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Gender Differences among juvenile offenders in the background characteristics and personality functioning

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Not only have female juvenile offenders been understudied, but also few attempts have been made to explore differences between female and male juvenile offenders. To examine gender differences among juvenile offenders, 36 female juvenile offenders were compared with 202 male juvenile offenders, in terms of offender background characteristics and personality functioning. As a result, female and male juvenile offenders differed in various aspects: as to whether they had a history of psychological abuse in the family and whether they had delinquent friends. Significant differences found between female and male juvenile offenders included alcohol/drug abuse and ability to handle difficult situations. In addition, female juvenile offenders were more likely to display mental health problems, such as anxiety, depression, paranoia, schizophrenia, and suicidal ideations, than male juvenile offenders. The present study emphasizes that differential efforts of intervention and treatment for female juvenile offenders are necessary in order to prevent repetitive delinquent behaviors. Finally, limitations of the present study and suggestions for future research were discussed.

Key words : female juvenile offenders; juvenile delinquency; gender differences; PAI; psychological abuse

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According to the Revised Juvenile Act 2007 in South Korea, juvenile offenders are defined as adolescents who commit delinquent acts between 10 and 18 years of age. According to official statistics, juvenile offenders were responsible for 4.0% of all offenses committed in South Korea in 2014 (The Korean Institute of Justice, 2016). Females accounted for 13.8% of juvenile offenders in South Korea in 2014 (Supreme Prosecutors' Office, 2015).

Over the past decades the proportion of female juvenile offenders in the criminal justice system has increased across nations, including the U.S., U.K., Canada, and Australia (Australian Institute of Health & Welfare, 2012; Jensen, Potter, & Howard, 2001; Kong & AuCoin, 2008; U.K. Ministry of Justice, 2009; U.S. Department of Justice, 2010). For instance, in the United States female juvenile offenders were responsible for about one third of index crime committed by juveniles (U.S. Department of Justice, 2010).

Despite these increased rates of crime committed by female juvenile offenders, the vast majority of studies on juvenile offenders have centered exclusively on male delinquency (Daigle, Cullen, & Wright, 2007). Not only have female juvenile offenders been understudied, but also few attempts have been made to explore differences between female and male juvenile offenders (Cauffman, Piquero, Broidy, Espelage, & Mazerolle, 2004; Martin, Martin, Dell, Davis, & Guerrieri, 2008; Steffensmeier & Allan, 1996; Vandiver & Teske, 2006). The representation of females on juvenile delinquency, if included in the sample, has been limited in previous studies, which makes it difficult to address the gender-specific needs of females for intervention (Calhoun, 2001; Heide, Roe-Sepowitz, Solomon, & Chan, 2012).

Previous studies on feminist criminology suggest that pathways to crime and delinquency may vary by gender (Reisig, Holtfreter, & Morash, 2006). There has been scant research to identify characteristics specific to female juvenile offenders and therefore not much information available to incorporate assessment and treatment programming (Emeka & Sorenson, 2009; Kempf-Leonard & Sample, 2000; Shepherd, Luebbers, & Dolan, 2013). Results from previous studies, which mostly utilized samples of male juvenile offenders, may not effectively contribute to developing effective risk assessment tools and intervention strategies for females (Borduin & Ronis, 2012; Funk, 1999; Holtfreter & Cupp, 2007).

Despite the paucity of past research on female juvenile offenders, some noticeable gender differences have been found. Compared to their male counterparts, female juvenile offenders reported higher rates of abuse in the family (Darby, Allan, Kashani, Hartke, & Reid, 1998; Gavazzi, Yarcheck, & Chesney-Lind, 2006; Jensen et al., 2001; Shepherd et al, 2013), substance abuse problem (Coid et al., 2009; McClellan, Farabee, & Crouch, 1997; McReynolds, Schwalbe,

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& Wasserman, 2010; Thompson & McGrath, 2011), risky sexual behavior (Pasko, 2006), and mental disorders (Cauffman, Lexcen, Goldweber, Shulman, & Grisso, 2007; Vincent, Grisso, Terry, & Banks, 2008; Wareham & Dembo, 2007). More specifically, female juvenile offenders report significantly higher levels of anxiety, depression, distress, somatic complaints, and suicidal ideations than their male counterparts (Belknap & Holsinger, 2006; Cauffman et al., 2004; Jensen et al., 2001; Miller, 1994).

