

ABSTRACT

Attention Deficit-Hyperactivity Disorder and Juvenile Criminality in the Jamaican Correctional Setting

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ADHD is a very common childhood disease with estimates of its prevalence among children in the correctional settings being much higher than for their counterparts in the general population. These prevalence rates for Jamaica are not known.

This study examined the prevalence of ADHD among incarcerated juveniles and the types of crimes that they committed. Data was collected on the census of juveniles in custody within three of the four juvenile correctional facilities in Jamaica between December 23, 2013 and March 6, 2014. Subjects within these juvenile facilities are adolescents between the ages of twelve and eighteen years old.

Participants consisted of 132 juveniles; 101 males housed within two (2) juvenile male institutions and 31 females housed in one facility. These participants were asked to complete the Jamaican Youth Self Report, The Conners – Wells Self-Report Scale (S) and a socio-demographic questionnaire. Their teachers within the facility were also asked to complete the Jamaican Youth Checklist-Teachers Report Form and the Conners Teacher Rating Scale –Revised (S).

108 (81.8%) of the participants were assessed as having an Axis I diagnosis; 29 (93.57%) females and 79 (78.2%) of the males. The prevalence of ADHD using

multiple measures ranged between 5.0% to 63.2% for males and 26.7% to 83.9% for females. Cross tabulations of the different measures of ADHD and types of crime did not produce any statistically significant relationship, suggesting that juveniles with ADHD were no more likely to commit violent crimes compared to juveniles without ADHD.

These results have implication for the care of children in the Jamaican juvenile justice system who have ADHD. With such a high prevalence consideration needs to be given as to how to appropriately, comprehensively and effectively approach this issue.

Keywords: George Anthony Leveridge; Attention Deficit-Hyperactivity Disorder; Jamaica, juvenile criminality, adolescent, child, crime.