



Investigating the elements influencing the psychological issues of reform school students

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Abstract

Reformatory students are those whose deviant behaviors and habits prevent them from receiving education under normal educational conditions. These students frequently lead a careless, undisciplined lifestyle, being unwilling to work and learn eager to play and demanding. Therefore, when they are admitted to reformatories with severe study and lifestyle requirements, they have great psychological difficulty adjusting to their new environment. Students' psychological issues in adapting to reformatory learning and living regimes are difficult and psychological deficits make it challenging for students to adapt to reformatory learning and living conditions. In Vietnam, 665 students from reformatory schools were polled to determine the causes of psychological issues. According to the findings, a variety of elements contribute to students' psychological difficulties. Individual student conditions such as health, awareness, attitudes and actions as well as inappropriate habits, living without goals or aspirations, etc. are on the subjective side of the equation. On the objective side are the students' conditions, family, education and psychological obstacles brought on by less-than-ideal circumstances which will make it more difficult for community students to adapt. Both the new school and society must pay more attention to reformatory students in order to establish the conditions necessary for successful integration into the new school and ultimate readmission into society for these students.

Keywords: Psychological issues, Reform school, Reformatory, Students, Vietnam.

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Contribution of this paper to the literature

This study contributes to the theoretical foundation of the research problem concerning the psychological challenges faced by students in Vietnam's reform schools. The study not only analyzed data but also used it to develop counseling materials based on outcomes.

1. Introduction

Reform schools also known as “juvenile detention centers” or “juvenile correctional facilities” are institutions designed to provide education and rehabilitation services to young offenders who have been sentenced by a court for a crime (Harris & Mooney, 2019). The psychological issues of students in reform schools can be influenced by a number of factors including the nature of the offense that led to their imprisonment, the quality of the educational and rehabilitative services provided at the facility and the overall environment of the reform school (Brooks, 2022). Students who have committed violent crimes or serious offenses may be more likely to experience psychological issues such as anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder as a result of their actions and the consequences they face (Atilola & Abiri, 2021). The quality of the educational and rehabilitative services provided at a reform school can also influence the psychological well-being of its students (Snehil & Sagar, 2020). Students who have access to high-quality education and rehabilitation programs may be able to process their experiences and learn new skills that can help them avoid future criminal behavior. On the other hand, students who do not have access to adequate educational and rehabilitative services may be more likely to experience psychological issues (Snehil & Sagar, 2020). The overall environment of a reform school can also influence the psychological well-being of its students. In a supportive and development environment, students may feel more secure and be able to engage in the rehabilitation process (Gibson, 2021). On the other hand, students may feel more stressed and anxious in a harsh environment which can exacerbate existing psychological issues (Gibson, 2021).

At the end of the twentieth century, studies on the health of detained youths in urban detention centers highlighted this population's health difficulties (Hein et al., 1980; Litt & Cohen, 1974; Litt, Cohen, Schonberg, & Spigland, 1972). These studies discovered many types of healthcare issues such as parental neglect and family breakdown as well as those produced by the institutional environment. Among the detained young population, there was an increased risk of behavior-related health problems such as pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases and drug usage. Over the last decade, studies have revealed a high frequency of mental health issues in juvenile justice populations (Fazel, Doll, & Långström, 2008). Mental health disorders are common among youth participating in the juvenile justice system. These frequently have an impact on their academic performance, behavior and interpersonal relationships.

The majority of youth who committed serious offenses reduced their crime over time, regardless of interventions and experienced decreased or limited illegal activity during the first three years after their involvement with the juvenile justice system (Sickmund & Puzanchera, 2014). Boys between the ages of 12 and 18 who have excellent or average academic performance in a correctional facility are less likely to re-engage with the judicial system after release than those who have poor academic performance and are placed in a remedial education group (Archwamety & Katsiyannis, 2000). According to a study of almost 4,000 adolescents released from secure facilities in Florida, those with above-average academic performance while incarcerated were more likely to return to school than those with below-average academic performance. This is an interesting finding that above-average school attendance is a risk factor for arrest. (Blomberg, Bales, & Piquero, 2012).

