongoing review and to begin the coding process. Deductive codes were generated before data collection as mentoring, education, mental health, and challenges. Then,

themes emerged from the interview responses resulting in six inductive codes. I present the findings associated with the research question by addressing each deductive code.

Success Factors

Mentoring

The role of juvenile probation is full of responsibilities. All participants identified mentor roles and expressed their experiences with mentoring their caseload. Each participant expressed the availabilities and barriers of connecting youth to the external mentor services and the challenges of boundaries of relationship building while also needing to enforce court orders. Diversion programs vary based on the direction of contact, structure, population, and other factors that can change at state lines (Cotter & Evans, 2017). A mentor is someone who advocates and provides resources in various aspects to youth. Lawing et al. (2017) asserted that probation officers could be trained in risk assessment methods for juvenile offenders solely reliant on probation professional judgment. Most participants mentioned connecting youth to mentor services or playing the mentor role – which the resources need to be relatable to be successful. Three descriptive themes came from the interview responses; consistency, positive, and goal-oriented. In chapter 2, mentoring was described to assist and navigate obstacles, teaching life skills, and support moral behavior. That is consistent with the responses with the addition of focusing on family support. This study aimed to identify the role of mentoring in juvenile probation to fill the gap of minimal literature addressing their experience in mentoring to determine if it is a success factor in probation.

Education

Most of the participants indicated that they rely on partnerships with schools in their districts. Some participants identified that obtainable and realistic educational resources were a challenge. Participant 009 indicated that probation usually follows something failing in the youth's education, whether socially, academically, or behaviorally. Miner-Romanoff (2015) asserted that school administration had recognized the requirement for instructive projects on criminal equity training. Criminal equity training allows school programs to merge with legal standards, which can be impressionable as a deterrent to deviant behavior. All participants identified the need for the youth to be supported by their family and external agencies to be successful. That is consistent with previous research from Yoder et al. (2016) that informed the factors that counteract those risks include accomplishment, valuing the importance of education, school involvement, and a supportive environment from friends and family to change the youths' lives positively.

It was mentioned that youth on probation face more complex issues that hinder the consistency and effectiveness of education programs. The majority of the participants identified the disproportionate resources to those associated with intellectual disabilities inserting themselves into their IEP. Burke and Dalmage (2016) explored methods for juvenile probation officers facing challenges in ensuring adequate educational assistance to justice-involved youth. Hirschinger-Blank et al. (2019) informed that complying with students' IEP despite more students qualifying for special education in the juvenile justice system; creates opportunities for agencies to improve results while providing

quality education. Advocacy tactics discussed were frequent reporting with parents and teachers, cooperation with community partners, direct communication, and addressing barriers such as transportation and funding.

Mental Health

All 10 participants placed a strong emphasis on assessing mental health as extremely important. Youth Offenders under probation have been found to exhibit a higher risk of mental health issues (Whittington et al., 2015). Chapter 2 revealed that youth who experience victimization lead to mental health issues which leads to deviant behavior. This study explored how juvenile probation officers assess mental health and what resources and challenges they face when connecting youth to appropriate mental health services. 6 out of 10 participants indicated that in addition to a risk assessment for mental health for female juveniles, they also assess for trauma-related issues such as sex trafficking or abuse. Sullivan et al. (2017) indicated that 75% of juvenile detained experience exposure to trauma and deal with anxiety and depression. In addition, mental health influences a stigma that is a relevant factor of decision-making to access the appropriate care. One of the most significant barriers discussed among all participants was participating in buy-in and family support for therapeutic services. If neither the youth nor their family does not see a need for those services, they do not cooperate the same as when they are interested. Thus, mental health competence can change juvenile probation officers to improve treatment methods for juvenile offenders.

All 10 participants indicated at some point during the interview that all three factors of mentoring, education and mental health treatment are most successful when all

three factors work in tandem. When one factor is missing, the goal of youth rehabilitating becomes a concern. Juvenile probation officers are positioned to act as service providers and create a plan not to re-offend in the future. The boundaries and limitations of wanting to be a mentor but needing to be a probation officer were mentioned by participant 007 as challenging to balance. Holloway et al. (2017) asserted that probation officers that do not feel confident with handling mental health issues are less likely to utilize treatment methods. That is not consistent with this research participant sample. A majority of the participants have 10 years or more of experience, with over 100 youth supervised. This group of participants responded in confidence that mental health treatment is a prominent success factor within youth diversion programs and probation in all. Continued education for juvenile probation officers in mental health could increase knowledge about disorders and improve the likelihood of becoming a better-rounded provider.

