

Mulvey, E. P., Schubert, C. A., & Odgers, C. A. (2010). A method for measuring organizational functioning in juvenile justice facilities using resident ratings. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 37(11), 1255-1277.

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Organizational Assessment and Accountability ADS 730A

**A Method for Measuring Organizational Functioning in Juvenile Justice Facilities Using Resident Ratings**

Edward Mulvey, Carol Schubert, and, Candice Odgers published the peer reviewed article entitled “A Method for Measuring Organizational Functioning in Juvenile Justice Facilities Using Resident Ratings” in November 2010 in the journal *Criminal Justice and Behavior*. This article is a longitudinal study with a quantitative research design that contains titles and sections including an Abstract, Introduction section titled: Two General Approaches to Improving Institutional Care, a Review of Literature with subsections such as Organizational Development Effects in Juvenile Justice Institutions, The Organizational Dimensions Considered, and Current Study. The Method section followed with subtitles of, Pathways Study Participants, Procedure, Release Interview Data, and Participants and Measures. A result and discussion section round out the remainder of the article.

The article utilizes an empirically based framework in the assessment of facilities housing youthful offenders, and the organizational climate within which the youth resides. The study focused on using juvenile’s self-reported perception of the care rendered to assess the organizational environment of facilities in which the youth are housed. The organizational climate of the juvenile institutions was evaluated and rated by the youthful offenders on the eight-dimensional attributes of Safety, Institutional order, Harshness, Caring adults, Fairness, Antisocial peers, Services and Reentry planning. The experiment concluded that with a clear-cut and easily administered evaluation instrument, juveniles are more than capable of providing intentionally consistent and reliable ratings based on the attributes previously stated.

John Creswell (2014), notes that an introduction is an integral part of a dissertation, scholarly research study or journal article. A strong opening is essential because this is the first chance for the author to grab the attention of the reader. An excellent introductory paragraph has the

following components: stating the research question, background material of studies about the problem, identifying deficiencies in these studies, the significance of the study amongst particular audiences and reporting the purpose statement. (Coughlan, Cronin, & Ryan, 2007; Veres, 2019) Other vital elements of an introduction are noting its importance to the field, identifying and defining key terms and concepts and ensuring it well written (Creswell 2014, Huang 2017).

In terms of background information on the subject, line six of the second introductory paragraph, Mulvey et al. (2010), discuss and provided supporting references to what the juvenile justice system was like in the latter part of the 19th and earlier parts of 20th centuries. The authors go on to describe the juvenile justice system in the later 20th century but fail to provide any supporting citations to support the diversity of institutional care available in the early 2000s. A supporting reference to the juvenile institutional care in this era include Gaylene Armstrong and Doris MacKenzie (2003) article entitled “Private Versus Public Juvenile Correctional Facilities: Do Differences in Environmental Quality Exist.”

The main research problem addressed by Mulvey et al. (2010), including the refashioning juvenile institutional care environment to improve adolescent offender behavior. The purpose of the research study is to build upon previous studies to improve residential placement outcomes by monitoring aspects of the organization environment by gathering information from the youth who were once institutionalized in those facilities. Although the article authors did not explicitly state, this is the research question that will be studied in this document, the statement of problem and purpose of the study were clear as stated in the last paragraph on page 1257 of the article.

### **Review of the Literature**

The characteristics of an outstanding literary review section of any study include clarifying and defining the problem within a broader context, place the area of research, summarizes the investigation of previous studies and provided a comprehensive and accurate representation of the current state of the investigation. It is also essential to identify pertinent literature, themes, and relationships along with contradictions, inconsistencies, and gaps in recent studies. An outstanding literary review section will establish a theoretical framework for exploring holes and inconsistencies and suggest the next steps in solving the problem (American Psychological Association, 2010; Creswell, 2014; Coughlan, Cronin, & Ryan, 2007; Veres, 2019).