Academic failure, school disengagement and disciplinary issues affect many adolescents who interact with the juvenile justice system. Academic outcomes for adolescents at risk of entering the juvenile justice system are lower than those of youth who do not encounter the system, indicating that academic interventions may be an effective means of assisting youth at risk of entering the system. Nearly half of all adolescents entering residential facilities for juvenile justice have academic aptitude levels below the age-appropriate grade level (Hovey, Zolkoski, & Bullock, 2017; Sedlak & McPherson, 2010). Three to seven times as many adolescents within the juvenile justice system are eligible for special education programs compared to adolescents outside the system (Leone & Weinberg, 2010). Numerous imprisoned children are illiterate, expelled from school (Krezmien & Mulcahy, 2008), not punctual and repeating grades due to failing the previous year. A survey of more than 400 imprisoned ninth grade students revealed that in the year prior to their incarceration, they were not regular and failed the majority of their courses (Balfanz, Spiridakis, Neild, & Legters, 2003). Youth with high rates of absenteeism who later enter the juvenile justice system have received special education services more than their peers with high rates of high school attendance (Zhang, Katsiyannis, Barrett, & Willson, 2007). Instead of reducing delinquent behavior, exclusionary punishments such as expulsion or suspension significantly increase a student's likelihood of involvement with the juvenile justice system. Youth benefit more from alternative disciplinary measures that do not remove at-risk students from the school environment (Gerlinger et al., 2021).

Family plays a crucial role in shaping the young behavioral patterns of adolescents (De Kemp, Scholte, Overbeek, & Engels, 2006). According to research, a positive parent-child relationship is associated with a lower likelihood of juvenile delinquency. However, these processes are reciprocal and can occur in both directions (Hipwell et al., 2008). Adolescents who have close relationships with their parents may be less inclined to antisocial behavior (Hirschi, 2017). A longitudinal study has demonstrated that maladaptive parenting techniques create a developmental trajectory that makes children susceptible to adult delinquency. On the other hand, positive parenting techniques prevent children from engaging in problem behaviors (Hoeve et al., 2008). The notion that rising levels of adolescent misbehavior will result in deteriorating relationships between children and their parents (Huh, Tristan, Wade, & Stice, 2006).

The school setting is essential in understanding adolescent misbehavior (Vazsonyi & Pickering, 2003). Adolescents who are devoted to and attached to school are less likely to engage in delinquent conduct (Thornberry, 1987). Hoffmann, Erickson, and Spence (2013) discovered a significant relationship between academic achievement, school connection and delinquent behavior. High-achieving adolescents are committed to school. As a result, they are less likely to engage in delinquent behavior that could jeopardize their well-established

relationships within the school environment. Conversely, low-achieving adolescents' feelings of exclusion at school may encourage them to drop out and engage in antisocial behavior (Hoffmann et al., 2013).

In this study, we focus on studying a number of major factors that affect the psychological obstacles faced by students when attempting to adapt to the learning and living regimens in detention institutions. These problems could have been caused by numerous factors. The most important aspects are those that are personal to the students themselves and to their families and those that are social in nature.

2. Methods

2.1. Participants

A survey was carried out to determine the key factors that influence the psychological obstacles faced by children when transitioning to the academic and residential environments of juvenile detention schools. The most important aspects are those that affect the students themselves as well as their families and the environment in which they live. Interviews were conducted with 665 students attending several reform schools in Vietnam. These schools included the no. 2 reform school in Ninh Binh, the no. 3 reform school in Da Nang, the no. 4 reform school in Dong Nai and the no. 5 reform school in Long An.

There were 97.4% male students and 2.6% female students and all of the students ranged in age from 12 to 17. 14.47% of students were illiterate, 40.3% of students were enrolled in primary school, 39.17% of students were enrolled in secondary school and 6.06% of students were enrolled in high school. As a result, the majority of criminals had a low level of education (illiteracy or primary and lower secondary schools). About 45.7% of students lived in urban areas, 47.3% lived in rural areas, 7% lived in hilly regions or on islands and 10% of them were living on the streets. The percentage of students whose parents had divorced was 19.7%, the percentage of students whose parents were separated was 3.4%, the percentage of students whose parents had passed away was 13.8%, the percentage of students whose parents were single was 1.7% and the percentage of students whose parents were typical was 61.4%. Almost forty percent of students have parents who have an unusual marital status, 12.8% of students were enrolled prior to being placed in a reform school, 73.7% of students had dropped out of school, 5% of students had not attended school since childhood and 8.6% of students had been expelled. Therefore, only 12.8% of children were enrolled in school before being sent to a reformatory, the remaining students were either expelled had not attended school since they were children or had dropped out of school.

2.2. Measurement

The students were given a questionnaire that contained 37 items and they were requested to fill it out addressing the elements that influence the psychological issues that children experience while attending reform schools. These aspects include the individual (14 items), the family (12 items) and the community (12 items). In order to identify the direction of the effect, a three-point scale based on the Likert method was applied to each question that was answered: the first option is to have a negative influence, the second is to have a normal influence and the third is to have a positive influence.

