

Development and Validation of Juvenile Vindication Scale

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Abstract

The current study was focused on investigating the psychometric properties of the “Juvenile Vindication Scale (JVS)” in juvenile delinquents. Primarily, phenomenology was explored by asking an open-ended question for the item generation of the juvenile vindication scale. Further, the content validity of the scale was determined through expert evaluation and then piloting testing was conducted to measure the suitability and user-friendliness of the developed scale. Lastly, a sample of 211 juvenile delinquents with the age range of 10-17 ($M = 9.86$, $SD = 11.92$) was administered the Juvenile Vindication Scale and Measure of Criminal Social Identity Scale (Boduszek et al., 2012). The results of exploratory factor analysis extracted a four-factor solution, namely Exoneration, Refutation, Extenuation, and Incrimination. The results indicated that JVS was found to have satisfactory internal consistency, reliability (ranged from .62 to .82), and concurrent validity ($r = .45$, $p < .01$). The outcomes of the current study systematically provide substantial information and make provision for the application of the Vindication of Juvenile Delinquents of Pakistan and are discussed in terms of cultural inferences.

Keywords: Juveniles, Delinquents, Vindication, Social identity, Pakistan.

1. Introduction

Juvenile Delinquency is an action that violates the law of authority and jurisdiction in which that specific action is carried out (Hoge, 2012). In broader terms, juvenile delinquency is a law-violating act performed by teenagers under 18 years (Sarwar, 2016). In Pakistan or other countries, juvenile delinquency is considered antisocial conduct exhibited by adolescents or minors. According to Fakhar (2014), Pakistan can be reckoned as an unfortunate doomed country, because the rate of juvenile delinquency is comparatively high in this country. Moreover, present educational, social, and financial situations in a country show the picture of the intensity and severity of juvenile crimes (as cited in Sarwar, 2016).

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In the past years, the rate of juvenile delinquency has increased in terms of substance abuse and suicide (Holloway et al., 2022; Shagufta, 2015). Some juveniles have no previous history of criminal activities, but they initiate criminal activities during adolescence, because of association with deviant peers (Drozдова et al., 2022; Farrington et al., 2014; Zedaker et al., 2023). Further, research studies also propose that parental supervision in terms of keeping an eye on adolescents with whom they associate is crucial and essential because it is the self-governing stage of parental affection towards their children (Boduszek et al., 2014; Shagufta, 2015). It has been observed that a family plays an essential role in influencing children that as a result leads them to be delinquent (Farrington, 2010; Glueck & Glueck, 2013; Sarwar, 2016).

2. Literature Review

As human beings' interactions and communications are based on biological tendencies, psychological aspects, and social associations (Engel, 1980) because as the person grows, his psychosocial needs get more imperative and prominent. According to Bowlby, 1973, humans have an inborn and instinctive need to build strong relations and socialize with other beings for their survival. Further, humans develop many capacities (such as rational thinking, linguistic and interpersonal skills, and helping and teamwork) while interacting with each other, also with time one's social world expands and becomes more extensive and complex (Saleem et al., 2014). If an individual's social world does not allow him to learn appropriate social skills, then this might cause distress that may affect his social life and even one's beliefs, thoughts, and attitudes. Vindication is the most frequently explored problem in terms of criminal thinking that refers to "a thought pattern of justifying the actions by blaming others e.g., society, family, and peers" (Sana & Rafiq, 2017). This style is related to the criminal rationalization and mollification (justification) factors of criminal thinking (Blonigen et al., 2022; Dina et al., 2022; Knight et al., 2006; Sana & Batool, 2017).

In terms of theoretical explanation, various concepts, and theories explain the irrational thinking of delinquents, of which one concept was given by (Boduszek & Hyland, 2012; Squillaro; 2023; Shagufta, 2015). In terms of environmental exposure, this conflicting behavior performed as a defensive shield by juvenile delinquents against apprehensive situations. Juvenile delinquents who have previously prevalent irrational thought patterns are deceptive in numerous life stages (Rodriguez, 2010; Walters, 2020; Yochelson & Samenow, 1977).

