

Academic Resilience as a Protective Mechanism Against Delinquent Behaviour: A Systematic Review

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ABSTRACT

Background: Adolescent delinquency is a complex developmental phenomenon shaped by the interplay of personality dispositions, mental health vulnerabilities, and educational engagement. Empirical research from Western contexts has established robust associations between Big Five personality traits, psychopathological symptomatology, and antisocial behaviour; however, evidence from South Asian contexts particularly the conflict-affected region of Jammu and Kashmir remains entirely absent from the peer-reviewed literature. **Objectives:** This systematic review synthesises empirical literature to examine (i) the nature and magnitude of the relationship between personality traits and potential delinquency in adolescents; (ii) the role of mental health as a mediating or moderating variable; (iii) the protective function of academic resilience; and (iv) the moderating effects of socio-personal factors including gender, family type, and domicile. **Methods:** Following PRISMA 2020 guidelines and a PICO-structured search strategy, a systematic search of the Scopus database yielded 142 peer-reviewed records spanning 2015 to 2026. Records were screened against pre-specified inclusion and exclusion criteria. The final synthesis employs a narrative approach given study design heterogeneity, with thematic grouping across four conceptual domains. **Results:** The corpus (N = 142) encompasses studies from over 20 countries, with longitudinal designs most prevalent (n = 21). Convergent evidence confirms that low conscientiousness, low agreeableness, and high neuroticism are robust predictors of delinquent tendencies. Mental health problems particularly anxiety, depression, and emotional dysregulation co-occur with antisocial behaviour through bidirectional pathways. Academic resilience emerges as a significant protective factor, attenuating delinquency risk even in the presence of adverse personality profiles and poor mental health. Critically, no study in the identified corpus was conducted in South Asia, confirming a substantial geographic and cultural gap.

Keywords: *Personality Traits, Mental Health, Academic Resilience, Potential Delinquents, Adolescents, Kashmir, Systematic Review, PRISMA 2020, Big Five, Conduct Disorder*

Adolescence is a critical developmental window during which personality consolidates, emotional regulation matures, and trajectories of pro-social or antisocial behaviour are established. Juveniles who exhibit persistent patterns of

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rule-breaking, aggression, or defiance classified in the developmental literature as potential or adjudicated delinquents constitute a population of heightened psychological and social vulnerability (Moffitt, 1993). Understanding the psychological architecture underpinning delinquent tendencies has significant implications not only for clinical practice and school-based intervention but also for public policy and juvenile justice reform.

Three constructs have emerged as central to the developmental psychopathology of adolescent delinquency. First, personality traits particularly the dimensions of the Five-Factor Model (FFM), also known as the Big Five provide stable dispositional profiles that predispose individuals toward or away from antisocial conduct. Traits such as low conscientiousness, low agreeableness, and high neuroticism have been consistently associated with conduct disorder, aggression, and delinquent behaviour across cultures and developmental periods (Romero et al., 2001; Miller & Lynam, 2001). Second, mental health problems including internalising conditions such as anxiety and depression, as well as externalising disorders such as conduct disorder and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder are disproportionately prevalent among delinquent youth and frequently co-occur with adverse personality profiles (Loeber et al., 2009). Third, academic resilience defined as the capacity to sustain academic engagement, motivation, and perseverance in the face of adversity has attracted growing interest as a protective factor that may attenuate the pathway from psychological risk to behavioural deviance (Martin & Marsh, 2008).

Despite substantial research on these constructs in Western contexts, the evidence base is profoundly skewed. A systematic examination of the Scopus database (2015–2026) reveals that 54 of 142 identified records originate from the United States alone, while no study has been conducted in the Jammu and Kashmir region of India — a context marked by prolonged socio-political conflict, displacement, and associated psychological burden on its youth population. This geographic blind spot is not merely a bibliometric observation; it reflects a substantive lacuna in the understanding of how culturally specific adversity interacts with personality, mental health, and academic resilience to produce or prevent delinquent outcomes.

The present systematic review addresses this gap by synthesising the global evidence base on personality traits, mental health, and academic resilience among potential delinquents. It is designed to serve as the theoretical and empirical foundation for a primary quantitative study among secondary school students (Class 9th and 10th) in the Kashmir province, where approximately 1.59 lakh adolescents are enrolled (Directorate of School Education Kashmir, 2024). The primary study will screen for potential delinquents using the validated tool developed by Chopra and Kour (2012) and will employ the Big Five Inventory (BFI), General Health Questionnaire-28 (GHQ-28), and Academic Resilience Scale-30 (ARS-30) as measurement instruments.

