Determinants of Institutional Misconduct by Juvenile Offenders

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Where??
Juvenile gangs in Singapore

Secret societies active in Singapore for past 200 years

Outlawed by British administration > underground

Youth gangs today tend to model secret societies

Why? Friendships and sense of belonging
Large volume of research on predictors of institutional misconduct

So why focus on institutional misconduct by juvenile offenders?

- Offence reduction
- Risk management
- Juvenile offenders - effective rehabilitation
Perhaps violence within prisons can be seen as an understandable and foreseeable consequence of life histories characterised by disregard for rules and conventions, exposure to violence, substance abuse, trauma, personality traits, criminal history.
Research consistently demonstrates that institutional misconduct is more likely among inmates who are

Younger, male, members of a racial or ethnic minority, have extensive criminal history

Gang affiliation is one of the strongest importation predictors of institutional misconduct.
Two of our research questions

1. Does gang membership increase the likelihood of assaultive misconduct within juvenile custodial settings?

1. Are protective factors associated with decreased likelihood of assaultive institutional misconduct?
The studied group

135 males aged between 13 and 18 years admitted to

Singapore Boys’ Home \((n = 60)\)

and

Singapore Boys’ Hostel \((n = 75)\)

between April 2010 and November 2011

Mean period of incarceration: 15.8 months
Mean age at admission: 16 years \((SD = 1.2)\)
Data Collection

- Comprehensive intake assessment
- Gang variables:
  - affiliation
  - duration
  - gang status

- Structured Assessment of Violence Risk in Youth (SAVRY)
  - 24 risk items
  - 6 protective factors
Structured Assessment of Violence Risk in Youth (SAVRY)

Risk Domains

**Historical**
- History of violence
- Exposure to violence

**Social/contextual**
- Peer delinquency
- Peer rejection

**Individual**
- Negative attitudes
- Risk taking/impulsivity

Example Items

- Pro social involvement
- Strong social support
- Strong attachments and bonds
- Positive attitude towards intervention and authority
- Strong commitment to school or work
- Resilient personality

Protective Factors
Assaultive Institutional Misconduct

- Attempted homicide
- Aggravated assault
- Violent sexual assault
- Fighting

Non-Assaultive Institutional Misconduct

- Drug possession
- Defiance
- Property misconduct
- Security misconduct
Gang Affiliation - Sample Characteristics

Gang-affiliated

- $n = 91$
- $(67.4\%)$

Non gang-affiliated

- $n = 44$
- $(32.6\%)$

Gang leaders

- $n = 21$
- $23.1\%$
## Incidence of Institutional Misconduct

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Incidences</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Prevalence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>606</td>
<td>4.49</td>
<td>5.89</td>
<td>87.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assaultive</strong></td>
<td>71</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>42.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-assaultive</strong></td>
<td>535</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>5.75</td>
<td>80.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Studied group: N = 135*
Results – Correlates of Assaultive Institutional Misconduct

- ASSAULTIVE MISCONDUCT
  - SAVRY RISK SCORE
    - .141
  - SAVRY PROTECTIVE SCORE
    - -.245*
  - GANG TIME (MONTHS)
    - .251*
  - GANG STATUS
    - .349*

* significant at $p < 0.01$
Association of SAVRY Protective Factors with Misconduct

1. Pro social involvement
   \[ r = -0.118 \]

2. Social support
   \[ r = -0.188^* \]

3. Attachments and bonds
   \[ r = -0.019 \]

4. Positive attitude
   \[ r = -0.061 \]

5. School commitment
   \[ r = -0.131 \]

6. Resilient personality traits
   \[ r = -0.379^{**} \]

* significant at \( p < 0.05 \)
** significant at \( p < 0.01 \)
Summary

- **SAVRY Total Risk score** was only weakly associated with assaultive institutional misconduct.
- **Gang affiliation and gang status** were both associated with increased likelihood of assaultive misconduct.
- **Resilient personality traits and strong social support** were significant predictors of non-engagement in assaultive misconduct.
Thank you!
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