

Guilt, Coping Strategies, Locus of Control and Emotional Intelligence among Adolescents in Conflict with the Law

Vengatesan Vikramadithyan¹, Balu Sudhakaran, & Smitha Ruckmani

The Tamil Nadu Dr. M.G.R. Medical University, India

Abstract

Adolescents in conflict with the law have to face emotional issues like guilt, which might influence their coping behaviour, perceptions of control, and emotional intelligence. The present study attempts to explore the relationship between guilt, coping strategies, locus of control, and emotional intelligence in adolescents in conflict with the law. In this cross-sectional study, 100 male adolescents aged between 16 and 18 years were selected from the juvenile justice system. Standardized tools were the Guilt and Shame Proneness Scale, Brief COPE Scale, Rotter's Locus of Control Scale, and Personal Profile Survey. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation. Significant relations were found between guilt and coping strategies and also between the locus of control and problem-focused coping. Guilt repair showed a positive association with emotional intelligence, thus acting as an adaptive function. This study highlights psychological aspects that impact emotional self-control and behaviour modification among adolescents within the legal system. The results of this study could help create viable strategies for counselling and rehabilitation that strengthen coping and emotional skills.

Keywords: *Guilt, coping strategies, locus of control, emotional intelligence, adolescents, law*

¹Publication based upon research conducted in partial fulfilment for an MPhil in Clinical Psychology at the Institute of Mental Health (IMH) Kilpauk, Chennai – 600010, Tamil Nadu, India (2025). Correspondence to Mr. Vikramadithyan V (email: vvadithyan@gmail.com).

Introduction

Adolescents are a unique group of individuals, presenting with multiple developmental changes across biological, emotional, and social dimensions. Adolescents are also more susceptible to environmental influences and normally display increased emotional instabilities. In common parlance, adolescents who enter into the justice system are to be defined as “adolescents in conflict with the law” according to Section 2(13) of The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015. This defines individuals under the age of 18 reported or found to have engaged in an offence of the criminal code. Furthermore, adolescents in conflict with the law may struggle with many psychological consequences such as low self-regulation, impulsivity, and exposure to adverse social conditions of their childhood which can result in criminal behaviour. (Koiv, 2016). In addition, adolescents who exhibit juvenile behaviour require better understanding emotions and thinking processes to aid in rehabilitation and general ease of situational (and critical) thinking towards desistance of criminal behaviours. Guilt is considered a particularly significant emotion that can affect adolescent behaviour. Guilt is a potentially complex moral emotion that occurs when one feels they have violated personal or social standards (Lewis, 1971).

Guilt functions as a self-regulatory influence because it leads to experiences of (or feelings of) empathy, responsibility, and some level of repair. Freud (1923) posited that guilt arises from the conflict between moral conscience and instinctual impulses, making it a fundamental part of moral development. While, adaptive guilt can promote personal development and social accountability; maladaptive guilt may lead to anxiety, rumination, or painful feelings (Kazdin, 2000). Thus, the capacity to manage guilt can ultimately affect whether guilt produces constructive behaviour change or psychological dysfunction. An individual’s ability to cope with guilt and stress is shaped by their coping skills. Coping is defined as the cognitive and behaviour efforts by which a person attempts to manage internal and external demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding his or her resources (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Coping can generally be separated into problem-focused coping, which is a learning skill specifically geared toward trying to address some part of the source of stress, and emotion-focused coping, which attempts to work on managing emotional reactions. Adaptive coping skills encourage psychological adjustment, while maladaptive coping skills (such as avoidance or aggression) can amplify feelings of emotional distress (Compas et al., 2017; Li et al., 2024). Young people in contact with the law often have limited adaptive coping

skills because of either poor emotional regulation, trauma, or disrupted family dynamics, which continue to reinforce delinquent behaviour patterns (Woodfield et al., 2019). Another significant psychological component that applies to this group is locus of control. Locus of control is the extent to which individuals believe they can control what happens to them in their lives. Rotter (1954) first defined the concept, differentiating between an internal locus of control (meaning that people view the consequences of their behaviour as a function of themselves) and an external locus of control, wherein individuals see the consequences of their actions as a result of outside forces like fate and luck or in relation to other people such as authority figures. People with higher internal locus of control are more likely to take responsibility and have proactive coping, while those with higher external locus of control may view themselves as helpless and may be less engaged (Lefcourt, 2014).

