



An integrative developmental & theoretical foundations of the juvenile delinquency risk and protective factors checklist-Version 2 (JDRPFC-2): A revisit

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Abstract

This short paper revisits the Juvenile Delinquency Risk and Protective Factors Checklist-Version 2.0 (JDRPFC-2), an enhanced iteration of the prototype first developed in 2012. It advances a theory-driven framework for identifying and organizing risk and protective factors associated with juvenile delinquency. Although the theoretical architecture of the checklist has not previously been formally articulated in the literature, its structure is firmly grounded in established criminological, developmental, and neuropsychological theories that account for variation in delinquent outcomes across individual, familial, peer, school, and community domains. Informed by ecosystemic and developmental perspectives, the JDRPFC-2 integrates principles from social development, social control, and social learning theories, highlighting the influence of social bonds, behavioral modeling, and reinforcement processes on youth behavior. The framework of JDRPFC-2 further incorporates strain and social disorganization theories to address the role of socio-structural stressors and neighborhood conditions, alongside neurodevelopmental models (e.g., the dual systems perspective) that explain heightened adolescent vulnerability to risk-taking. Finally, resilience and diathesis-stress frameworks guide the conceptualization of protective factors as active, buffering assets rather than merely the absence of risk or adversity. Collectively, these integrated theoretical foundations position the JDRPFC-2 as a comprehensive and developmentally sensitive tool for understanding juvenile delinquency, supporting systematic screening, and informing targeted intervention planning.

Keywords: Criminological theory; Developmental psychopathology; Juvenile delinquency; Resilience framework; Risk and protective factors

Introduction

Risk and Protective Factors in Juvenile Delinquency

The risk and protective factors of juvenile delinquency are often conceptualized within an ecological and developmental framework that recognizes multiple interacting domains influencing delinquent outcomes (Aazami *et al.*, 2023) ^[1]. This perspective is rooted in developmental psychopathology and social development models, which propose that behavior emerges from the dynamic interplay of individual characteristics and environmental conditions across time (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Cicchetti & Rogosch, 2002) ^[5, 13]. For example, the social development model (SDM) integrates elements of social learning and social control theories, suggesting that the strength of prosocial bonds and opportunities for positive involvement in conventional activities mediate the influence of risk factors (e.g., antisocial behavior and ineffective parenting) on delinquency (Catalano *et al.*, 2012; Hawkins *et al.*, 2002) ^[7, 17]. When youth form strong attachments to family and school norms, they are less likely to engage in delinquent acts; conversely, weak social bonds and inadequate supervision elevate the likelihood of delinquent behavior (Farrington *et al.*, 2016; Hovee *et al.*, 2009) ^[16, 21]. This model has been foundational in empirical research identifying salient risk and protective domains during childhood and adolescence and continues to guide prevention science and policy-oriented research (Hawkins *et al.*, 2008; Lösel & Farrington, 2012) ^[18, 23].

Social Control Theory

Social control theory (see Hirschi, 1969; Costello & Laub, 2020; Dubey, 2025) ^[14, 15, 20] posits that delinquency risk

increases when an individual's attachments, commitments, and involvement with prosocial institutions are weak (Hirschi, 1969; Pratt *et al.*, 2010) ^[20, 27]. Positive social bonds with parents, teachers, and prosocial peers act as protective forces by fostering the internalization of social norms and inhibiting deviant behavior, whereas the absence of these bonds serves as a risk factor by reducing social constraints against delinquency (Sampson & Laub, 2005; Hovee *et al.*, 2009) ^[21, 29].

Social learning theory (Costello & Laub, 2020) ^[14] further explains delinquency risk by emphasizing that antisocial behavior is learned through processes of reinforcement, modeling, and imitation within one's social environment (Akers & Jennings, 2019) ^[3]. Association with delinquent peers or family members normalizes antisocial conduct and increases the likelihood of delinquent behavior, whereas exposure to prosocial models and reinforcement of non-delinquent behaviors functions as a protective influence (Pratt *et al.*, 2010; Walters, 2019) ^[27, 36].

General Strain Theory

Besides, strain and control perspectives help explain how certain risk factors operate (Turanovic & Pratt, 2013) ^[35]. The General Strain Theory (GST) suggests that individuals experiencing significant strain (e.g., socio-economic hardship, family conflict, or failure to achieve positively valued goals) are more likely to develop negative emotions (e.g., anger, frustration), which may elevate the likelihood of delinquent coping responses as a means of relieving or adapting to strain (Agnew, 2006; Maimon & Browning, 2010) ^[2, 24]. Strains that are perceived as unjust, high in magnitude, and associated with low social control are especially conducive to delinquent outcomes (Agnew, 2006; Hay, 2006) ^[2].

