

Introduction

- The current study explores the effects of mental illness and mental health treatment on a justice-involved adolescent's likelihood of adult arrest.
- Research shows that around 50% of incarcerated adolescents have at least one mental disorder while only around 20% of general population youth have one (Atkins et al., 1999; Schwarz, 2009).
- Prior literature has established that mental health treatment can impactful for justice-involved youth, however resources are scarce in our current juvenile justice system.
- More research needs to be done on this intricate relationship due to some contradictory existing literature. Further, justice-involved youth with mental illness are an under-researched and underserv population, calling for more information on their experiences.

Background

General strain theory is one possible explanation for the hypothesiz relationship. It explains crime by positing that negative life circumstances and emotions lead to delinquency (Agnew, 1992). Th illuminates how the negative emotions associated with mental illness may lead to criminal behavior. It also explains how mental health treatment could mitigate the relationship between adolescent mental illness and justice system involvement because it can act as a legitimate coping mechanism for these negative emotions.

Methods

Participants

Data comes from the Pathways to Desistance dataset, a longitudin dataset of 1,354 justice-involved youth from Phoenix and Philadel (Mulvey, 2016). When the study began, the adolescents were bety the ages of 14 and 17 and had been found guilty of a crime.

Design

- Linear regressions were performed using 14,036 person-wave responses over 10 years.
- An interaction term was then added to the regression to test the impact of mental health treatment.

Measures

- Adolescent mental illness measured by clinical significance on more BSI subscales and/or a yes on one or more CIDI tests as a adolescent during the study.
- Mental health treatment measured by asking if the adolescen ever gone to a psychologist/counselor/social worker and/or has taken prescription medication for mental illness.
- Adult justice system involvement measured by whether or not participant had ever been arrested as an adult during the study.

The Effect of Mental Illness and Mental Health Treatment on the Arrest of Justice-Involved Youth

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Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Predictor Variable		
Adolescent Mental Illness	0.24	0.43
Outcome Variable		
Adult Justice System Involvement	0.68	0.47
Moderating Variable		
Mental Health Treatment	0.39	0.49
Control Variables		
Male	0.86	0.34
Proportion of Offending	0.15	0.15
Socioeconomic Status (Parents Education Level)	4.30	0.95
Alcohol Dependency	0.07	0.26
Drug Dependency	0.13	0.33
White	0.20	0.4
Black	0.41	0.49
Hispanic	0.34	0.47
Other Ethnicity	0.05	0.21
Demographics		
Age	18.9	2.45

Note: Pathways to Desistance. This table shows all control variables as they were reported at wave 1. N = 1,354.

Results

Figure 2.

Regression Models

		Model 1: Bivariate Regression		Model 2: Multivariate Regression	
al		b SF		<i>b</i> SE	
ohia Veen		U	SL	0	SL
veen	Adolescent Mental Illness	-0.031	0.030	-0.018	0.031
	Adolescent Mental Illness with Missings as Yes	-0.054*	0.025	-0.033	0.026
	Adolescent Mental Illness with Missings as No	-0.008	0.030	0.005	0.031
e	Gender - Male			0.275***	0.038
	Race - Black			-0.008	0.035
two or	Race - Hispanic			-0.075*	0.037
ר ו	Race - Other			-0.083	0.066
	Proportion of Offending			0.000***	0.000
t has s ever	Parents Education Level (SES)			0.020	0.014
	Alcohol Dependency			0.156**	0.053
: the	Drug Dependency			0.094*	0.043

Note: Race category "white" was used as a reference. *** p < .001. ** p < .01. * p < .05



Figure 3.





Note: Pathways to Desistance.

Discussion

This study hypothesized that among justice-involved youth, adolescents with mental illness would be more likely to be arrested as an adult than those who did not suffer from mental illness. Next, the study hypothesized that mental health treatment would act as a moderator in this relationship. The results of this study did not support either hypothesis. Despite this, the study does have some interesting implications. This study shows how much results may vary based on how missing cases in the data are treated. In the regression, only when the missing cases were treated as a 1 in the outcome variable were statistically significant results found. This shows that if most of these missing cases really were justice-involved as an adult, mental illness may have had a significant impact. However, due to the differences in results based on the treatment of the missing cases, we cannot make conclusive deductions from this study. Overall, these results imply that more research is needed on the intricate relationship between adolescent mental illness and adult justice system involvement. Justice-involved adolescents are a special population that deserve further research so that we can help them desist from crime.

References:



