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Family Background and Environment, Psychological Distress, and Juvenile Delinquency

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ABSTRACT

The relationship between youth offending and family background is still unclear in the literature. This study explored the role of family factors and psychological distress in relation to delinquency and youth offending to try and explicate the relative importance of family structure, family relations, and psychological distress. The study used the Brief Symptom Inventory, the Family Environment Scale, and the Delinquency Scale in a structured interview format to measure psychological distress, family structure and relations, and levels of youth offending, in 219 older children and adolescents aged between 12-17 years living in areas associated with high levels of youth offending in the UK. Analysis involved correlations, hierarchical multiple regression and analysis of variance. Family relations were the best predictors of delinquency and were also correlated with psychological distress. The relationship between delinquency and psychological distress indicated that participants with more psychological distress were less likely to be involved in criminal behaviour. The study supports the conclusion that youth offending and psychological distress are both influenced by a range of factors in the family, but may be unrelated to each other.

KEYWORDS

Juvenile Delinquency, Family Background, Family Structure, Family Relations, Mental Health

Cite this paper

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