3. Results

3.1. Personal Factors

According to Table 1, we used seven different factors to determine whether or not students agreed on personal variables. According to the students' consensus, the following is a list of all variables that had a beneficial influence: understanding of social norms (n = 578, 86.92%), strong will (n = 565, 84.96%) and good character (conforming to the norm) (n = 416, 62.56%), reasonable demand (n = 599, 90.08%), trust in the future, the good and the right (n = 598, 89.92%), conforming actions and routines to social norms (n = 587, 88.27%). In addition, the following list of all variables shows a negative influence: poor character (does not conform to the norm) (n = 425, 63.91%), lack of trust in the future, the good and the right (n = 634, 95.34%), weak will (n = 633, 95.19%), inconsistent actions and routines to social norms (n = 600, 90.23%), misunderstanding of social norms (n = 589, 88.57%), unreasonable demand (n = 586, 88.12%) and inconsistent observance of social norms.

3.2. Family Factors

The agreement of students on family factors was investigated using four different components. The following is a list of all variables that had a beneficial influence: love, respect and care for each other (n = 498, 74.89%), normal care (n = 476, 71.58%) and democratic parenting (n = 323, 48.57%), enjoyable, kind and cheerful (n = 535, 80.45%). On the other hand, all variables for which the students' agreement had a negative influence are listed below: do not care (n = 460, 69.17%), do not care about each other, be cold and callous (n = 619, 93.08%), distress, vexation (n = 569, 85.56%), do not care (n = 460, 69.17%) and authoritarian parenting (n = 78, 11.73%) as shown in Table 2.

Table 1. Students' agreement on personal factors.

Item	Descriptive statistics of the variables	Direction of influence		
		Negatively	Normally	Positively
Understanding of social norms	N	0	87	578
	%	0.00	13.08	86.92
Misunderstanding of social norms	N	589	76	0
	%	88.57	11.43	0.00
Appropriate observance of social norms	N	0	80	585
	%	0.00	12.03	87.97
Inconsistent observance of social norms	N	585	80	0
	%	87.97	12.03	0.00
Conforming actions and routines to social norms	N	0	78	587
	%	0.00	11.73	88.27

Item	Descriptive statistics of the variables	Direction of influence		
		Negatively	Normally	Positively
Inconsistent actions and routines to social norms	N	600	65	0
	%	90.23	9.77	0.00
Good character (Conforming to the norm)	N	0	249	416
	%	0.00	37.44	62.56
Poor character (Does not conform to the norm)	N	425	240	0
	%	63.91	36.09	0.0
Have trust in the future, the good and the right	N	0	67	598
	%	0.00	10.08	89.92
No trust in the future, the good and the right	N	634	31	0
	%	95.34	4.66	0.00
Reasonable demand	N	0	66	599
	%	0.00	9.92	90.08
Unreasonable demand	N	586	79	0
	%	88.12	11.88	0.00
Strong will	N	0	100	565
	%	0.00	15.04	84.96
Weak will	N	633	32	0
	%	95.19	4.81	0.00

Note: N: Number of students; %: Percentage.

Table 2. Students' agreement on family factor.

Item	Descriptive statistics of the variables	Direction of influence		
		Negatively	Normally	Positively
Family affection				
Love, respect and care for each other	N	0	167	498
	%	0.00	25.11	74.89
Normal	N	0	553	112
	%	0.00	83.16	16.84
Not care about each other, be cold and heartless	N	619	46	0
	%	93.08	6.92	0.00
Family environment				
Enjoyable, kind and cheerful	N	0	130	535
	%	0.00	19.55	80.45
Normal	n	58	501	106
	%	8.72	75.34	15.94
Heaviness, distress, vexation	n	569	96	0
	%	85.56	14.44	0.00
Parental care				
Pay too much attention	n	148	460	57
	%	22.26	69.17	8.57
Normal/Care	n	0	189	476
	%	0.00	28.42	71.58
Do not care	n	460	205	0
	%	69.17	30.83	0.00
Parenting styles				
Democratic parenting	n	0	342	323
	%	0.00	51.43	48.57
Permissive parenting	n	61	562	42
	%	9.17	84.51	6.32
Authoritarian parenting	n	78	534	53
	%	11.73	80.30	7.97

Note: N: Number of students; %: Percentage.

3.3. Social Factors

We used four criteria in order to investigate whether or not students agree on social variables. Students' agreement had a positive influence on the following variables: high cultural area (n = 587, 88.27%), contains beneficial and helpful information (n = 465, 69.92%), interest in education (n = 303, 45.56%) and one religion (n = 229, 34.44%). All variables are listed in Table 3.

Table 3. Students' agreement on the social factors.

