

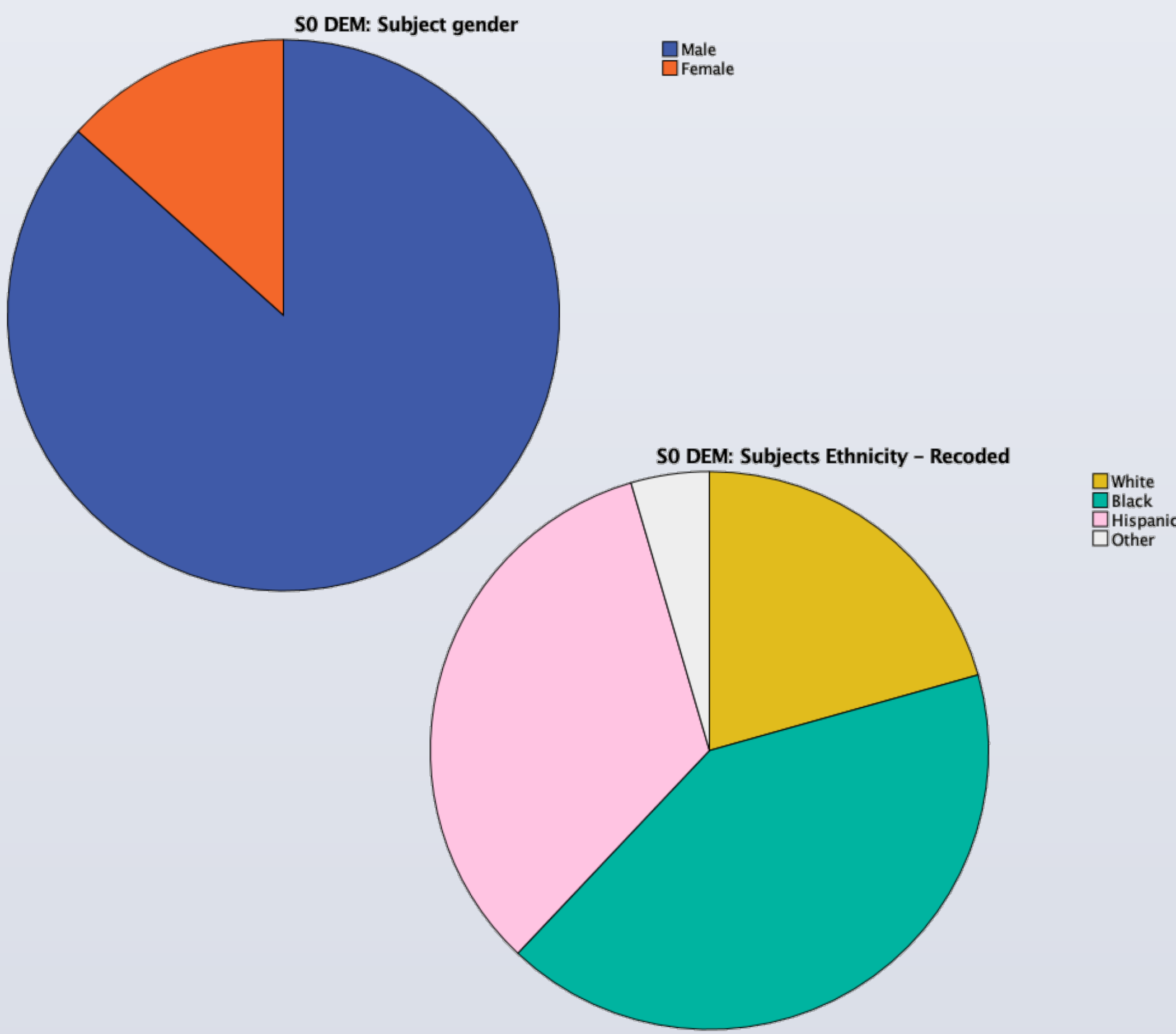
The Relationship Between Exposure to Violence and School Commitment Among Juvenile Offenders

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ABSTRACT

The primary purpose of the present research was to examine the relationship between exposure to violence and school commitment among juvenile offenders. This study used a secondary data analysis collected from the Pathways to Desistance. The current cross-sectional study consisted of 1,212 female and male serious juvenile offenders amid the ages of 14 and 19 years who had been adjudicated at the time they committed the offenses. The data was examined to analyze the impact exposure to violence had on school commitment. This study confirmed the hypothesis that as exposure to violence increases, school commitment decreases among juvenile offenders. These findings, along with previous studies, indicated the importance of providing trauma informed interventions on school campuses to ensure justice involved students are able to successfully integrate to their school environment.