Previous research has identified a number of factors contributing to female juvenile delinquency: family dysfunction (Bloom, Owen, Deschenes, & Rosenbaum, 2002; Crespi & Rigazio-DiGilio, 1996), childhood abuse (Hoyt & Scherer, 1998; Leve & Chamberlain, 2004; Mallicoat, 2007; Simpson, Yahner, & Dugan, 2008), mental health problems (Mullis, Cornille, Mullis, & Huber, 2004; Myers, Scott, Burgess, & Burgess, 1995), substance abuse (Andrews et al, 2012; Blum, Ireland, & Blum, 2003; Wareham & Dembo, 2007), and delinquent peers (Borduin & Ronis, 2012; Hubbard & Pratt, 2002).

Previous studies also reported some offense characteristics specific to female juvenile offenders. In terms of offender-victim characteristics, female juvenile offenders tend to attack someone known to them rather than a stranger (Heide et al., 2012; Loper & Cornell, 1996). In regard to circumstances of the offense, females reported higher rates of using accomplices (Heide et al., 2012), although the findings related to this variable have not been consistent (Roe-Sepowitz, 2009).

To date there are few empirical studies comparing female and male juvenile offenders, as well as determining factors related to female juvenile delinquency. The present study aims to provide detailed analyses of the characteristics of female and male juvenile offenders and examine differences among gender groups in terms of family background, individual factors, personality functioning, and offense characteristics. Furthermore, the study aims to determine factors that predict an offender's gender by using regression analysis.

It is of fundamental importance to identify factors that are particularly associated with female juvenile delinquency. First, as previously stated, prior studies on juvenile delinquency have predominantly focused on males (Daigle et al., 2007). Second, previous studies suggest that there may be gender differences in the pathways to delinquency (Reisig et al., 2006). Therefore, differential efforts of intervention and treatment for female juvenile offenders are necessary to in order to prevent repetitive delinquent behaviors and improve public safety. Ultimately, the current study seeks to add to our growing understanding of female juvenile delinquency, focusing on offender background characteristics and personality functioning. This study also seeks to provide insight into the gender-specific needs of females for treatment and intervention.

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Method

Participants

The present data was collected through police records and investigation reports in police departments, in which juvenile offenders were arrested. A total of 238 juvenile offenders, who were arrested by police between January 2011 and December 2014, were examined.

The data contained information on the thirty-six female juvenile offenders with a mean age of 15.14 years (range 12-18 years). The type of offense that female juvenile offenders committed was as follows: 33.3% (n = 12) of offenders were arrested for theft, 33.3% (n = 12) for assault, 8.3% (n = 3) for drug abuse violations, 2.8% (n = 1) for fraud, and 22.2% (n = 8) for others. The average number of the previous convictions for female juvenile offenders was 0.14 (SD = 0.424).

The data also contained information on the 202 male juvenile offenders with a mean age of 15.10 years (range 12-18 years). Considering female juvenile offenders constituted 13.8% of juvenile offenders in South Korea (Supreme Prosecutors' Office, 2015), the proportion of participants across gender in the present study (15.1%) fairly represents the juvenile offender population. No significant difference between female and male juvenile offenders was found in the age of offender at the time of offense (t (234) = 0.144, ns). The type of offense that male juvenile offenders committed was as follows: 48.5% (n = 96) of offenders were arrested for theft, 32.3% (n = 64) for assault, 2.0% (n = 4) for drug abuse violations, 2.0% (n = 4) for extortion, 1.0% (n = 2) for fraud, and 14.1% (n = 28) for others. The type of offense did not differ significantly across gender ((5) = 8.35, ns). The mean number of the previous convictions for male juvenile offenders was 0.21 (SD = 0.647): again, the gender difference was not significant (t (235) = 0.670, ns).

Variables

To examine differences between female and male juvenile offenders, information on offender background characteristics and personality functioning was investigated. First, variables regarding offender background characteristics included sociodemographic variables such as family structure and functioning, school life, and previous criminal history. Second, information on personality functioning, including mental health disorders, was compared through PAI (Personality Assessment Inventory; Morey, 1991) results.

