



### 15 Acute Stress Disorder (ASD) Symptomatology and Crime in a Nationally Representative Sample of Youth

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After attending this presentation, attendees will appreciate the correlation between ASD symptomatology and criminal behavior in youth and will use this knowledge to implement early interventions for traumatized youth.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by presenting data that will encourage clinicians and policy-makers to pay close attention to symptoms of ASD in youth, as early intervention may help prevent the development of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and potentially may deter youth from committing crimes.

No previous studies have examined the relationship between ASD and criminal behavior among youth. This study looked at data from the National Comorbidity Survey-Adolescent Supplement (NCS-A). Participants in this survey, which took place between February of 2001 and January of 2003, consisted of 10,148 youths between the ages of 13 and 18 years. Interviews were conducted using computer-assisted personal interviews, computer-assisted telephone interviews, and telephone interviews.<sup>1</sup> This study hypothesized that analysis of a nationally representative sample of youths would reveal a relationship between symptoms of ASD and criminal behavior. Since the NCS-A was conducted prior to the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM-5)*, symptoms of PTSD from the *DSM-IV* were mapped to *DSM-5* criteria for ASD. Due to changes in the *DSM-5* criteria for ASD, the youths in this study were described as having “ASD symptomatology.” Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to estimate prevalence rates of ASD symptomatology and examine the relationship between ASD and criminal involvement.

Youths with ASD symptomatology were significantly more likely to report arrest-related crimes than youths without any lifetime diagnosis. Youths with ASD symptomatology had 25.4 greater odds of a report arrest for a violent crime when compared to youths who did not meet criteria for any lifetime diagnosis. Additionally, youths with ASD symptomatology had 8.3 greater odds to have reported arrest for property crimes and 17.9 greater odds to have reported arrest for “other” crimes compared to youths without any lifetime diagnosis. Youths with ASD symptomatology had 11.6 times greater odds of reporting, but not being arrested for, a property crime, 24.2 times greater odds for a violent crime, and 10.9 greater odds for any other crime when compared to youths who did not meet the diagnostic criteria for any *DSM-IV* lifetime diagnosis.

The data presented here provide a more accurate picture of the relationship between ASD and related crime, allowing for prevention and intervention strategies to be potentially developed. Focusing on at-risk youths to provide support and education is crucial. Due to the inevitable nature of certain trauma, intervention strategies must be catered to those youths who are experiencing ASD symptoms. Without addressing youths who are experiencing symptoms of ASD, their conditions may progressively worsen into more severe trauma-related disorders.<sup>2,3</sup> The quality of life for these untreated youths decreases severely and serves as an increased risk factor for criminal involvement, suicide, and other comorbid psychiatric disorders.

#### Reference(s):

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#### Acute Stress Disorder, Crime, Adolescents