Social Disorganization Theory

In contrast, social disorganization theory highlights how community structural conditions (e.g., poverty, residential instability, and weak neighborhood cohesion) undermine collective efficacy and the community's capacity to enforce norms and regulate behavior, thereby increasing delinquency risk at the community level (Sampson, Morenoff, & Gannon-Rowley, 2002; Kubrin & Wo, 2015) [30]. Communities marked by concentrated disadvantage and social fragmentation are less able to mobilize informal social control, which in turn elevates opportunities and motivations for juvenile offending (Sampson *et al.*, 2002; Kubrin, 2009) [22, 29, 30].

Dual Systems (Risk-vs.-Protective Factors) Models

From a developmental and neuropsychological standpoint, models such as the dual systems model emphasize biological and cognitive maturation processes (Moffitt, 1990) [26]. Specifically, the asynchronous development of reward-seeking systems (e.g., the socio-emotional system) and self-regulatory control systems during adolescence creates a normative predisposition toward risk-taking, which may interact with social and environmental risk factors (e.g., peer influence and low parental supervision) to increase delinquency risk (Steinberg, 2008a, 2008b; Casey *et al.*, 2008) [6, 32, 33]. As executive functioning and self-control capacities mature over time, these regulatory processes increasingly function as protective mechanisms that reduce engagement in delinquent behavior (Steinberg *et al.*, 2018; Shulman *et al.*, 2016) [31, 34].

The concept of protective factors originates from resilience frameworks and the diathesis-stress approach in developmental psychology, which posit that supportive relationships, strong cognitive and emotional competencies, and opportunities for positive engagement can buffer the effects of stressors and risk exposure (Rutter, 2006; Masten, 2014) [28]. Protective factors are not simply the absence of risk; rather, they represent positive assets (e.g., effective parental supervision, academic success, and prosocial peer networks) that mitigate the likelihood that exposure to risk will translate into delinquent behavior (Farrington *et al.*, 2016; Lösel & Farrington, 2012) [16, 23].

Overall, the theoretical frameworks underpinning risk and protective factor assessment in juvenile delinquency, including the varied models based on theories of social development, social control, social learning, strain, ecological/developmental, and resilience perspectives, explain how multiple, interacting influences across individual, relational, and contextual levels either elevate the likelihood of delinquency (risk factors) or buffer against it (protective factors) (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Hawkins *et al.*, 2008) [5, 18]. These integrated foundations guide the identification of checklist items in assessment tools such as the JDRPFC-2, linking empirically supported predictors of delinquency to underlying mechanisms of

socialization, stress response, learning, attachment, and self-regulation.

The Juvenile Delinquency Risk-and-Protective Factors Checklist-Version 2.0

The Juvenile Delinquency Risk and Protective Factors Checklist (JDRPFC) evolved from an earlier informal risk-protective rating scale developed in 2009 (Chia, 2009) [8], originally known as the Challenging Behavior Index Factor (CBIF; Chia & Wong, 2014) [11, 12]. Over time, the CBIF was refined and subsequently incorporated into a semi-formal assessment tool, leading to the development of the JDRPFC in 2012 (Chia, 2012) [9]. The JDRPFC represents an improved and more structured version of the CBIF and was designed as a screening measure grounded in a theoretical synthesis of empirically supported risk and protective factors. Although the specific theoretical framework underlying Version 2.0 of the JDRPFC (JDRPFC-2; Chia, 2014) [11, 12] is not widely disseminated or publicly available, the identified risk and protective factors are consistent with well-established criminological and developmental theories. These theories explain how individual, family, peer, school, and community characteristics may either increase or mitigate the likelihood of juvenile delinquent behavior.

The JDRPFC-2 is a semi-formal, practitioner-oriented checklist designed for use in screening, case formulation, and program evaluation across educational, clinical, and juvenile justice settings. It functions as a structured rating tool that systematically captures key individual, family, peer, school, and community factors empirically linked to juvenile delinquency. The checklist incorporates both risk factors (e.g., impulsivity, affiliation with antisocial peers) and protective factors (e.g., supportive relationships, engagement in prosocial activities), reflecting a balanced developmental and ecological perspective. Intended for use by psychologists, educators, social workers, counselors, youth and community service workers, and allied professionals (e.g., educational and behavioral therapists), the JDRPFC-2 serves as a screening and formulation aid rather than a diagnostic instrument. Ratings are derived from professional judgment informed by multiple sources, including interviews, record reviews, behavioral observations, and collateral reports.