In youth populations, external locus of control has been associated with externalizing responsibility for their behaviour onto the situation or other individuals making it more difficult to change behaviour or reflect on their behaviours (Baron & Byrne, 2004). Emotional intelligence (EI)—defined as the ability to perceive, understand, and manage emotion, both in oneself and others—is an important factor in both guilt and coping. Salovey and Mayer (1990) and Willmott and colleagues (2018) discussed emotional intelligence being a multidimensional construct comprising self-awareness; self-regulation; motivation; empathy; and social skills. Individuals demonstrating a high level of emotional intelligence will often accurately perceive emotional cues and respond empathetically using Adaptive Coping approaches (Goleman, 1995; Ioannides & Willmott, 2023). However, individuals who demonstrate low emotional intelligence will often exhibit impulsive decision-making, aggression, and ineffective coping for managing either stress or guilt. These are characteristics common to at-risk adolescents, delinquency, and youth violence (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2008). Furthermore, the development of EI skills will be important for rehabilitating youth and facilitating potential growth in empathy, social relationships, and regimes of mitigated responses for guilt. The relationship between guilt, coping strategies, locus of control, and emotional intelligence represents an important basis for understanding the cognitive and emotional elements of juvenile delinquency. Young people who express feelings of guilt and an internal locus of control are more likely to use adaptive coping strategies and have higher emotional intelligence, contributing to greater prosocial behaviours. Whereas, youth who endorse higher levels of external control beliefs combined with maladaptive coping strategies may suffer from chronic guilt, anxiety, and low emotional regulation (Tangney et al., 2007). Looking at these variables

in concert allows researchers to examine how moral emotions, personality variables, and cognitive appraisals work together to influence behaviours within youth offenders (Boduszek et al., 2019; Willmott et al., 2018). Understanding the psychological aspects of adolescents who are in conflict with the law and its relationship with delinquent behaviour has received limited empirical attention in India. Most research has focused on the sociological and legal perspectives of the adolescent (Filkin et al., 2022; Kirkman et al., 2024) without exploring the emotional and cognitive dimensions. Emotional experiences of juvenile offenders in India are also complicated by cultural, family structures, and societal stigmatization. As such, there is a call for psychological research to investigate these variables in the Indian context. The purpose of the present study is to look at guilt, coping skills, locus of control and emotional intelligence, and to see how these interact among adolescents in conflict with the law. Using guilt, coping skills, locus of control and emotional intelligence brings together the emotional and behaviour dimensions that factor into delinquent behaviour. It is the goal of the researchers to shed light on these interactions that can contribute to future psychological interventions that can promote emotional skills and accountability among adolescents and incorporated into rehabilitation programs and working towards positive adolescent development in juvenile offenders.

Objectives and hypotheses of the study

The goal of the study is to analyse the psychological correlates of adolescents who are in conflict with law by examining guilt, coping strategies, locus of control, and emotional intelligence. These four concepts are central in understanding how emotional and cognitive processes influence behaviour, decision-making, and adjustment among youth in conflict with law. As articulated before the intention is to examine how these correlations exist, and in an effort to suggest recommendations for effective rehabilitation and/or counselling practices. More specifically, the study has the following objectives; to measure the level of guilt expressed by adolescents, in conflict with law; to identify the coping strategies adolescents use to deal with emotional distress; to establish the extent to which adolescents attempt to perceive control over the events in their lives; and finally, for the purpose of collecting a comprehensive picture of adolescents' emotional condition, to measure adolescents' level of emotional intelligence. In addition, the study will examine the relationships among variables as a means of deepening the understanding of their psychological influences on behaviour and emotional outcomes. To support these objectives, the study aims to test the following null hypothesis: there is no significant relationship between guilt and coping strategies, guilt and locus of

control, or guilt and emotional intelligence in adolescents at risk of conflict with law. Additionally, there is no significant relationship between locus of control and coping strategies, locus of control and emotional intelligence, or coping strategies and emotional intelligence in adolescents at risk of conflict with law.