Many assessment tools are available that measure delinquency in juveniles and criminal thinking in adult offenders (Boduszek & Hyland, 2012; Knight et al., 2006; Sana & Batool, 2017; Walters, 2020; Yochelson & Samenow, 1977); however, there is no assessment scale available that can assess and evaluate the juvenile's vindictive criminal thinking. In terms of theoretical explanation, various concepts, and theories explain the irrational thinking of delinquents, of which one concept was given by (Boduszek & Hyland, 2012; Squillaro; 2023; Shagufta, 2015). In terms of environmental exposure, this conflicting behavior performed as a defensive shield by juvenile delinquents against apprehensive situations. Juvenile delinquents who have previously prevalent irrational thought patterns are deceptive in numerous life stages (Rodriguez, 2010; Walters, 1990; Yochelson & Samenow, 1977).

Culturally, we have limited evidence about motives behind major delinquent behaviors such as assassination, robbery, drug dealing, and so on. The main purpose of the current study was to investigate the function of the vindictive thinking styles of juvenile delinquents in Pakistan. Since there was limited research in Pakistan on juvenile vindictive thinking; therefore, it was.

essential to explore this variable. Unfortunately, no attempt was made to develop and validate a scale for the assessment of juvenile vindication. This research would perhaps be a precursor in nature and support the phenomena of vindictive criminal thinking. This research has also filled the gaps in the literature by exploring juvenile vindication.

3. Research Methodology

Phase I: Item Generation

To create a list of expressions and distinct thought patterns of vindication in juveniles, phenomenology was explored by asking an open-ended question in Urdu such as “How does one justify his mistakes and crimes?” from 30 juvenile delinquents. After phenomenology exploration, the repeated and dubious items were excepted and a final list of 32 thought patterns was given to 6 experienced experts (4 criminologists and 2 psychologists), for content validation. After that expert’s evaluation, 21 items out of 32 were found appropriate and more illustrating to keep in the final juvenile vindication scale.

Phase II: Pilot Study

To determine the initial reliability and responsiveness of the construct, a pilot study was done by administering the newly developed scale (Juvenile Vindication Scale, JVS) on 30 imprisoned juvenile delinquents that were chosen through purposive sampling. It took 10 minutes to complete the instrument. The outcomes of the pilot study suggested that the scale’s items were understandable and user-friendly.

Phase III: Main Study

This phase was proposed to find out the psychometric properties of Juvenile Vindication Scale (JVS).

Participants. The 211 juvenile delinquents on parole and probation period ($M = 9.86$, $SD=11.92$) were chosen through purposive age ranged from 10 to 17 years.

4. Measures.

Demographic Performa

The demographic variables were consisted of age and types of crimes (such as violent or nonviolent).

Juvenile Vindication Scale (JVS)

The Juvenile Vindication Scale was developed for Juvenile Delinquents. JVS was comprised of 21 vindictive thinking styles of juveniles with a Likert scale ((1) *strongly disagree* to (5) *strongly agree*). The high score on this scale exhibited more vindication criminal thinking a juvenile delinquent possessed.

Measure of Criminal Social Identity (MCSI).

The scale “Measure of Criminal Social Identity (MCSI)” was used to determine the concurrent validity of the “Juvenile Vindication Scale (JVS)” (Boduszek et al., 2012; Shagufta, 2015). This measure was intended to develop by considering the Three-dimensional Strength of the “Group Identification Scale” (Cameron, 2004) to assess criminal social identity. This measure consists of 8 items with three subscales (such as Cognitive Centrality, In-group Affect, and In-group Ties).

The scoring options consisted of a 5-point rating Likert scale (5=*strongly agree* to 1=*strongly disagree*). The reliability of the MCSI Urdu version ranged from .68 to .91, respectively.