Mulvey et al. (2010) cited the pertinent literature that was needed to enhance the readers understanding of the background and relevance of the subject including the history of the Annie E. Casey Foundation to the role of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJJ). Additional strengths of this article review of the literature including using majority primary sources. This writer only identified one secondary citation in this section, which was Grant (1965 cited in Andrews, Bota & Hope 1990). This writer was also unable to locate the primary location of this source of the citation. The review of literature section was well organized and balanced containing numerous relevant citations from within the last ten years, but also referenced fundamental pioneers of the field such as Leo Srole (1956). All references were cited correctly both in text and in the reference section of the article. Throughout the article, all concepts, terms, and theories were clearly defined, with supporting details such as institutional order which is defined by the authors as clear responsibilities, adherence to the shared mission, rules and routines (Mulvey et al., 2010). To ensure maximum clarity of the article, sections such

as the Review of Literature should have been plainly labeled. It is not clear where the introduction ends, and the literature review begins, this writer made assumptions on the labels for the section based on the characteristics that should be included in each segment.

This writer did not note any inconsequential references in this section that should be recommended for deletion. Mulvey et al. (2010), however, underemphasized the importance and findings of the Performance-based Standards project also known as the Survey of Youth in Residential Placement (SYRP). The Survey of Youth in Residential Placement (SYRP) was very similar to the study conducted by Mulvey et al. (2010) as the “SYRP is a unique addition (to), gathering information directly from youth through anonymous interviews (Moone, 2000; Sedlak & McPherson, 2010a; Sedlak & McPherson, 2010b). Mulvey et al. (2010) also used interviews of juveniles to self-reported perceptions about juvenile residential facilities. Mulvey et al. also made the ambiguous statement that “No commonly accepted protocols for characterizing dimensions of juvenile justice institutions, and minimal information exists regarding the reliability or validity of the measures that are currently used” (2010) while disregarding the validity of the SYRP as listed above and other relevant instruments such as the “Census of Juveniles in Residential Placement and the Juvenile Residential Facility Census, which are biennial mail surveys of residential facility administrators conducted in alternating years”(Sedlak & McPherson, 2010a).

Other shortcomings of the review of literature included the discussion on juvenile justice facilities using the different dimension of social climate as an assessment tool toward ongoing assessment and accountability. Mulvey et al. (2010), only noted Moos, (1968 & 1974) social climate scales research, and that the scales were not valid according to Wright and Boudouris, (1982). More current application of Moos scales includes adoptions by Langdon, Cosgrave, and

Tranah (2004), which applied the assessment tool to determine the difference in perception of staff and youthful offenders in open and secure institutional facilities. An experiment by Ross, Diamond, and Liebling (2008) also used prison climate measurement studies to analyze dimensional attributes that overlap with Muley et al. (2010), including Safety, Security environmental quality of life and personal wellbeing.

### **Methodology**

The research design of this study was clear; reference was made throughout the article of the quantitative and longitudinal design of the study. Stephen Gorard (2013), defined a longitudinal design as, “Study involving a sequence of data collection episodes taking place with the same cases, such as a cohort study” (p.xiii). In the procedure subsection Mulvey et al. (2010), describe the two type of interview participants would undergo and the frequency of those interviews.

The method of collecting data and the instruments used were described in great detail throughout the procedure subsection of the overall method category. The instruments used were appropriate to the research design and consistent with the approaches in social science research. The means of data collection were interviews of participants for a larger longevity study that were released from a juvenile residential facility. A release interview as Mulvey et al. (2010), described it was conducted 30 days before or after release for a juvenile residential facility, to obtain a perception of youth’s residential experience and institutional environment including program operations, services provided, feeling towards safety. The released interview consisted of 165 items and took approximately 1 hour.

Further detail regarding the data collection process included using a computer-assisted format, where trained interviewers read the questions aloud to the participants. The interviews

were conducted in the placement facility, participant home and public spaces such as the local library. Every attempt was made to interview out of the hearing range of others; if others were present, participants were given the option to enter answers on a keypad. These type of data collection process were verified by researchers such as Johnston and Walton (1995) and Lessle and O'Reilly (1997) as they implement interview reporting for sensitive issue and populations.

This study population is of the sensitive classification as the target population was identified as a youth between the ages of 14 and 17<sup>th</sup> at the time of their serious criminal offense. There were limitations placed on drug-related offenders to only 15% of the study population. The study also targeted all females youthful offender and youth being tried as an adult and met the age and serious offense requirement. The actual sample size of this study was the 668 release interviews that were conducted, with each participant only contributing to one interview. This sample size could have been larger as when the sample was divided per institution; some institution only had two youth representing that juvenile facility.