Rating Scale (5-point Likert): The description of the rating scheme is provided in Table 1 as follows:

Table 1: Rating Scheme for JDRPFC-2

Score	Agreeability	Occurrence
1	Strongly Disagree	Not Present
2	Disagree	Minimally Present
3	Neutral	Inconsistently Present
4	Agree	Clearly Present
5	Strongly Agree	Consistently Present

The Table 2 below shows the 20 items in the JDRPFC-2

Table 2: The JDRPFC-2 Items

No.	Item Statement	1	2	3	4	5
1	Displays difficulty with impulse control	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2	Seeks excitement or risk without considering consequences	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3	Has a history of rule-breaking or oppositional behavior	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4	Shows limited empathy or concern for others	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5	Struggles with emotional regulation under stress	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

6	Is affiliated with peers who engage in antisocial behavior	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7	Experiences inconsistent or ineffective parental supervision	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8	Has frequent conflict with caregivers or authority figures	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9	Demonstrates poor attachment or trust in adults	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10	Shows disengagement or persistent difficulties in school	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11	Lacks involvement in structured or prosocial activities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
12	Has limited problem-solving or decision-making skills	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
13	Has access to at least one stable and supportive adult	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
14	Demonstrates the ability to reflect on consequences of actions	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
15	Shows motivation to comply with rules and expectations	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
16	Engages in prosocial peer relationships	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
17	Participates regularly in positive school or community activities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
18	Demonstrates resilience when faced with challenges	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
19	Expresses future goals or aspirations	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
20	Is receptive to guidance, intervention, or support	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Note

- Items 1 to 12 primarily reflect risk factors.
- Items 13 to 20 primarily reflect protective factors.
- Protective items may be reverse-scored if a total risk index is required.

Total Score Range: (a) Minimum score: 20; and (b) Maximum score: 100

Interpretation (Non-diagnostic): Table 3 below shows the total score, score range and the score interpretation based on the results obtained from the JDRPFC-2 administration.

Scoring and Interpretation

Table 3: Score Range and Interpretation

Total Score	Score Range	Interpretation
20-39	Low Risk/High Protective Profile	Strong protective factors and minimal risk indicators; focus on maintenance and strengths-based support
40-59	Mild to Moderate Risk	Emerging risk factors present; preventive and skill-building interventions recommended
60-79	Moderate to High Risk	Multiple risk factors with insufficient protective buffering; targeted, multi-systemic intervention indicated
80-100	High Risk Profile	Significant cumulative risk and limited protective factors; intensive, coordinated intervention strongly recommended

Recommended application of JDRPFC-2

- Screening and case formulation;
- Monitoring change over time;
- Informing individualized intervention planning; and
- Supplementing Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR) -based or ecological models

Conclusion

The Juvenile Delinquency Risk and Protective Factors Checklist-Version 2.0 (JDRPFC-2) is theoretically anchored in a robust integration of criminological, developmental, and neuropsychological perspectives, reflecting the multifactorial nature of juvenile delinquency (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Farrington *et al.*, 2016) [15, 16]. By synthesizing social development, social control, social learning, strain, social disorganization, neurodevelopmental, and resilience-based frameworks, the JDRPFC-2 moves beyond single-theory explanations and captures the dynamic interplay of individual characteristics and contextual influences across developmental stages (Hawkins *et al.*, 2008; Sampson *et al.*, 2002; Steinberg, 2008) [17, 18, 30, 32, 33]. This integrative foundation supports a balanced assessment of both risk exposure and protective assets, reinforcing the view that delinquency is neither inevitable nor static but shaped by modifiable processes over time (Lösel & Farrington, 2012; Masten, 2014) [23]. As an evolution of its original prototype, the JDRPFC-2 offers enhanced conceptual clarity and practical relevance for practitioners, researchers, and policymakers seeking

developmentally informed approaches to screening, case formulation, and intervention planning (Catalano *et al.*, 2012; Farrington *et al.*, 2016) [7, 16]. Its emphasis on protective factors as active buffering mechanisms aligns with contemporary strengths-based and prevention-oriented models of youth justice and psychosocial care (Masten, 2014; Rutter, 2006) [28]. Future empirical validation and longitudinal research are warranted to further establish the checklist's psychometric properties and predictive utility, consistent with best practices in risk assessment development (Andrews & Bonta, 2010; Hawkins *et al.*, 2008) [4, 18]. Nonetheless, the JDRPFC-2 provides a theoretically coherent framework capable of supporting early identification, targeted intervention, and the promotion of adaptive developmental trajectories among at-risk youth.

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