Challenges

Overall the most popular challenge among the 10 participants was the lack of participation and family support. In addition, to support, most of the participants identified an area that needed more resources to make that area more successful. Although each participant identified challenges with existing services at their disposal, they all indicated during the interview that it takes much follow-up and follow-through, and the kids deserve that extra time invested. Participant 009 expressed his frustration with not giving each kid on his caseload undivided attention due to the large caseload.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical foundation for this study exploring the perceptions of juvenile probation officers was the labeling theory. The labeling theory assesses how the process flows into formal and informal labeling amongst the youth. Although this study identified only three success factors, labeling theory is relevant to show how juvenile probation officers assume their discretion. Labeling theory suggests that an individual's behavior reflects how others label them (Becker, 1963). Therefore, these reflective labels of deviance and delinquency under the supervision of juvenile probation officers can interfere with the effectiveness of providing necessary tools. One of the main barriers generated from the participant interview responses was the difficulties of being effective when faced with a juvenile who does not want to participate or a family that does not support the need for a service. Considering the social components that connect youth to community implies the definition of the labeling theory. Howard Becker's approach to labeling suggested that deviance was the making of social groups.

Participants were asked to share their number of years of experience, how many youths have they supervised in their career, and how their experience affects their current caseload. All participants have expressed learning a few lessons throughout their careers. Participants 002, 006, and 010 had a similar response emphasizing not treating all youth the same. It is crucial to take each case individually and apply the necessary services. Participant 009 indicated that although he has learned so much, that there is much more to learn. He also mentioned the importance of being relatable and sensitive to understanding that, specifically in minority communities, by addressing the experiences

of juvenile probation officers and how their experiences help them with discretion to avoid labeling after a formal process like a court-ordered diversion program.

Distinctions between formal and informal labels apply in all settings related to mentoring, education, and mental health treatment. Educational agencies, parental and peer acceptance create labeled environments (Kavish et al., 2016). Lee et al. (2017) indicated that parent's labels tend to have the most substantial impact on a juvenile. The descriptive code for challenges was funding, participation, and support. This is consistent with the need for family support when connecting youth to services related to mentoring, educational assistance, and mental health treatment. In this study, labeling theory was used to understand the population of juvenile probation officers' perceptions of youth diversion programs and their experiences in a mentor role, connecting educational services, and assessing for mental health treatment.

Limitations of the Study

Although the data collection method was in-depth interviews, it is possible that the participants may not have given an accurate depiction of their experiences. However, for the eight probing questions and the follow-up questions, the participants gave detailed answers from their experiences of the factors studied. Participants showed enthusiasm and passion when discussing the connection of services at their discretion within their diversion programs. The study had a sample size of 10 participants. Although this is sufficient for a qualitative case study, it still does not necessarily apply to most opinions in the juvenile justice system in the United States.

I intended to recruit 20 participants; however, I found that most juvenile probation officers did not meet the criteria for supervising youth in a youth diversion program. Recruiting from a Midwestern state, I found that many counties have allowed diversion programs to be run from a nonprofit perspective rather than through a court-ordered probation officer. Some potential participants considered themselves case managers rather than probation officers working with high-risk youth rather than first-time offenders, essentially diversion programs. This study was limited to juvenile probation officers in a Midwestern state. Potential participants being recruited from Facebook and LinkedIn were outside of those boundaries.

Due to COVID-19, the interviews took place via Zoom. Two out of the 10 participants did not share their video during the interview. As a result, I had to use voice inflation to determine the tone rather than body language. I would have preferred to conduct in-person interviews and to focus on one municipality of juvenile probation officers.

Recommendations

Research in the future could benefit from a larger sample size from a larger demographic. The focus of this study was juvenile probation officers in a Midwestern state; however, the lived experiences from other regions should also be explored. Future research could also focus on one diversion program from the experience of all the personnel, given the flexibility around title differences within each municipality. Replicating this study to larger sample size is feasible, now using Zoom and Nvivo Transcription. Using a larger sample demographic would allow a more comparative

analysis from different regions or a specific state. Also, future research could consider the uniformity of the justice system versus the experience of the juvenile probation officers expressing that each case needs to be individualized.

The success factors of mentoring, education and mental health treatment suggest that all three factors are required to succeed. Considering how these services can act as an essential component to diversion programs and consider getting more insight from the perspective of juvenile probation officers on resources that can better support the families. Future research can include a more comprehensive ethnic background, using random sampling to target a more diverse participant base, as all but one of this study's participants identified as Caucasian. In addition, future researchers can research the stigma of inner-city youth or minority youth on therapy-based practices as a result of not achieving juvenile and family participation.