INTRODUCTION

Significant of Study:

Having trauma informed school can allow staff members to better understand the importance of teacher connection and encourage students to feel supported on campus, thus increasing school orientation.

Purpose of the Study:

The purpose of the study is to create new knowledge related to healthy academic outcomes among juvenile offenders.

Research Question:

What is the relationship between exposure to violence and school commitment among juvenile offenders?

Hypothesis:

The hypothesis of this study is as exposure to violence increases, school commitment decreases among juvenile offenders

LITERATURE REVIEW

Exposure to Violence and School Commitment:

The connection between school commitment and juvenile offenders decreases when children are exposed to violence. The negative impact on their academic performance thereby affects their school attendance, school bonding, and educational achievement (Dill & Ozer, 2016; Jäggi, et al., 2020; Ruiz et al., 2018).

School Commitment and Juvenile Offenders:

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2020), assert violence in communities and schools can affect the student’s overall wellbeing and health; thus, influencing their educational outcome. In consequence, students exposed to violence pose a higher risk of dropping out of school or engaging in delinquent behavior (Antunes & Ahlin, 2021; Baglivio, et al., 2014; Fine el al, 2018).

Exposure to Violence, School Commitment, and Juvenile Offenders:

School factors such as retention rates, frequent expulsion or discipline practices, ineffective classroom management (Christle et al., 2005), poor teacher-student relationships (Baker et al., 2008; Pianta, 1999), and poor school connections result to behaviors of delinquency (Sander et al., 2012).

Gaps in Research:

Observed bias is a probable outcome because adolescents may be more inclined to answer questions in a way that becomes more favorable by the professional researcher. Longitudinal studies often have higher morbidity rate among respondents and require an enormous amount of findings for it to be completed. Another limitation to the research studies was the over representation of males that create a gender bias in past studies.

METHODS

Research Design:

The current research was a secondary data analysis of interviews collected in collaboration with the “Pathways to Desistance” study. The original study was a 10 year study that surveyed 1,345 serious juvenile offenders between the ages of 14 and 19, from the juvenile and adult court systems between the years of 2000 and 2010. Maricopa County, Arizona ($n = 654$) and Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania ($n = 700$).

Sampling Method:

Study participants were selected from the original Pathways to Desistance study sample of 14-17 year old juvenile offenders. Study participants who failed to completely respond to all of the exposure to violence and school commitment questions were excluded from the current study. This resulted in a final sample size of 1,212 study participants.

Measures:

Independent Variable: The independent variable was exposure to violence, defined as witnessing or being a victim of a violent event. A modified Exposure to Violence Inventory was used to measure the construct.

Dependent Variable: The dependent variable was school commitment. The dependent variable had four dimensions: teacher bonding, school orientation, school engagement, and number of school activities.

Data Analysis:

Spearman rho correlation and multiple linear regression analysis were used to test relationships between exposure to violence and school commitment. Exposure to violence was statistically significant with all school commitment measures except for number of school activities.

RESULTS

Regression Models for School Commitment Measures

	Teacher Bonding	School Orientation	School Engagement
Predictor	<i>B (SE)</i>	<i>B (SE)</i>	<i>B (SE)</i>
Constant	3.522 (.340)***	4.916 (.297)***	5.358 (.322)***
Age	.004 (.021)	-.065 (.018)***	-0.89 (.020)***
Gender	-.040 (.070)	-.060 (.062)	-.155 (.067)*
Ethnicity	.025 (.059)	-.231 (.052)***	-2.15 (.056)***
Exposure to Violence	-.042 (.008)***	-.040 (.007)***	-0.44 (.008)***

Reference groups: Female & Not White. *** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$

CONCLUSION

Findings:

The study found that an increase in exposure to violence led to a decrease in school bonding. The study also found that higher levels of exposure to violence was related to lower levels of school engagement. This finding determined the correlation between children who have experienced or witnessed violence have been more prone to academic underachievement, commitment, and engagement. The effects that exposure to violence have on students were not significantly correlated to participating in school activities such as sports, clubs, and after school programs. Teacher bonding appeared to be negatively affected when higher levels of exposure to violence was experienced. School orientation appeared to be negatively affected when higher levels of exposure to violence was experienced. Exposure to violence is a risk factor that can impede children’s school commitment. School engagement appeared to be negatively affected when higher levels of exposure to violence was experienced. Low academic performance among students is associated with a decrease in academic cohesiveness.

Implications for Future Research:

Investigation on sexual orientation and differences in socioeconomic status would need to be explored to ensure inclusivity and generalizability thereby being able to be attributed to other justice involved juveniles. To ensure reliability, a second study like the Pathway of Desistance would have been made focusing solely on females rather than having a mixed approach. By conducting a study with female participants only would have addressed the gap in research.

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