

Female Delinquency in Secondary Schools: The role of Ethnic identity - Trauma and Depression Precipitating Female Delinquency – The Case of Cyprus

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Prevention of aggressive delinquent and other forms of antisocial behaviour has become a major field of research and policy making in many countries. Adolescent antisocial behaviour in schools is a serious health problem that adversely affects the learning process. It is manifested by aggressive and delinquent acts in schools and the general community. School environments can be structured to minimise opportunities for delinquent acts within the school and at the same time manage to influence delinquency that occurs outside the school setting.

The specific study is undertaken in an attempt to study the phenomenon of female juvenile delinquency in the schools in Cyprus since at the time, there is a lack of research in this challenging issue and its diverse parameters. The aims of this study are to initially examine the extent of the phenomenon of female juvenile delinquency in secondary schools in Cyprus and the role of gender in delinquency. Further, emotional factors precipitating delinquent behaviour and the role of depression and traumatic experiences are examined. The role of ethnic background in a multicultural society was also taken into consideration in examining female antisocial behaviour in schools.

The purpose of the study is to examine how individual, protective and risk factors are related to adolescent delinquent behaviour in the schools and to explore depression and trauma among school-aged females and its relationship to delinquency within a contextual framework.

The research seeks to test the relation between antisocial violent behaviour in secondary schools and trauma and depression among female delinquents (trauma for the purposes of this study is defined as physical or sexual abuse, loss of a loved one, life threatening experiences).

This project intends to utilise the ISRD-2 findings (European Project in the context of Daphne, the International Self Reported Delinquency Study – 2), to examine the extent of the phenomenon of female delinquency in secondary schools in Cyprus. In addition, qualitative as well as quantitative data analysis (questionnaires, interviews, participant observation), will also be employed in an attempt to study the different parameters of juvenile delinquency and provide suggestions for effective psycho-educational interventions within the secondary school system. Beck-Youth inventory and Trauma Symptom Checklist for Children (TSCC) will be administered to female students that will be evaluated for depressive symptomatology and prior exposure to trauma. Semi-structured interviews and focus groups with a smaller number of students who meet the criteria of our population will be conducted (case study).

Finally, systematic observation of a representative sample of female students in their natural setting (classroom and school environment) will be included in the survey. Through observation, the behaviour of female delinquents will be recorded and analysed and the interventions of educators will also be examined.

Overall, the project will examine the extent of the phenomenon of female juvenile delinquency in secondary schools in Cyprus and it will further investigate whether prior traumatic experiences, depression and ethnic background are predictors of violent antisocial behaviour and delinquency in the school setting.

The project hopes to provide a basis for improvement and change in secondary school settings, by offering recommendations and suggestions for the development and implementation of a psycho-educational preventive intervention related to the phenomenon of delinquency.