Throughout the data collection process, the discretion and ability to connect services are beyond probation and are essential to the youth's success. Consideration for how often juvenile probation officers are trained for new ways to engage and connect youth to services may offer alternative views on the experiences. Future studies could examine the effects of mentoring, education, and mental health by conducting a quantitative study to determine if those factors reduce recidivism and incarceration. This recommendation may assist in determining whether resources focusing on those factors are accessible and available to examine the compliance or completion of each program to determine the outcomes. In addition, it could provide insight to policymakers on the relevance of creating additional funding for both internal and external partnerships to

enhance the experience of juvenile probation officers by providing additional resources. This research explored the experiences of juvenile probation officers who supervise youth to understand youth diversion programs from the perspective of a population that works directly with the youth. This study focused on a population that directly supervises one probation program; however, there is room in research to explore programs beyond first-time offenders in youth diversion programs. Furthermore, researchers could explore how courts process first-time offenders and how some courts deviate from the court process altogether to use nonprofits or community-based services to address the youth's needs.

Implications

This study aimed to benefit positive social change in the youth diversion community by implementing the population that works directly with the youth. The perceptions of juvenile probation officers explored in this study revealed the need for consistency, adequate support, funding, and youth and family buy-in to impact youth lives effectively. There is a positive social change implication for how juvenile probation officers view labeling and parents and peers to understand the stigma of labels affecting the youth's success. Lee et al. (2017) implied that resistance to the community after being viewed as delinquent directly reflects society's weakened bonds. Labeling theory assumes that malicious negative behavior leads to negative self-conceptions that result in felonious behavior. Juvenile probation officers' discretion is imperative to their daily work with troubled youth. The effect of labeling should be noted to encourage positive influences.

Some participants spoke of using risk assessments, whether self-reported or conducted by staff, to help determine what services the youth need. This practice shows effort toward the youth's exposure to positive experiences. Thus, juvenile probation officers should receive training to ensure services are structured to meet the needs and build relationships beyond probation, as probation court orders are meant to be temporary. The social change implications are that juvenile probation officers directly supervising youth express their experiences to gather ways for potential policy changes within the justice system related to services specific to mentoring, education, and mental health treatment.

Conclusion

This qualitative case study explored juvenile probation officers' perceptions of mentoring, education, and mental health access within youth diversion programs. The juvenile probation officers identified the most successful and least successful aspects of these success factors. The semi structured interviews revealed that it is necessary for mentoring, education, and mental health treatment to be considered success factors that the juvenile probation officer would need to individualize probationers' resources. It was noted that juvenile probation officers' discretion is an essential factor in connecting youth to necessary services. The recommendation is to implement a larger sample size from multiple geographic areas. The implication to social change results in using juvenile probation officers' usually omitted voice in future research when evaluating probation programs like youth diversion.

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Appendix A: Demographic Questionnaire

Instructions: Please complete form accurately and honestly to ensure the success of this research. Thank you for participating!
Please note: All responses will be confidential.

Gender – select one
        Male
        Female

Ethic Background – select one
        White
        African-American
        Asian
        Native American
        Latino or Hispanic
        Other (specify) _____

Age – select one
        18-24
        25-34
        35-44
        45 +

Education – select highest level completed
        High School
        Bachelor's Degree
        Master's Degree

How long have you been in this position? – select one

        0 - 2 years
        2 - 5 years
        5 - 10 years
        10 years +

Approximately, how many youth have you supervised in your career?

        10 – 40
        40 – 60
        60 – 100
        100 +

Appendix B: Interview Guide

Introduction: The purpose of this research is to explore the perceptions of juvenile probation officers' on the success factors of youth diversion programs. This section will consist of a semi structured interview to allow participants to provide an understanding of experiences supervising juveniles in youth diversion programs.

Research Question: What are the perceptions of juvenile probation officers on the success factors of youth diversion programs as they relate to mentoring, education, and mental health treatment?

Semi Structured Interview Script

1. How would you describe your role as a mentor?

2. What resources are available for offenders that need educational assistance?

3. How important is it to your program goals to assess for mental health issues?

4. How would you evaluate the program's success on connecting juveniles to resources?

5. How do you think your experience in this position effects your caseload?

6. What is your perception of the most successful components of the youth diversion program? Why?

7. What is your perception of the least successful components of the youth diversion program? Why?

8. What are some of the challenges you face in connecting youth to services related to mentoring, education, and mental health treatment