5. Procedure

By following the protocol of receiving permission from Institutional Review Board (IRB), researchers contacted Inspector General (IG) of Prisons, Punjab, Pakistan and briefly described the objectives of the current research. Once permission obtained, prison authorities were assured about the confidentiality and anonymity of the research data. The juvenile delinquents were purposively approached for the administration of the research protocol and assured regarding the confidentiality and privacy of the data collected. Some measures were self-administered and some were administered by researchers and prison assistant superintendents. A total of 211 participants completed the research assessment forms. The protocol was completed approximately in 15 minutes; eventually, juvenile delinquents were debriefed for their contribution.

6. Analysis and Results

This part consists of EFA, psychometric properties, and validities of the Juvenile Vindication Scale (JVS) that includes “Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin” measure of sampling adequacy was .81 and Bartlett’s test of Sphericity was also significant ($\chi^2 (171) = 776.31, p < .001$) representing that current research data is suitable for factor analysis (Akoglu, 2018; Field, 2013). Number of factors for JVS was determined based on Eigen Values >1 and factor loadings $>.40$ (Kaiser, 1974). The retention criterion for retaining items in the final factor structure was .40 or above (Table 1). The 45.24% variance was explained by 4-factors and each factor has minimum 4 items and maximum 6 items, as for sufficient reliability minimum three items in a factor are acceptable (Guildford, 1952).

Figure 1

Scree Plot Presenting Extraction of 4-Factors of Juvenile Vindication Scale (N=211)

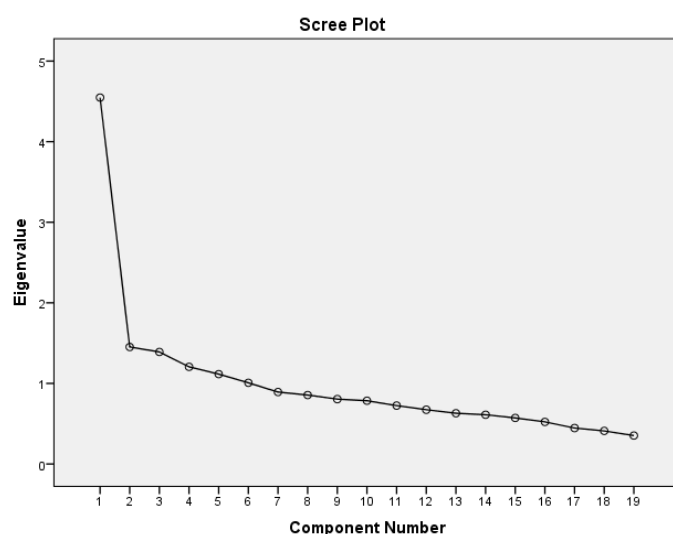


Table 1
Factor Structure of 19 Items of JVS on Juvenile Delinquents with Varimax Rotation

Sr. No	Item No	I	II	III	IV
1	7	.69	-.06	.03	.31
2	8	.67	.21	.12	-.02
3	3	.55	.09	.20	.12
4	9	.50	.49	.08	-.15
5	15	.43	.39	-.10	.26
6	13	.12	.72	.27	-.03
7	4	.04	.64	.09	.11
8	14	.14	.63	-.01	.34
9	5	.39	.41	.22	.10
10	21	.14	-.07	.67	-.08
11	19	.39	.28	.65	.12
12	20	.17	-.02	.58	.05
13	18	-.09	.20	.44	.29
14	11	.30	.20	.44	.19
15	12	.29	.15	.43	.08
16	2	.12	.10	.12	.76
17	1	.03	.12	.02	.72
18	6	.37	.00	.14	.46
19	16	.23	.12	.35	.41
Eigen Values		4.55	1.45	1.39	1.21
% Variance		23.93	7.64	7.32	6.35
Cumulative %		23.93	31.58	38.89	45.24

By considering communal themes determined by every item, researchers allocated each respective factor a specific label.