Measures

The instrument of Risk Assessment Tool for Juvenile Offenders (RATJO; Lee & Cho, 2005) is currently administered in police departments

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as part of the intake procedure for juvenile offenders. The RATJO was designed to aid in justice decision making for juvenile offenders by evaluating complex factors that contribute to the risk of recidivism. The 45-item RATJO is utilized to measure risk factors in various domains of juvenile offenders, including family background, school life, peer relations, criminal history, and personal characteristics (see Tables 1 & 2 for individual items).

First, the RATJO evaluates the domains of family structure and family functioning, which consist of nine items related to family organization, family bonding, and abuse. Second, the domain of school life consists of six items pertaining to commitment to and behavioral problems in school, and peer affiliations. Third, the RATJO also measures the domain of runaways through three items, which are associated with experiences of running away from home. Fourth, the domain of criminal history includes ten items focusing on previous crimes as well as the nature of the current offense. Finally, the 17-item domain of individual factors assesses various personal characteristics, such as alcohol/ substance abuse and cognitive/emotional/ behavioral problems. Each of the 45 items of the RATJO is assessed dichotomously, a 0 for no and a 1 for yes. The sum of scores from a total of 45 items is generated to indicate the risk level of recidivism for juvenile offenders. The risk level is considered low when the sum of scores ranges from zero to ten, intermediate from 11 to 20, and high when 21 or above.

The RATJO was standardized on a national sample representing the general adolescent population, and found to be reliable for assessing juvenile offenders. Lee and Cho (2005) reported that the internal consistency coefficient (α) of this instrument was .86. The alpha coefficient in the current study was .862. Lee and Lyu (2009) reported the predictive and discriminate validity of the instrument to be reasonable. The interrater reliability, Cohen's kappa, for the 45 items ranged from .357 to 1.00 (Lee & Lyu, 2009). More specifically, out of the 45 items the value of 27 items fall between .81 and 1.00, showing almost perfect agreement between raters. For 13 items kappa ranged from .61 and .80, showing substantial agreement. Four items displayed moderate agreement by the value between .41 and .60. Only one item had a kappa of .357, which shows a fair agreement between raters.

Six raters completed the RATJO. The interrater reliability is not available as only one of the raters is assigned to evaluate each juvenile offender referred to the police department. However, all participating raters were supervised before completing the RATJO and submitting reports. Therefore, all the information on the report was double checked by the assigned supervisor.

In addition to the RATJO, the PAI (Personality Assessment Inventory; Morey, 1991), which assesses personality functioning and

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psychopathological syndromes, is administered for juvenile offenders in police departments. The PAI comprises a total of 344 items, which constitute 22 subscales including four validity scales, 11 clinical scales, five treatment consideration scales, and two interpersonal scales (for details see Morey, 1991). Participants themselves rate responses on a continuous scale, ranging from zero for false, one for somewhat true, two for mainly true to three for very true. The alpha coefficient in the current study was .840. The PAI is widely used in various contexts such as educational, clinical, psychotherapy, forensic, and correctional settings (Belter & Piotrowski, 2001; White, 1996). The PAI-A (Personality Assessment Inventory- Adolescent; Kim et al., 2006) was used for the juvenile offenders.

Procedures

Data analyses were conducted using SPSS 18.0. First, gender differences were examined by using bivariate analyses. Information on offender background characteristics and PAI results characteristics were compared by gender using chi-square analyses or t-tests at the .05 probability level. In addition, the present study employed logistic regression analysis to explain differences among female and male juvenile offenders.

Results

Differences in the Offender Background Characteristics

Table 1 shows the difference in the family structure/functioning, school life, runaways, and criminal history of female and male juvenile offenders. It was assured that none of the cells contained expected frequencies less than five in the chi-square analyses.

First, no significant gender difference was found in terms of family structure/functioning, except for only one variable. A significant difference emerged when psychological abuse in the family was compared. Female juvenile offenders were more than twice as likely to have a history of psychological abuse as male juvenile offenders. Second, regarding school life and runaways, there was a statistically significant gender difference as to whether they had delinquent friends. About two thirds of female juvenile offenders had peers engaging in delinquent behavior, whereas less than half of male juvenile offenders did. Third, with respect to the criminal history, no gender difference was discovered. The percentages reported in relation to criminal history did not significantly vary by gender.