Materials and Methods

Participants

As recorded in the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB, 2020), Tamil Nadu is the fourth Indian state in terms of the rate of juvenile involvement in crime, contributing to around 16.4% of the total crimes in the state. Given this, the present study included a total of 100 adolescents who were in conflict with law. We ensured representation based on different types of offences and institutional settings by using stratified random sampling. The inclusion criteria consisted of adolescents who went through or had gone through conflict with law and had committed offences between the ages of 16 and 18 years, as defined in the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015. The exclusion criteria was adolescents who had experienced any formally diagnosed mental illness, as to minimize confounding variables that may interfere with emotional and cognitive functioning.

Measures

For the research, four standardized psychological assessments were applied with adolescents in conflict with the law to evaluate the variables of guilt, coping strategies, locus of control, and emotional intelligence. The measures selected for the study were reliable and valid and have been established in behaviour and psychological research.

The Guilt and Shame Proneness Scale (GASP) was developed by Cohen (2011) to assess individual differences in proneness to guilt and shame in response to a variety of personal transgressions. The GASP consists of 16 items that comprise four four-item subscales: Guilt–Negative Behavior Evaluation (Guilt-NBE), Guilt-Repair, Shame–Negative Self-Evaluation (Shame-NSE) and Shame-Withdraw. The two guilt-based subscales evaluate both negative evaluations of behaviour and reparation following private transgressions, while the two associated shame-based subscales assess negative self-evaluations and tendency to withdraw following public exposure. For scenario-based measures like the GASP, internal consistency values tend to range between $\alpha = .60$ and $.80$. Furthermore, the two guilt-based subscales were

found to be highly correlated and negatively associated with unethical decision making, whereas the shame-based subscales exhibited lower correlations and poorer psychological functioning.

The Brief COPE (Carver, 1997) is a well-recognized self-report inventory used to evaluate coping strategies used to adapt to stress. The inventory comprises 28 items divided into 14 two-item subscales: self-distraction, active coping, denial, substance use, use of emotional support, use of instrumental support, behaviour disengagement, venting, positive reframing, planning, humour, acceptance, religion, and self-blame. Participants report their level of coping on a 4-point Likert scale from 1 (I haven't been doing this at all) to 4 (I've been doing this a lot). The whole Brief COPE had a Cronbach's alpha of .70 indicating good internal consistency. The alphas for the subscales ranged from .44 to .89. The Brief COPE shows adequate reliability and validity in diverse populations.

The Locus of Control Scale, created by Rotter (1966), is made up of 29 forced-choice items that each have two response options. Participants are to select the one that best reflects their belief in control over how things will turn out in life. Lange and Tiggemann (2010) reported that the scale is multidimensional and consists of two distinct but largely independent factors: personal control (a belief that one can master one's life) and political control (a belief that one can influence social or political systems). The test-retest reliability of the scale was reported as .61 which reflects stability. The measure is still one of the most widely used measures of generalized expectancies of internal versus external control orientation.

The Personal Profile Survey (PPS) designed by Purohit in 2000 was utilized to measure emotional intelligence. It is made up of 48 items, and has six areas or dimensions: self-awareness, self-management, internality, motivation, empathy, and social skills, with each area having eight items. The PPS is grounded in the conceptual model proposed by Salovey and Mayer (1990), as well as the empirical work of Seligman and colleagues. There were 28 items stated positively and 20 items stated negatively, and each item was rated on a four-point scale. The original version demonstrated an alpha coefficient of .42, while the present Tamil version demonstrated a test-retest coefficient of .88, indicating strong reliability.