Item	Descriptive statistics of the variables	Direction of influence		
		Negatively	Normally	Positively
Status of the family residence				
High cultural area	n	0	78	587
	%	0.00	11.73	88.27
Normal cultural area	n	0	231	434
	%	0.00	34.74	65.26
Low cultural area	n	331	334	0
	%	49.77	50.23	0.00
Government and political organization				
Interested in education	n	0	362	303
	%	0.00	54.44	45.56
Normal	n	0	541	124
	%	0.00	81.35	18.65

Item	Descriptive statistics of the variables	Direction of influence		
		Negatively	Normally	Positively
Not interested in education	n	354	311	0
	%	53.23	46.77	0.00
Religion				
No religion	n	151	401	113
	%	22.71	60.30	16.99
One religion	n	144	302	229
	%	21.65	45.41	34.44
Multi-religion	n	158	293	214
	%	23.76	44.06	32.18
Media and information				
Contains beneficial information	n	0	200	465
	%	0.00	30.08	69.92
Contains bad and useless information	n	598	67	0
	%	89.92	10.08	0.00

Note: N: Number of students; %: Percentage.

On the other side, the following is a list of all variables that had a negative influence: contains information that is inaccurate or irrelevant ($n = 598, 89.92\%$), a low cultural area ($n = 354, 53.23\%$), a multi-religious population ($n = 158, 23.76\%$) and is not engaged in education ($n = 354, 53.23\%$).

4. Discussion

According to the statistical findings, all student-related characteristics influence the psychological obstacles students face when adjusting to the academic and living environment of reform schools. There are many different factors each of which has different impact. Variables with a positive sign have an effect that is either positive or neutral. Character, willpower and physical health are all examples of positive attributes that have a favorable influence on students that assist them in lowering psychological concerns and quickly adapting to the environment of their educational institution. On the other hand, unfavorable aspects such as inaccurate perception, an inappropriate attitude, a lack of willpower and other similar issues have a severe effect on the psychological obstacles faced by students. The findings of the research also reveal that the personal traits of the student have a major impact on the psychological obstacles they face when adjusting to the learning and living surroundings of the school. It is important to note that the findings of any study should be considered in the context in which they were conducted and should not be taken as universal truth. Additionally, it is important to recognize that individual experiences and circumstances can vary greatly and that not all students may face the same obstacles when adjusting to reform schools. It is important for educators and administrators at reform schools to consider their students' needs and provide support and resources to help them overcome psychological obstacles.

According to statistical evidence, the psychological obstacles that students face during the transition to the classroom and living environment in reform schools are influenced by their familial situations. Positive family characteristics influence positively the adaptability of children and contribute to the elimination of psychological disorders. The inability of students to adapt to a new environment and the psychological challenges they already face are both made worse when detrimental family factors are present. The psychological condition of the family as a whole and the approach that parents take to instruct their children all have a significant impact on the difficulties that students face psychologically in correctional institutions. A student's family situation can have an impact on their psychological well-being and ability to adjust to a new environment. Other factors such as a student's individual characteristics and experiences, their previous educational experiences and the specific support and resources available at the reform school they are attending can also play a role in their ability to adjust.

Positive social factors such as a pleasant psychosocial atmosphere, a high student population in living quarters and healthy social information sources will help students adjust more easily to the learning and living environments that are present in reformatories. This is due to the fact that the students' ability to learn and adapt to different environment will be enhanced as a result of these characteristics. The students' adaptability will be negatively impacted in the opposite way if they are exposed to challenging social conditions such as a populated cultural region, an intricate social environment or a dysfunctional psychosocial environment. In addition, children are not affected by circumstances that are neutral. On the other hand, students are more affected by unfavorable factors than by favorable ones.

There are some limitations to this research. In the research sample, there are significantly more males than females. Males dominate the sample in terms of both weight and number of participants. According to the findings of the study, the next poll should include an appropriate gender balance. For future studies to produce results that are statistically relevant, additional statistical analysis will need to be conducted in order to incorporate the perspectives of students on the factors that contribute to the development of their psychological problems. In this case, the fact that there are significantly more males than females in the sample may impact the results of the study and the generalizability of the findings to a wider population leading to a bias in the results and making it difficult to draw conclusion about the experiences of female students in reform schools. It is important for future research in this area to consider this limitation and include a more balanced sample of males and females in order to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the experiences of students in reform schools.

5. Conclusion

The purpose of this study is to investigate the factors that contribute to the psychological issues faced by school children. This survey included the participation of 665 children from a reform school. According to the findings, the students are of the opinion that they will benefit from the presence of positive variables. In contrast, the negative aspects that were discussed and agreed upon will have an adverse impact on the students' mental health. The findings of this study should be used for future research, applied and analyzed in greater depth and then used to develop predictions on statistically important elements. In addition, educators are now in a position to

develop appropriate vocational training programs and policies, re-education plans to promote the incorporation of adolescent offenders into reformatories throughout the Vietnamese setting.

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