Differences in the Individual Factors

As shown in Table 2, Female juvenile

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Table 1. Gender Differences in the Offender Background Characteristics

Family structure	female	male	χ^2
Loss of either parent	1(2.8%)	8(4.0%)	N/A
Parents divorced/separated	12(33.3%)	69(34.2%)	0.01
Living alone	0(0.0%)	3(1.5%)	N/A
No guardians	1(2.8%)	4(2.0%)	N/A
Family functioning	female	male	χ^2
Family discord	6(16.7%)	16(7.9%)	2.79
Physical/verbal violence	8(22.2%)	25(12.4%)	2.48
Psychological abuse	10(27.8%)	23(11.4%)	6.87**
Parental weak attachment	10(27.8%)	34(16.8%)	2.43
family member in prison	0(0.0%)	6(3.0%)	N/A
School life	female	male	χ^2
Dropped out of school	8(22.2%)	32(15.8%)	0.89
Frequent or long-term truancy	16(44.4%)	64(31.7%)	2.23
Bullying or being bullied at school	8(22.2%)	35(17.3%)	0.49
Suspended at school	16(44.4%)	83(41.1%)	0.14
No plans to attend a higher education	7(19.4%)	37(18.3%)	0.03
Associations with delinquent friends	24(66.7%)	94(46.5%)	4.95*
Running away from home	female	male	χ^2
Frequent runaway	9(25.0%)	46(22.8%)	0.09
Having friends who hang out together after running away	17(47.2%)	67(33.2%)	2.64
Having lived with friends after running away	10(27.8%)	31(15.3%)	3.31
Criminal history	female	male	χ^2
Previously arrested	17(47.2%)	79(39.1%)	0.84
Previously convicted	2(5.6%)	22(10.9%)	N/A
Previously placed in juvenile facility	0(0.0%)	4(2.0%)	N/A
Prior probation violation	1(2.8%)	11(5.4%)	N/A
History of crime against person	10(27.8%)	46(22.8%)	0.43
Current offense: crime against person	13(36.1%)	73(36.1%)	0.00
Current offense: planned	10(27.8%)	33(16.3%)	2.70
Criminal sophistication	6(16.7%)	60(29.7%)	2.59
Gradual severity of criminal career	12(33.3%)	57(28.2%)	0.39
The first age of arrest: ten or younger	1(2.8%)	2(1.0%)	N/A

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

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Table 2. Gender Differences in the Individual Factors

Individual Factors	female	male	χ^2
Drinks often	15(41.7%)	43(21.3%)	6.89**
Having used inhalants	4(11.1%)	11(5.4%)	N/A
Alcohol/drug abuse	12(33.3%)	25(12.4%)	10.22**
Addicted to internet game	1(2.8%)	10(5.0%)	N/A
Problem with sexual experience	1(2.8%)	5(2.5%)	N/A
Prostitution	2(5.6%)	1(0.5%)	N/A
Failure to accept responsibility for offense	22(61.1%)	109(54.0%)	0.63
Lack of empathy to victim	20(55.6%)	119(58.9%)	0.14
No perception of consequences of actions	17(47.2%)	91(45.0%)	0.06
No respect for law	12(33.3%)	60(29.7%)	0.19
No realistic plans/efforts for future	16(44.4%)	83(41.1%)	0.14
Poor cognitive functioning	4(11.1%)	2(1.0%)	N/A
Unstable emotions	6(16.7%)	16(7.9%)	2.79
Low ability to handle difficult situation	24(66.7%)	88(43.6%)	6.55*
Impulsive behavior	20(55.6%)	115(56.9%)	0.02
Anger explosion	14(38.9%)	78(38.6%)	0.00
Uncooperative at investigation	6(16.7%)	20(9.9%)	1.44

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

offenders noticeably differed from male counterparts in the various individual factors. Relative to their male counterparts, female juvenile offenders drank twice as often. Moreover, about one out of three female juvenile offenders suffered from alcohol/drug abuse, while only one out of eight male juvenile offenders did. Furthermore, significant gender differences were noted in regards to the ability to deal with difficult situations, such as being easily discouraged by adverse circumstances or getting easily frustrated at home or school, and feeling helpless when faced with a problem.