Study Procedure

This research proposal was presented before and cleared by the Institutional Ethics Committee of the Department of Clinical Psychology. After ethical clearance, formal permission was

obtained from the Government Institute of Mental Health, Kellys, Chennai, and Observation Homes, Kellys and Cuddalore, for conducting the study. The respective institutional authorities were contacted with regard to coordination for the identification of eligible participants matching the inclusion criteria as per the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015. The study procedure was clearly explained to each participant, after seeking necessary permissions. Informed consent was obtained from those willing to participate, with guarantees of confidentiality and voluntary participation. They were assured that their responses would be used strictly for research purposes and they reserved the right to withdraw at any stage, without consequence. Data collection was done individually in a quiet and confidential environment within the premises of the Government Institute of Mental Health and the Observation Homes. In this respect, standardized assessment tools were administered on all participants, namely, Guilt and Shame Proneness by Cohen (2011), Coping Strategies by Carver (1997), Locus of Control by Rotter (1966), and Emotional Intelligence by Purohit (2000). The assessments were done in the presence of trained clinical psychology professionals to ensure that the important ethics and procedures were complied. The data were coded and entered into SPSS (Version 25) for analysis once they had been collected. In this regard, the descriptive and correlational statistics applied in this study allowed establishing the relationship existing among the variables of study and determined the level of significance.

Analysis of Data

Descriptive analyses (means, standard deviations, skewness and kurtosis) of the variables guilt, coping strategies, locus of control and emotional intelligence was carried out using a statistical package IBM SPSS Statistics Version 25. In addition, these analyses were done so as to understand the overall distribution of data and central tendencies. Pearson's correlation analysis was employed to test the relationships between the variables so as to ascertain the direction and strength of associations among them. The level of significance was set at $p < .05$. The correlation analysis between the study constructs revealed significant associations, which implied that the aspects of adolescent psychology were interrelated.

Results

Descriptive statistics were computed for categorical variables. As shown in (Table 1), 100% of participants were not taking any psychiatric medication at the time of assessment. The largest proportion was related to thefts (25%), while murders and POCSO cases accounted for 20%

and 15%, respectively. Attempt to murder and narcotics-related crimes were jointly ranked second (9%). Minor offences like nuisance (3%), robbery (3%) and threatening (2%) were even less prevalent. When it comes to offense recurrence, 52% of the adolescents were habitual offenders while 48% engaged in crime for the first time.

Table 1: Characteristics of the demographic variables (N=100)

Variables	Category	Frequency (N)	Percentage %
Psychiatric Medication	No	100	100.0
Type of Crime	Attempt to murder	9	9.0
	Burglary	8	8.0
	Murder	20	20.0
	Narcotics	9	9.0
	Nuisance	3	3.0
	POCSO	15	15.0
	Robbery	3	3.0
	Snatching	6	6.0
	Theft	25	25.0
	Threatening	2	2.0
Offence Type	First-time	48	48.0
	Habitual	52	52.0

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were calculated for all continuous variables, including emotional intelligence, coping strategies, guilt, and locus of control among the juveniles in conflict with

the law. The findings are shown in Table 2. The average age of the participants was 16.66 years (SD = 0.77).

Table 2

Characteristics of the subscales of Emotional intelligence, Coping strategies, locus of control, and Guilt.

Variable	Mean	SD	Median	Min	Max
Age	16.66	0.77	17	13	17
Self-awareness	17.33	3.30	17	11	27
Self-management	17.84	3.39	18	11	25
Internality	17.10	3.26	17	11	26
Motivation	16.98	2.38	16.5	12	23
Empathy	18.25	2.86	18	13	26
Social skills	17.38	2.19	17	13	23
Total PSS Emotional Intelligence	104.88	8.46	105	87	123
Problem-focused coping	26.06	3.75	26	13	32
Emotion-focused coping	26.17	4.75	27	16	36
Avoidant Coping	16.23	3.12	17	9	23
Guilt – Negative Behaviour Evaluation	20.46	4.11	21	12	28
Guilt – Repair	19.22	6.55	21	4	28
Shame – Negative Self-Evaluation	19.17	4.14	20	11	27
Shame – Withdraw	14.88	4.26	14	6	23

Locus of Control (LOC)	10.35	2.29	11	4	14
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Emotional Intelligence Subscales

