



Schools as Places of Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency

Franjić S*

Independent Researcher, Croatia

*Corresponding author: Siniša Franjić, Independent Researcher, Croatia; E-mail: [sinisa.franjic\[at\]gmail\[dot\]com](mailto:sinisa.franjic[at]gmail[dot]com)

Abstract

Juvenile delinquency is a very big problem which is present in today's modern society. The delinquent behavior of young people has always attracted serious public attention. This is a problem that many scientific disciplines deal with. Juvenile delinquency has recently become an increasingly common topic discussed in public. Recently, juvenile delinquency has increasingly become the subject of various scientific studies of this issue in which scientists are trying to determine the causes that lead to delinquent behavior of young people. Prevention of juvenile delinquency is one of the most important tasks of modern society. The aim of this paper is to point out a model of juvenile delinquency prevention that could be applied in schools.

Keywords: Juvenile Delinquency; Schools; Criminal Responsibility; Prevention

Introduction

Delinquency is a community problem [1]. In the final analysis the means for its prevention and control must be built into the fabric of community life. This can happen only if the community accepts its share of responsibility for having generated and perpetuated paths of socialization that lead to sporadic criminal episodes for some youth and careers in crime for others. Studies of the causes of crime point to many individual and social pathologies that may find expression in deviant and criminal behavior. In a competent community, however, the opportunities and motivations for crime are controlled by the way its institutions are organized to respond to such threats to public safety. There is a willingness to experiment and improve the responsiveness of individual and family services, religious organizations, neighborhood groups, schools, recreational agencies, housing associations, employment markets, and juvenile justice agencies. The result is a communal context that is sensitive to the problems of growing up and possessed of the institutional capacity to respond appropriately.

School-based delinquency prevention broadly refers to strategies that take place in a school building, or under the authority of

school personnel, designed to reduce or prevent the occurrence of problem behavior [2]. One meta-analysis integrated results from 165 experimental or quasiexperimental studies of school-based prevention interventions. Outcomes of interest were alcohol and drug use, dropout and non-attendance, delinquency, and other conduct problems. Strategies were partitioned into environmentally and individually focused, and then categorized by the presence of 11 treatment components or activities. Interventions with an environmental focus may alter the organizational structure of the school, increase the safety of the school building, improve teacher classroom management, or adjust the disciplinary practices used by administrators. Individually focused strategies consist mostly of psychosocial programs that utilize individual counseling, behavior modification, skills-based learning, and the like.

School-based prevention strategies were generally effective for reducing alcohol and drug use, dropout and non-attendance, and other conduct problems. For delinquency, mean effect sizes across all program types were positive but had a 95% confidence interval that included zero. Three out of four environmental approaches were found to be effective for reducing delinquency:

Received date: 16 August 2020; **Accepted date:** 21 August 2020; **Published date:** 28 August 2020

Citation: Franjić S. Schools as Places of Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency. SunText Rev Neurosci Psychol 1(2): 109.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.51737/2766-4503.2020.009>

Copyright: © 2020 Franjić S. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.



school and discipline management; classroom or instructional management; and reorganization of grades or classes. Establishing norms or expectations for behavior was the only environmentally focused intervention strategy that did not achieve a statistically significant effect size. Conversely, only one of the seven individually focused interventions had a significant and positive effect on reducing delinquency. This was an instructional approach to self-control or social competency with cognitive-behavioral or behavioral instructional methods. Without the cognitive-behavioral component, self-control and competency instruction had a null to negative effect size.

The school has come to be seen as a prime actor in the development and prevention of delinquent/criminal behavior [3]. This ascendance to prominence is reflected in research focusing on the correlates and causes of behavior, government and private reports linking schools and education to delinquency, and the advent of prevention programs intimately tied to schools and education. The ability to use school problems and concerns to predict possible problems later in life places school personnel in the midst of prevention. Schools are also prime locations for implementing prevention programs. Many interventions often deal with pre-delinquent youths and youths having problems in school.

School Bonding

Commitment addresses the extent to which individuals are invested in conventionality or have a “stake in conformity” [4]. School commitment is conveyed by the priority the school holds for the student, as well as the student’s investment in school activities. Students who are highly committed to the school accept the goals, norms, and values of the school. The mechanism that drives an individual’s conformity is the desire to adhere to the ascribed rules to maintain the value of the school and school related activities. Highly committed students do not wish to jeopardize what they have or could have by engaging in delinquency or other antisocial behaviors.

Involvement refers to an individual’s participation in conventional activities as they are related to school. In many instances measures of school involvement are operationalized in terms of frequency of attendance at school events such as sporting events. Another measure of school involvement is the number of hours a student spends in extracurricular activities such as yearbook, band, or other school-sponsored clubs.

When students are spending their time under adult supervision, as in the case of involvement in school activities, they have less time to engage in delinquent behaviors. These conventional activities, and the adult supervision that is present in school-based activities, preclude time for delinquency. When students are involved in school activities they spend more pro-social time with their peers

under the supervision of the faculty advisors or coaches, increasing the level of school bonding.

Belief is the acceptance of the values and norms of the school. When an individual endorses the rules of society as legitimate and valid, he or she is less likely to act in a delinquent manner. Belief in school is the most difficult component of the bond to develop, primarily because of the low levels of empirical support for this dimension in the study of school bonding.

There is growing concern that the increased incarceration rates, especially the unprecedented rates in the United States today, may affect other institutions such as families, communities, and schools in a manner that increases crime and social disruption or that at minimum offsets any crime reduction effect of increased incarceration [5]. The argument goes this way: Social institutions such as families, neighborhoods, communities, education, and labor markets provide and enforce norms of behavior that keep most people from engaging in criminal activity. When the ties or bonds to these institutions are weakened or lost, individuals become more marginalized, and such individuals have higher levels of violence and crime.

Schools

School officials must make daily decisions about discipline and crime prevention, something they may not have thought much about when they decided on a career in education [6]! Because so much of an adolescent’s time is spent in school, it would seem logical that some relationship exists between delinquent behavior and what is happening—or not happening—in classrooms. Numerous studies have confirmed that delinquency is related to academic achievement, and experts have concluded that many of the underlying problems of delinquency, as well as their prevention and control, are intimately connected with the nature and quality of the school experience. Although there are differences of opinion, most experts agree that problems associated with the educational system bear some responsibility for the relatively high rate of juvenile crime.

The school has become a primary determinant of economic and social status. In this technological age, education is the key to a job that will mark its holder as successful. No longer can parents ensure the status of their children through social class alone. Educational achievement has become of equal, if not greater, importance as a determinant of economic success. This emphasis on the value of education is fostered by parents, the media, and the schools themselves. Regardless of their social or economic background, most children grow up believing education is the key to success. However, many youths do not meet acceptable standards of school achievement.

Schools are also important in the development of protective factors [7]. Clear rules and consistent enforcement are important but so is reinforcement of positive behaviors. Teaching stress



management, problem-solving, and self-control is important to the prevention of delinquency. Schoolbased probation programs can influence the kinds of programs delivered by educators and provide more contact and better monitoring of juveniles on probation.

Additionally, the community can provide protective factors. Positive opportunities, mentoring programs, and afterschool activities promote positive behavior and association with prosocial peers. Probation agencies can work closely with community leaders to encourage the development of protective programs. In some cases, they may directly offer the services through such programs as day reporting centers where juveniles and their families may receive a variety of educational and family services not offered elsewhere by the schools or community.

Given the evidence that habitual aggression emerges early in life, preventive intervention programs should target young children [8]. The extant intervention literature suggests that such programs should focus on enhancing the physical, cognitive, and social development of children by providing broad-based services during the early years. Such interventions may be child-centered, such as preschool enrichment programs, or they can focus on providing families with the support and skills needed to maximize their child's development. Children and families who can be identified based on known risk factors should also receive targeted intervention programs to prevent further escalation of risk.