Differences in the Personality Functioning

Differences in the PAI results of female and male juvenile offenders are shown in Table 3.

First of all, four scales of validity (ICN, INF, NIM, PIM) were compared. As a result, female juvenile offenders scored higher on the scale of NIM and lower on the scale of PIM than male

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juvenile offenders. In other words, the tendency is for female juvenile offenders to make a negative presentation of themselves. Male juvenile offenders, in contrast, tend to "fake good" or manage to try and create favorable impressions.

Participants who received 70 or higher for any of the four validity scales were excluded from further analysis related to PAI. As a result,

Table 3. Gender Differences in the PAI results

Constructs		female M (SD)	male M (SD)	t
Validity Scale				
ICN	Inconsistency	49.50 (8.97)	46.53 (9.39)	1.76
INF	Infrequency	53.53 (8.78)	52.29 (9.67)	0.716
NIM	Negative Impression	53.39 (14.26)	46.59 (10.29)	3.426**
PIM	Positive Impression	47.61 (12.00)	55.11 (11.12)	3.686***
Clinical Scale				
SOM	Somatic Complaints	48.90 (7.94)	45.68 (8.02)	1.991*
ANX	Anxiety	51.14 (8.32)	44.89 (8.99)	3.481**
ARD	Anxiety-Related Disorders	47.97 (9.52)	45.90 (8.53)	1.177
DEP	Depression	54.90 (10.75)	47.66 (10.88)	3.297**
MAN	Mania	44.97 (10.93)	44.57 (9.61)	0.198
PAR	Paranoia	50.79 (10.18)	46.43 (8.72)	2.411*
SCZ	Schizophrenia	47.93 (9.85)	42.95 (8.33)	2.873**
BOR	Borderline Features	52.48 (12.84)	45.82 (9.63)	3.239**
ANT	Antisocial Features	50.59 (13.01)	49.20 (10.42)	0.633
ALC	Alcohol Problems	51.21 (12.18)	46.78 (7.48)	2.614*
DRG	Drug Problems	52.21 (9.34)	50.66 (8.33)	0.904
Treatment Scale				
AGG	Aggression	51.79 (12.97)	48.64 (10.42)	1.439
SUI	Suicide Ideation	50.83 (9.35)	45.74 (8.26)	2.985**
STR	Stress	52.07 (11.16)	49.02 (10.68)	1.404
NON	Nonsupport	51.90 (10.73)	46.96 (9.37)	2.55*
RXR	Treatment Rejection	50.72 (9.18)	54.34 (10.99)	1.668
Interpersonal Scale				
DOM	Dominance	49.31 (9.99)	50.37 (9.56)	0.544
WRM	Warmth	49.45 (7.94)	53.20 (9.76)	1.952

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

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a total of 52 cases, including 7 cases of female juvenile offenders and 45 cases of male juvenile offenders, were excluded.

Female juvenile offenders differed significantly from males in a number of clinical scales. Female juvenile offenders scored higher on the scales of SOM, ANX, DEP, PAR, SCZ, BOR, and ALC than their male counterparts. In other words, female juvenile offenders were more likely to be concerned with bodily matters and display high levels of anxiety, depression, paranoia, and schizophrenia. Also, compared to their male counterparts, female juvenile offenders displayed a higher tendency to be emotionally unstable, and also showed to have trouble maintaining relationships. In addition, female juvenile offenders were more likely to suffer from alcohol and drug abuse than male. In terms of treatment scales, female juvenile offenders demonstrated higher levels of suicidal ideation (SUI) and feeling lack of support (NON). Finally, female and male juvenile offenders did not significantly differ from each other on the interpersonal scales.

Logistic Regression Analysis

Finally, logistic regression analysis was conducted to identify factors that differentiated among female and male juvenile offenders (see Table 4). The dependent variable was the gender of the offender (male = 0, female = 1). Variables that yielded significant results from previous bivariate analyses were included as independent variables: 'psychological abuse' (no = 0, yes = 1), 'associations with delinquent friends (no = 0, yes = 1), 'drinks often' (no = 0, yes = 1), 'alcohol/drug abuse' (no = 0, yes = 1), and 'low ability to handle difficult situation' (no = 0, yes = 1). A multicollinearity problem with these variables was not detected in the collinearity diagnostics, as none of the tolerance values were below .10 and none of the VIF (Variance Inflation Factor) were over five (O'Brien, 2007). Therefore, all five variables were included in the regression analysis.