According to the findings, the participants were found to have emotional intelligence that ranged from moderate to high in all subdomains. Empathy was the highest-rated dimension with a mean score of $M = 18.25$ and $SD = 2.86$, while self-management ($M = 17.84$, $SD = 3.39$) and self-awareness ($M = 17.33$, $SD = 3.30$) followed closely in terms of mean score. Internal subdomain ($M = 17.10$, $SD = 3.26$), motivation ($M = 16.98$, $SD = 2.38$), and social skills ($M = 17.38$, $SD = 2.19$) also showed a similar pattern with moderately high and consistent scores. The total emotional intelligence score ($M = 104.88$, $SD = 8.46$) indicated that the majority of the participants were emotionally adaptive and socially perceptive to a certain degree. Thus, these results portray the case of the law-delinquents' teenagers who are, in fact, very good at knowing, doing and controlling their feelings even though their behaviour is challenging. (Segrin & Taylor, 2007)

Coping Strategies

Results from the Brief COPE scale revealed that adolescents used problem-focused and emotion-focused coping methods with almost equal frequency as their scores showed 26.06 ($SD=3.75$) for problem-focused and 26.17 ($SD=4.75$) for emotion-focused coping. (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) Research results indicate that individuals tend to apply equivalent levels of constructive problem-solving methods and emotional regulation techniques when facing stressful situations. The mean score for avoidant coping ($M = 16.23$, $SD = 3.12$) was significantly lower. (Compas et al., 2017) Research results show that participants avoided using denial or disengagement or any other destructive coping methods. The study findings indicate that adolescents chose to deal with their emotional distress through cognitive and behaviour coping strategies.

Guilt and Shame Dimensions

The analysis of the Guilt and Shame Proneness Scale revealed that study participants demonstrated average levels of guilt and shame proneness. The participants reached their highest scores on the Guilt–Negative Behaviour Evaluation ($M = 20.46$, $SD = 4.11$) and Guilt–Repair ($M = 19.22$, $SD = 6.55$) subscales which shows they understood their wrongdoings and

wanted to make amends. The Shame–Withdraw ($M = 14.88$, $SD = 4.26$) subscale showed the lowest scores which indicates that people tend to stay in their current situations after making mistakes. The Shame–Negative Self-Evaluation ($M = 19.17$, $SD = 4.14$) results showed a moderate level of self-critical awareness. (Cohen et al., 2011). The research findings indicate that young people who break the law possess awareness of their wrongdoing and may develop self-directed emotions which could help them change their behaviour.

Locus of Control

The mean score for Locus of Control (LOC) was 10.35 ($SD = 2.29$), indicating a slight inclination toward internal locus of control. Participants believed they had some control over their actions and life outcomes because they did not think all events would happen according to fate or external factors. (Maruna & Mann, 2019) Research shows that adolescents who break the law develop personal responsibility and self-agency which helps them change their behaviour and succeed in rehabilitation. The descriptive results show that adolescents who break the law display a psychological profile which includes average emotional intelligence and adaptive coping skills and functional guilt awareness. The participants demonstrated emotional and cognitive abilities for self-reflection and positive behaviour change through their balanced coping methods and their tendency toward reparative guilt and partial internal control orientation.

Table 3: Pearson's Correlation:

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Guilt – Negative Behaviour Evaluation	—	.23*	0	0.03	0.07	-.07
2. Guilt – Repair		—	0.09	.29**	-.15	.23*
3. Coping – Problem Focused			—	.45**	.32**	.35**
4. Coping – Emotion Focused				—	.31**	-.08
5. Coping – Avoidant					—	-.10
6. Locus of Control						—

****.** *Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

*****. *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).*

Correlation between Guilt and Coping Strategies

Guilt–Negative Behaviour Evaluation and Problem-Focused Coping were positively correlated ($r = .23, p < .05$) and Guilt-Repair and Avoidant Coping were positively correlated ($r = .29, p < .01$). This suggests that teens who admit to their bad behaviour are likely to be both problem and emotion focused in their ways of coping with stress. The results refute the null hypothesis that there is no relationship between guilt and coping strategies. This is consistent with Yi (2010) that revealed a positive association between guilt and avoidant coping, and Street et al. (2010) who reported that trauma-related guilt predicts greater use of avoidant coping strategies. Correspondingly, Yi and Baumgartner (2011) reported guilt as a significant predictor of problem-focused coping among adolescents.