Because children spend a significant amount of time in schools, continued efforts should be made to provide child-centered programs in schools, those that give children opportunities to learn and practice effective social relations skills.

Schools may prevent delinquency if they successfully socialize people to fit into the society, yet the schools cause delinquency in those who reject that socialization [9]. If the economy and society demand that most people engage in alienating labor and exhibit obedience to authority, the schools will try to prepare them for such a life. Those students who refuse the precast mold and react with anger, resistance, and rebellion become "delinquents." The very refusal to fit is delinquency.

Even without parental support, the net effect of the school must be positive. As a result of the school experience, some students learn better to appreciate the advantages and opportunities associated with self-control and are thus effectively socialized regardless of their familial experiences. One of the major school correlates of crime has always been the mundane homework. Those who do it are by definition thinking about tomorrow. Those who do not do it have a shorter time frame. One mark of socialization is considering the consequences of today's activities for tomorrow. Homework thus indexes and perhaps contributes to socialization.

The traditional informal ways in which schools and parents dealt with problem behaviors in schools have given way to reliance on school resource officers: sworn law enforcement on school campuses [10]. The shifting institutional arrangements have the potential to "criminalize" more juvenile misconduct, for example, through formal charges of disorderly conduct. The threats of drugs and of violence from students or against students that have institutionalized the role of the school resource officer have also affected procedural rules for processing juveniles. For example, traditional standards of probable cause and warrants under search and seizure law are compromised in the school context because of the "special needs" of schools in maintaining discipline and teaching children. The warrantless searches and seizures extend beyond those where individualized suspicion can be established and into random drug-testing for school extra-curricular activities. The differences between children and adults are recognized in law and practice; the responsibility of parents to discipline and control their children is increasingly shared with schools and now sworn law enforcement officers in schools. These changes can lead to formal processing in "criminalized" due process oriented courts where punishment may displace treatment and help.

Criminal Responsibility

Criminal justice officials must be convinced that juveniles are not amenable to treatment in juvenile court before assigning the JO (Juvenile Offender) label or before sentencing the convicted juvenile offender to a secure facility [11]. The criteria for deciding which juveniles are amenable to treatment or to transfer to the juvenile court can appear vague to persons outside of the criminal justice system. Individualized justice is a principle that contains "many more items in its framework of relevance". It requires officials to consider "a full understanding of the client's personal and social character". Yet individualized justice does not preclude consideration of offense characteristics, because it allows officials to use the offense as just one of many aspects of the eligible offender's case. Offense, like many other forms of behavior, is to be taken as an indication or "symptom" of the juvenile's personal and social disorder.

In extreme cases of violence, such as murder, offense becomes especially relevant; there is little need to look beyond the offense at the juvenile's characteristics. Discretion is limited by law; for example, juveniles charged with murder are not eligible for youthful offender (YO) status. In such acts, officials have no other choice but to charge juveniles in criminal court as juvenile offenders. In offenses less serious than murder, however, such as robbery and assaults, which are listed as B or C felonies, individualized justice is more likely to come into play to assist officials in their determination of criminal responsibility. With these less serious JO offenses, officials may refer to the juvenile's personal background. Indicators of support in the family, school,

and places of work enter as relevant factors to assist the official assessment of "moral character" and juvenile offender status. In other words, legal officials do what countless criminology textbooks recommend in looking to parents and schools as indicators of social control and future delinquent or criminal behaviors.

Prevention

School factors play an important role in the understanding of delinquency, from a variety of perspectives [12]. For one, schools serve as an important setting for student interactions with peers. Schools also serve as the most important source of evaluation of student performance. Within this context, schools can be sources of either positive or negative emotions and experiences for youths. Academic performance is a major factor in how students perceive themselves. Low or poor academic performance can lead to delinquency through a series of connections. Significant negative outcomes in school include dropping out, bullying, and school shootings.