It should be noted that the PAI scales that yielded gender differences (SOM, ANX, DEP, PAR, SCZ, BOR, ALC, SUI, and NON) were not included in the current analysis, as excluding 52 cases in which any of the four validity scales scored 70 or higher would drastically decrease the sample size.

Table 4. Logistic Regression

Measure	ß	S.E.	Wald	Exp(ß)
Psychological abuse*	.952	.473	4.044	2.591
Associations with delinquent friends	.481	.412	1.362	1.618
Drinks often	.033	.567	.003	1.034
Alcohol/drug abuse	1.037	.595	3.033	2.820
Low ability to handle difficult situation	.689	.401	2.947	1.992

* $p < .05$

Note: Chi-square (5) = 19.39, $p < .01$, -2 log likelihood = 182.856

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The result of Hosmer- Lemeshow goodness of fit test indicates that the model fits well (χ^2 (5) = 4.384, p = 496). Among the five variables entered into the analysis, one variable turned out to significantly contribute to predicting the gender of the juvenile offender (see Table 4). When compared to male juvenile offenders, female juvenile offenders displayed an increased probability of having a history of psychological abuse. Specifically, female juvenile offenders were more than two times as likely to have a history of psychological abuse. The overall hit ratio revealed that the current model identified 85.3% of the juvenile offenders correctly.

Discussion

Based on a sample of 36 female and 202 male juvenile offenders in South Korea, the current study distinguished between female and male juvenile offenders in terms of offender characteristics and personality functioning. A number of significant gender differences were found. The current findings indicate that female juvenile offenders, as opposed to males, were more likely to have a history of psychological abuse in the family, have delinquent friends, drink often, are involved in alcohol/drug abuse, and display low abilities to deal with difficult situations. In addition, based on the PAI results, and compared with male juvenile offenders, female juvenile offenders were more likely to display mental health problems such as anxiety, depression, paranoia, and schizophrenia. Finally, a logistic regression analysis revealed that female juvenile offenders displayed an increased probability of suffering from psychological abuse.

The current findings confirmed results from previous research on female delinquency; female juvenile offenders were more likely than males to have a history of abuse (Darby et al., 1998; Gavazzi et al., 2006). Females who have a history of abuse often engage in delinquent acts as an effort to recover low self-esteem and build up emotional bonding with other delinquent peers (Chesney-Lind & Belknap, 2004). As maintaining interpersonal relationships and getting social support from peers plays a critical role for adolescent girls (Moretti & Higgins, 1999), displaying strong attachments to friends may sometimes be associated with female offending (Daigle et al., 2007).

The current finding that female juvenile offenders demonstrated higher levels of mental health problems, including anxiety, depression, and suicide ideation, is consistent with previous findings. Mental health issue is suggested to be a major factor affecting female juvenile delinquency (Dixon, Howie, & Starling, 2004). This indicates the urgent need of particular treatment programs for females, as critical gender differences have not been incorporated in the intervention approaches yet (Calhoun, 2001; Martin et al., 2008). Females are more likely to internalize their problems than males, and as a

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result a greater proportion of females than males suffer from a variety of mental health problems (Cauffman et al., 2004; Chamberlain & Moore, 2003; Nolen-Hoeksema & Girgus, 1994). Based on the current findings, mental health services and intervention programs particularly designed focusing on substance abuse problem and mental health issues may efficaciously address specific needs of female juvenile offenders (Cauffman et al., 2007).

In terms of the alcohol and substance use, the present results are in accordance with most of previous studies on female juvenile delinquency (McReynolds et al, 2010; Thompson & McGrath, 2011; Wareham & Dembo, 2007). Relative to males, female juvenile offenders were more likely to drink often and involve alcohol/drug abuse. Moreover, they were less likely to commit crime when sober at the time of the offense than male juvenile offenders. The current results emphasize that it is imperative to offer proper education on the harmful impact of alcohol and substance use for female juvenile offenders and provide treatment programs to reduce delinquent behaviors (Pasko, 2006).