Correlation between Guilt and Locus of Control

A small but significant positive association was found between Guilt-Repair and Locus of Control ($r = .23, p < .05$), such that adolescents who pursued reparative strategies exhibited a somewhat more internal locus of control. This implies that responsibility-reparation interaction may be motivated by a desire to restore one's moral self or to take responsibility for one's wrongdoings (cf., Blasi, 1993; Lewis, 1971; Tangney et al., 2007), which lends support to the notion that internal locus of control leads to entity/corrective behaviour, Rotter (1966) and Lange & Tiggemann (2010). Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Correlation between Guilt and Emotional Intelligence

The overall emotional intelligence score (Total PPS) was positively associated with Guilt–Repair ($r = .23, p < .05$), indicating that teens with higher emotional intelligence are more prone to admit guilt and to engage in reparative actions. This is consistent with earlier studies relating guilt repair to an adaptive understanding of emotions and empathy (Tangney & Dearing, 2002; Cohen et al., 2011). The null hypothesis was rejected.

Correlation between Locus of Control and Coping Strategies

Constructive relationship were observed between Locus of Control and Problem-Focused Coping ($r = .32, p < .01$) which suggests that the adolescent having internal control orientation seems to be more active in engaging problem-focused way of coping with life stressors. This finding is in line with Lefcourt (2014) who stressed that internal locus of control facilitates proactive management of stress. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Correlation between Locus of Control and Emotional Intelligence

The relationship of Locus of Control with Total Emotional Intelligence was small and non-significant ($r = -.10, p > .05$), denoting absence of any substantial association. Therefore, the null hypothesis was supported, with the implication that in this sample control beliefs and emotional competence may be two separate developmental paths.

Correlation between Coping Strategies and Emotional Intelligence

The relationship of Locus of Control with Total Emotional Intelligence was small and non-significant ($r = -.10, p > .05$), denoting absence of any substantial association. Therefore, the null hypothesis was supported, with the implication that in this sample control beliefs and emotional competence may be two separate developmental paths. Problem-Focused Coping was associated with a moderate positive correlation with Total emotional intelligence ($r = .35, p < .01$) and Emotion-Focused Coping was correlated weakly positively with emotional intelligence ($r = .20, p < .05$). This suggests that adolescents who have superior emotional understanding are more likely to employ adaptive coping strategies — in line with Carver (1997) and Schutte et al. (1998) who emphasized emotional regulation as a fundamental determinant of coping effectiveness. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Discussion

The current study was the first to examine guilt, coping strategies, locus of control, and emotional intelligence in adolescents at risk and in conflict with the law. These results provide valuable information about how our vulnerable population thinks, feels, and experiences and also reveal how guilt-based constructs, control beliefs, and emotional competence converge to either promote or undermine positive coping strategies. Emotional responses and coping strategies: The results showed that guilt correlated significantly with coping strategies, especially that guilt related to negative behaviour evaluation was positively correlated with

problem-focused coping and guilt repair was positively correlated with avoidant coping. It suggests that young people who acknowledge they have done something wrong are fairly likely to draw on a combination of problem-focused and emotion-focused strategies in situations of stress or moral dilemma. These results corroborate previous findings illustrating that guilt can be either an adaptive or maladaptive coping tool. Yi (2010) and Street et al. (2010) found that trauma-related guilt was positively correlated with avoidant coping and psychological distress while Yi and Baumgartner (2011) found that guilt was a significant predictor of positive, problem-focused coping mechanisms. Together, the current results indicate that guilt may promote behavioural regulation and moral awareness, at least to a certain degree of its context and magnitude (Tangney et al., 2007; Luyten et al., 2002). Locus of control was also positively correlated with guilt-repair, suggesting that adolescent who guilt itself in a reparative manner tend to have a more internal control orientation. This implies that responsibility for one's actions and making appropriate reparations may be associated with enhanced agency and self-regulation. This finding is consistent with Rotter's (1966) theory of internal locus of control as including the individual believing that he or she is responsible for what has happened and with the results reported by Lange and Tiggemann (2010) linking internal control with adaptive functioning. Consistent with this, Blasi (1993) and Lewis (1971) noted that guilt frequently activates reparative efforts to rectify one's moral standing. For that reason, reparative guilt in adolescents may facilitate greater internalization of responsibility and more positive changes in behaviour.