In the analytic approach to this research Mulvey et al. (2010), did focus on the reliability and validity of the statistical testing and results. First, in determining the validity and reliability of the survey instrument, the researchers used an already existing scales and interview items for a variety of sources. Table 1 in the study reflected a construct of each item asked and a reference to outside sources to support that type of items being included in the study. To further address validity and reliability of the outcomes Mulvey et al. (2010), "assessed the internal consistency, parameter estimates, overall model fit, and convergent validity of newly created subscales for each dimension" ( p.1267). Results scaled were validated through the statistical application of exploratory followed by confirmatory factor analytic. Huizinga and Elliott, (1986), has used a

similar statistical process to validate positive value scales in reassessing reliability and validity of self-reported delinquency measures.

This writer concern that the study design and statistical methods used by Mulvey et al. (2010), was appropriate for this study. Multilevel modeling was the statistical method applied to estimate the intraclass correlation of the different dimensions. Multilevel modeling also referred to as hierarchical linear model analyze a cluster of data such as the eight dimensions being tested for in Mulvey et al. (2010) study. A multilevel model accounts for the correlations among the observations within each group and allows for separate lines to be estimated. A model like an ANCOVA would not be as effective as a multilevel model because of the population size and the generalizability of the study (K. Blue, personal communication, October 18, 2018). According to Mulvey et al. (2010), “We also tested whether each of the eight dimensions was best represented by a single factor (unidimensional) or multiple components (multidimensional)” ( p.1267).

This article was very clear in identifying study limitations. Some of those limitations included since not all residential stay resulted in a released interview, the 668 samples may not be representative of all the pathways youth which had a total population of 1,354 youth. Another limitation that may affect the study outcome includes that two youths only rated some of the facilities. More institutional raters would increase the generalizability of the study. Other areas of concern include the fact that three studies were written up in this article; at times it became cumbersome to keep all the information straight. Recommendation for improving the study including using some open-ended question to ensure not missing youth true perspective on items the researchers may not have been looking for.

Some of the strength of the study included the fact that participants were a part of the programs for so long, they might have developed a relationship with the interviewers. This



relationship might have completed more honesty in the self-reporting aspect of the research. Although this study did not have a pilot study that this writer is aware of, the fact that the data was able to be used for many research studies brings validity to the research. Another strength of the study is the detail that was provided to the reader. Although this study was complete, the detail in the procedures makes the study possibility duplicatable. The methodology of the study was logically organized and easy to follow with numerous subheading to keep the sections clear and concise. The steps of the research process were followed including the introduction, literature review, Methodology,

Ethical consideration is an essential part of any study. Furthermore, special attention must be paid to vulnerable populations such as those used in Mulvey et al. (2010). For this study ethical permission was reviewed and granted from three different institutions including the Institutional Review Boards (IRB) of the University of Pittsburg, Arizona State University and Temple University. Institutional research cannot be conducted without this type of approval to ensure that ethical guidelines are being followed. To the best of this writer, knowledge study participants were fully informed about the nature of the research and were confidential because in Mulvey et al. (2010), stated before each interview commenced youth were provided informed consent. Participants were also informed of the confidentiality protections provided by the Department of Justice for this type of funded research according to Mulvey et al. (2010).

### **Overall Critique**

The final section of this critique is to discuss the quality of the article. The American Psychological Association Manual (2010), along with Niagara University professors such as Dr. Huang and Dr. Veres gave the following guideline for a well-rounded research document. The first is ensuring the document has no spelling errors. Spelling errors or the miss use of a word

makes the document unreadable and confuses the audience. Correct spelling will assist with the clearness of the writing. Dr. Huang points out that clear and direct writing is an essential component of a robust article, including ensuring the sentence structure follows the rules of proper grammar. The proper grammar consists of complete sentences, written in the correct tense, and are to the point (Huang, 2017). A part of a well-written dissertation is ensuring the document complies with the APA format outlined by the American Psychological Association Manual. Essential components of APA formatting that should be clear in the dissertation included the labeling and configuring of all tables, graphs, and charts. Citation of references should be accurate and consistent to support the research while meeting the terms dictated by the APA manual. This article meets all of the criteria set forth above to be a well-written article. This author found no spelling or grammatical errors; the document was readable and well organized from the title to the reference page. To the best of this writer knowledge, all reference was properly cited in the text and on the reference page.

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