What should not be overlooked in the present study is that female and male juvenile offenders do share various aspects of family background and individual factors. This is in accordance with a number of previous studies on juvenile delinquency. For example, Roe-Sepowitz (2009) reported that female and male juvenile offenders did not differ significantly with respect to problems at school and previous delinquency. Other prior studies also have noted similarities among juvenile offenders across gender, in terms of family background (Pasko, 2006), history of physical and sexual abuse (Zagar, Busch, Grove, & Hughes, 2009), school problems (Pasko, 2006; Roe-Sepowitz, 2009), and previous delinquency (Roe-Sepowitz, 2009).

The present study provides implications for reducing juvenile delinquency. Efficient interventions must include a wide range of services relating to female juvenile delinquency, for example providing support for abuse in the family, relationships with peers, especially delinquent ones, treating alcohol/drug abuse, improving abilities to deal with difficult situations, and empowering personality functioning. Gender-responsive strategies of treatment and intervention specifically designed for female juvenile offenders should be adopted to prevent future offenses (Emeka & Sorenson, 2009; Mallicoat, 2007).

We add some cautionary notes in interpreting the current results. First, the sample size is small, which may limit the generalizability of current results. With a relatively small number of participants, the current findings need to be replicated with a different sample. Second, another major limitation of the present research is that interrater reliability is not available. Third, there is a considerable gap in the proportion of participants across gender in the present study: therefore, future studies using a

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different sample with an equal number of female and male participants are needed to replicate the current results.

In spite of these limitations, the current study is one of the first empirical studies in South Korea comparing female and male juvenile offenders, and determining factors related to female juvenile delinquency. The current findings add to our growing understanding of gender-specific research on juvenile delinquency. The present study showed that findings from previous studies on female juvenile delinquency, of which were mostly conducted in other countries (e.g. U. S., U. K., and South Africa), can be generalized to female juvenile offenders in South Korea in terms of their history of psychological abuse, mental health problems, and alcohol/drug abuse. For future research we need to conduct an empirical study on the difference between juvenile females who engage in delinquent behavior and those who do not, possibly with identifying differences among juvenile males, with or without involvement, in delinquency as well.

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소년범의 배경 특성 및 심리적 특성에서의 성차

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비행청소년에 대한 연구는 이제까지 대부분 남성을 중심으로 이루어져 왔다. 따라서, 여성 비행청소년에 대한 연구가 미흡할뿐더러, 특히 남성 비행청소년들과는 다른 배경 특성 및 심리적 특성에 있어서의 차이를 분석한 연구는 여전히 많지 않은 실정이다. 따라서, 본 연구에서는 총 236명의 소년범을 대상으로 그 배경 특성 및 심리적 특성에서의 성차를 살펴보았다. 그 결과, 남녀 비행청소년들에 있어 몇 가지 뚜렷한 차이점이 나타났다. 우선, 가족 기능에 있어 여성 비행청소년이 남성 비행청소년들보다 가족 간 심리적 학대로 고통 받는 경우가 훨씬 더 많았으며, 교우관계에 있어 비행을 저질러 경찰서에 드나드는 친구가 여성 비행청소년의 경우 훨씬 더 많은 것으로 나타났다. 또한, 여성 비행청소년이 남성 비행청소년들보다 술을 더 자주 마시고, 알코올 혹은 약물 남용에 해당하는 경우가 유의미하게 더 많았으며, 어려운 일에 대한 대처능력은 현저히 낮은 것으로 나타났다. 더불어, 인성 검사(PAI) 결과 여성 비행청소년이 불안이나 우울, 망상, 경계선 특징, 자살 관념 등 여러 정신 건강과 관련된 문제를 남성 비행청소년들보다 더 심각하게 겪고 있는 것으로 나타났다. 본 연구는 소년범들의 재범 방지를 위해 성별에 따라 특화된 개입 및 치료의 노력이 필요하다는 것을 보여준다. 마지막으로, 본 연구의 한계점과 후속 연구의 가능성에 대해 논의하였다.

주제어 : 여자 비행청소년; 청소년 비행; 성차; PAI; 심리적 학대

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