The association of guilt with emotional intelligence was positive and statistically significant, and specifically between guilt-repair and total emotional intelligence scores. It shows that the adolescents with emotional intelligence are more able to identify a moral transgression and worry repair, indicating a great emotional sensibility and empathic level. These results are consistent with those of Tangney and Dearing (2002) and Cohen et al. (11), who found that people that are more emotionally intelligent regulate guilt in a positive way and they participate in reparative actions. Emotional intelligence therefore seems to be a key element in moral decision making and emotional regulation in juvenile offenders (Schutte et al., 1998; Salovey & Mayer, 1990). The study further showed that locus of control was positively associated to coping strategies (Thew et al., 2018). Adolescents with internal control orientations were also more likely to adopt problem-focused coping. This corroborates Lefcourt's (2014) statement that those who have control over the environment take proactive coping styles and Rotter's (1966) results that internal control is an indicator of positive

adjustment and self-regulation. Teenagers who think they have a lot of control over what ends up happening may confront difficulties more actively and apply means that approve of rehabilitation and reintegration. Nonetheless, the association between locus of control and emotional intelligence was small and nonsignificant, indicating that these facets may constitute unique but complementary aspects of psychological well-being. This result is contradicting the Ghorbani et al. Hashemian (2002)'s results that they found a stronger correlation between internal control and emotional intelligence, but it might also indicate environmental enough outside force and pressure on youth offender that act as a unique psychosocial factor that influence on their development of emotional regulation and belief of control. On the other hand, emotional intelligence was positively related to the use of coping strategies, which suggests that broadly emotionally intelligent adolescents had a greater chance of using problem-focused as well as emotion-focused coping strategies during their stressful experiences. This is in agreement with the findings of Carver (1997) and Schutte et al. (1998) who found that persons possessing higher levels of emotional awareness and regulation were more successful at stress management and life adjustment. Because emotional intelligence probably facilitates adaptive coping (e.g., through understanding, expression, and regulation of emotions) (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Petrides & Furnham, 2003), increasing emotional intelligence may increase the effectiveness of coping. Taken together, the results from this study suggest that the parents and teachers of adolescents at risk of losing the entire relationship with themselves guilt, emotional intelligence, and beliefs about internal control are linked factors which contribute to positive outcomes in the adolescent population. Adolescents characterized by reparative guilt, self-reflective emotional insight and internal control are more likely to be successful in engaging in positive coping and behavioural, reform. Findings provide insight into the emotional and cognitive procedures behind adolescent delinquency and reintegration and support prior research that highlights emotional regulation and personal responsibility as integral to reducing recidivism and positively promoting adjustment (Maruna & Mann, 2019; Tangney et al., 2007).

Limitations

The current study has certain limitations. First, the sample consisted of 100 adolescents from two observation homes, and this may limit the generalizability of the result. Participants from a greater number of observation homes located in different regions might increase the representativeness of the findings, and higher-order inferential analyses could be conducted.

Second, on the basis of the feedback received from the participants, the questionnaires were perceived as being too long and time consuming to complete, culminating in a feeling of fatigue and a decrease in attention during the process of evaluation. This could have potentially influenced the reliability of the responses. Third, there weren't any female participants in the study. This may suggest a bias in a study. Future research may utilize abbreviated culturally sensitized measures (Sherretts & Willmott, 2017) or multiple session data collection to minimize participant burden.

Conclusion

This research was conducted to study guilt, coping, locus of control (LOC), and emotional intelligence (EI) in adolescents in conflict with the law. Results showed significant correlations between guilt and coping strategies and between locus of control and emotional intelligence. Results are in line with other studies analysing the relationships between these constructs in comparable populations.

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Ethical approval: The proposal was approved by the Medical and Allied Specialties Scientific Committee, Madras Medical College, Chennai (Approval Date: 03.02.2023). Following approval, permission was granted to conduct the study titled “*Guilt, Coping Strategies, Locus of Control, and Emotional Intelligence among Adolescents in Conflict with Law*” for the duration of February 2023 to September 2023.

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all participants involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement: Research data are available on request to corresponding author.

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