Factor 1: Exoneration

This factor comprises of 5 items. The high scores on this factor refers to “a state of freeing oneself from blame or guilt by justifying the wrong deeds”. Examples include compelling to steal, taking law into hands, unemployment is the cause of crime.

Factor 2: Refutation

This factor contains 4 items. The high scores on this factor refers to “a state of proving that the certain evidence is not true by denying/refusing one’s own mistakes”.

For example, irresponsibility towards wrong doings, society is responsible for sins, society kills poor people.

Factor 3: Extenuation

This factor comprises of 6 items. The high scores on this factor refers to “a state of making partial excuses or giving partial justifications in order to lessen the seriousness of an offense”. Examples include breaking laws for a better life, committing crime for self-defence, committing crimes for a deserving life.

Factor 4: Incrimination

This factor comprises of 4 items. The high scores on this factor refers to “a state of making someone appear guilty or responsible of one’s own wrongdoings or offences”. For example, holding parents responsible for failures, police arrest innocent ones, irresponsibility of parents.

Construct Validity of JVS

The JVS showed a significant positive relationship with its factors. Further, Cronbach Alpha value of JVS was ranged from .62 to .82 showing acceptable internal consistency (Table 2).

Concurrent Validity of JVS

The concurrent validity of JVS was determined with Measure of criminal social identity (MCSI) (Boduszek et al., 2012; Shagufta, 2015). The results of the current study showed that there was a significant positive relationship found between the total of JVS and MCSI ($r = .45$, $p < .01$), shows that juvenile delinquents who have vindictive thinking styles are significantly related to delinquent peer groups (Table 2).

Table 2

Summary of Inter-Factor Correlations, Internal Consistency, Means, and Standard Deviations on JVS (N=211)

Factor	1	2	3	4	5	MCSI T
1. Exoneration	—	.50**	.38**	.41**	.75**	.39**
2. Refutation		—	.43**	.36**	.74**	.33**
3. Extenuation			—	.38**	.77**	.24**
4. Incrimination				—	.71**	.41**
5. JVS Total					—	.45**
M	21.64	16.81	24.51	16.21	79.17	35.58
SD	3.19	2.89	4.02	3.20	9.95	4.86
α	.66	.64	.62	.62	.82	.72

Note. JVS = Juvenile Vindication Scale, MCSI T = Measure of Criminal Social Identity Total.
** $p < .01$.

7. Discussion and Conclusion

Criminal thinking stimulates the chances and responses of distorted thoughts primarily in a complicated situation on account of the “cognitive process that motivates illegal life” (Dina et al., 2022; Sana & Rafiq, 2017). It is further suggested that “criminal thought patterns are not only stimulated in complicated circumstances, rather also in uncomplicated circumstances” (Kroner & Morgan; 2014), for instance, response to tedious circumstances or even reassuring rewards that are aggravated by criminal thinking styles, perhaps cause criminal activities. Thus, the vindictive criminal thinking style strongly stimulates situations, and expectations, and recognized distorted meaning.

The tool to assess juveniles’ criminal thinking styles in terms of vindication was developed and validated in three phases. After exploration of phenomenology and content validity, the list of 21 items was generated empirically for the Juvenile Vindication Scale. Exploratory Factor Analysis extracted 4-factors, namely Exoneration, Refutation, Extenuation, and Incrimination that described Juvenile Vindication (JV) with 19 items. Operationally, researchers define JV as “a thought pattern of justifying the actions by blaming others e.g., society, family, and peers” (Sana & Rafiq, 2017). Vindication is often the most explored and investigated thought pattern in terms of criminal thinking. Following the literature, this thinking style is interrelated to the concepts of criminal rationalization and mollification (justification) criminal thinking styles (e.g., Desmarais et al., 2018; Knight et al., 2006; Walters, 2020).