Violence in schools has been declining since the mid-1990s. However, school violence is still of concern to school administrators and the public, and many school districts have implemented anti-violence measures for their schools. One issue related to school violence that is receiving increased attention is school bullying. There are now several bully-prevention efforts in place in schools, such as the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program.

Three major risk factors for adult antisocial behaviour become observable in individuals in school settings during the elementary grades [13]. These include persistent physically aggressive behaviour (including fighting and bullying), academic failure, and low commitment to school. All three of these risks can be affected by intentional alterations in schools and schooling. As students move from elementary to secondary schools, social influences and behavioural norms of school peers also contribute to risk for antisocial behaviour. Several effective curricula for students ages 11–16 focus on confronting and reducing these later appearing risks.

Good teaching begins with good classroom management. There is a long history of strong experimental evidence demonstrating that behavioural techniques for classroom management, such as the establishment of clear rules and directions, the use of contingent approval and reinforcement, and the involvement of students in specifying contingencies and reinforcing themselves can reduce antisocial behaviour in schools. Intervention studies have shown that the use of proactive classroom management practices produces less student misbehaviour in class and more on-task academically focused behaviour.

Conclusion

Students are taught at the school and their educational progress is regularly monitored and evaluated, in order to ensure the necessary education that suits their needs and abilities. Parents, preschool institutions, schools and society as a whole should take constant care, educate and implement prevention from the earliest childhood. School, as an obligatory and indispensable educational institution in every modern society, is most often the place where for the first time some forms of behavior begin to manifest in children. Thus, in addition to prosocial behavior, a small number of children may also exhibit risky forms of behavior which may not be socially unacceptable, but may develop into them. Therefore, the school is an important place for early detection of risky behaviors of the child, which opens the possibility of adequate and successful intervention, and thus the prevention of severe behavioral disorders. The school should establish good cooperation with parents and provide them with appropriate assistance, in order to respond as successfully as possible to the tasks set before parents and the school in terms of educational work and prevention of juvenile delinquency.

References

1. Miller AD, Ohlin LE. Introduction to Delinquency and Community: Creating Opportunity and Controls. In *Contemporary Masters in Criminology*. Springer, Boston, MA. 1995; 319-334.
2. Welsh WN, Harding C. School effects on delinquency and school-based prevention. *The handbook of juvenile delinquency and juvenile justice*. 2015; 1: 181-198.
3. Krohn MD, Lane J, editors. *The handbook of juvenile delinquency and juvenile justice*. John Wiley & Sons; 2015; 22.
4. Eith CA. *Delinquency, schools, and the social bond*. LFB Scholarly Pub; 2005.
5. MacKenzie DL. *What works in corrections: reducing the criminal activities of offenders and delinquents*. Cambridge University Press; 2006.
6. Siegel LJ, Welsh BC. *Juvenile Delinquency: the Core Belmont*. CA: Wadsworth Thomson. 2011; 348.
7. Krause W. *Juvenile probation: Supervision or babysitting*. *Youth Violence and Delinquency: Monsters and Myths*. 2007; 1: 81-97.
8. Guerra NG. *Intervening to prevent childhood aggression in the inner city*. *Violence and childhood in the inner city*. 1997; 256-312.
9. Gottfredson DC. *Schools and delinquency*. Cambridge University Press; 2000.
10. Gardner K, Lanza-Kaduce L. Putting the processing of juvenile offenders into context. *The handbook of juvenile delinquency and juvenile justice*. 2015; 1: 85-100.
11. Singer SI. *Recriminalizing delinquency: Violent juvenile crime and juvenile justice reform*. Cambridge University Press; 1997.
12. Shoemaker DJ. *Juvenile Delinquency, Second Edition*, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.; Laham, USA. 2013.
13. Hawkins JD, Herrenkohl TI. *Prevention in the school years in Farrington DP, Coid JW. (eds): Early Prevention of Adult Antisocial Behaviour*, Cambridge University Press; Cambridge, UK. 2004.