Theoretically, there is a range of concepts that illustrate the unreasonable thinking of delinquents (Boduszek & Hyland, 2012; Gómez et al., 2022; Jiang et al., 2020; Squillaro, 2023; Shagufta, 2015; Walters, 2020); however, this current research model described the concept of Juvenile Vindication thoroughly to study distorted thought patterns in both the adults and juvenile delinquents. Vindication includes self, situations, law, family, and society. Contrary to the literature, behavioral styles persuade an individual’s thinking style to fight or flight against complicated circumstances by denying committed crimes (Desmarais et al., 2018; Knight et al., 2006; Sana & Rafiq, 2017; Walters, 2020). The most commonly used defense tool is the justification of one’s criminal acts by exonerating the circumstances and providing irrational meanings (e.g., honor killing). Further, it has been suggested that delinquents mostly rationalize their crimes by highlighting the wrongness of society and generally make circumstances responsible to become free from the culpability and accountability of crimes, eventually escalating the casual of recidivism (Sana & Rafiq, 2017; Taxman et al., 2011).

Complex situations generally prompt the denial and refusal of wrongdoings; because refutation occurs when criminal thinking styles influence the reactions (Kroner & Morgan, 2014). Complex situations either empower the delinquents to exert power over others or sometimes make them imprudent in that they refute the offenses entirely. Essentially, extenuation refers to a state of making partial excuses or giving partial justifications to lessen the seriousness of an offense such as crimes committed for self-defense, to live a better life, or order to get rid of poverty, and so on (Sana & Batool, 2017). Mostly, delinquents extenuate by giving partial excuses to justify their crimes, exonerate to get themselves free from the culpability of wrong acts, and refute by denying the crimes or sometimes use religion as a vindictive means, since they generally want themselves to look more conventional, not a delinquent (Boduszek & Hyland, 2012; Sana & Batool, 2017).

Thus far one of the most prominent features of the vindication criminal thinking style is incrimination which is associated with a state of refutation in which delinquents refuse and rationalize their crimes by making others responsible for their criminal acts (Walters, 2020). That is the reason complexities are associated with a lack of maturity in attitude about self and others (Andersen & Chen, 2002; Saleem et al., 2014), but what can one person expect from a child? To be well-built, to be invulnerable, to be self-assured, or to always find affection, if there is any disaffection.

The JVS has a significant positive correlation with its factors, namely exoneration, refutation, extenuation, and incrimination. Further, JVS has satisfactory internal consistency and adequate concurrent validity. The association between the Juvenile Vindication Scale (JVS) and the Measure of Criminal Social Identity are in line with the literature (Boduszek et al., 2012; Jiang et al., 2020; Knight et al., 2006; Walters, 2001) indicating that those juvenile delinquents justify, refute, and blame others, who tend to have associations with delinquents' friends and have a criminal social identity. Another finding of this current research reveals that only those juvenile delinquents give partial excuses (i.e., exonerate) for their offenses who committed nonviolent crimes.

Moreover, overall, all juvenile delinquents justify, refuse, and blame others for their committed crimes whether committed crime is violent or nonviolent. This is possibly inherited from families, learned from acquaintances, and skilled from societal circumstances.

The results of the current study are discussed in terms of inferences and implications of juvenile vindication as a criminal thinking style for correctional counseling services. JVS can effectively assess the vindicated thought patterns of juvenile delinquents. Based on the vindication of criminal thinking styles, interventional strategies related to correctional counseling can be considered for juvenile delinquents, as normally designed for children, but in a more advanced form such as cognitive restructuring with the ABA design model, which includes anxiety handling, moral reasoning, spiritual counseling, social skills training, and relapse prevention.

It is concluded, JVS can further be useful in conducting future studies and observing the therapeutic efficacy to moderate the chances of re-offend. Since this study was found to be a self-reported measure, so further exploration should be done by using projective techniques and indirect approaches. The current research is an original work to measure the vindication of criminal thinking styles of juvenile delinquents. Further, this research will be helpful for researchers to understand the comprehensive concept of juveniles' vindication.

Declaration of conflict of interest

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest(s) with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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