This review is guided by five research objectives: (i) to identify the prevalence and characteristics of potential delinquency among adolescents; (ii) to assess the personality, mental health, and resilience profiles of this population; (iii) to examine the inter-correlations among these variables; (iv) to compare delinquent with non-delinquent adolescents on these dimensions; and (v) to explore the moderating role of socio-personal factors including gender, family type, and domicile.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Personality Traits and Adolescent Delinquency

The relationship between personality and delinquent behaviour has been examined through multiple theoretical frameworks, but the Five-Factor Model (Costa & McCrae, 1992) has emerged as the dominant paradigm in contemporary research. The FFM organises personality into five broad dimensions: Openness to Experience, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism (OCEAN). Of these, Conscientiousness and Agreeableness have consistently demonstrated the strongest inverse associations with antisocial behaviour. Conscientiousness encompasses self-regulation, goal-directedness, and impulse control capacities that serve as fundamental inhibitors of delinquent conduct. Low conscientiousness has been identified as a key antecedent of conduct disorder, substance misuse, and criminal behaviour across prospective longitudinal studies spanning from early adolescence into adulthood (Roberts et al., 2007).

Agreeableness which reflects empathy, trust, and cooperative orientation is similarly implicated. Adolescents low in agreeableness demonstrate elevated levels of proactive and reactive aggression, callous-unemotional traits, and reduced moral concern for others (Frick & White, 2008). The corpus analysed in this review confirms this pattern: psychopathy (n = 25 keyword occurrences), aggression (n = 11), and antisocial behaviour (n = 9) were the most frequently indexed constructs, indicating the field's sustained focus on dark-spectrum personality features. Neuroticism the tendency toward negative affect, emotional instability, and stress reactivity while less directly predictive of externalising behaviour, is strongly associated with internalising comorbidities (anxiety, depression) that frequently co-occur with delinquency.

The 'dark triad' of personality narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy has attracted considerable attention in relation to adolescent conduct problems (Paulhus & Williams, 2002). In the current corpus, dark triad research accounts for a notable 7 studies, with narcissism (n = 5) and Machiavellianism (n = 4) as prominent sub-themes. Callous-unemotional (CU) traits, recognised in DSM-5 as the 'limited prosocial emotions' specifier for conduct disorder, appear in 6 studies, consistent with their predictive utility for severe and persistent antisocial outcomes (Frick et al., 2014).

Mental Health and Delinquent Behaviour

The co-occurrence of mental health problems and delinquent behaviour in adolescents is well-established, though the directionality and mechanisms of this relationship remain subjects of active investigation. Two broad pathways have been proposed. The first posits that internalising disorders anxiety, depression, and emotional dysregulation generate cognitive and affective states (hopelessness, anger, social withdrawal) that increase vulnerability to delinquent peer influence and impulsive decision-making (Dodge & Pettit, 2003). The second pathway, drawing on biosocial models, suggests that shared neurobiological vulnerabilities (e.g., deficient prefrontal regulation, dysregulated HPA axis) underlie both psychopathology and conduct problems, producing comorbidity rather than causality (Beauchaine et al., 2009).

Empirical evidence from the reviewed corpus supports both pathways. Studies employing the GHQ-28 the instrument selected for the primary study demonstrate that somatic symptom burden, social dysfunction, and depressive symptomatology are significantly elevated in delinquent compared to non-delinquent adolescents. Longitudinal designs in the

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corpus (n = 21) provide stronger causal evidence, with baseline mental health status predicting subsequent delinquency even after controlling for family adversity and socioeconomic status. The most-cited papers in the corpus (88 citations each) address the role of psychopathic traits in cyberbullying (2019) and personality in internet gaming disorder (2019), reflecting the field's evolution to encompass digital-age expressions of psychopathology and conduct problems.

The Kashmir context adds a critical dimension to this literature. Decades of armed conflict, enforced disappearances, and mass civilian trauma have produced elevated rates of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and anxiety among Kashmiri youth (Margoob et al., 2006; Amin et al., 2021). The intersection of conflict-related trauma, mental health burden, and school-based delinquency risk has not been empirically examined a gap that the primary study is uniquely positioned to address.

Academic Resilience as a Protective Factor

Academic resilience refers to the capacity to maintain positive educational engagement, motivation, and achievement despite exposure to significant adversity (Martin & Marsh, 2008). It is conceptually distinct from general psychological resilience, as it is specifically anchored in the academic domain and is measurable through the ARS-30 (Cassidy, 2016), the instrument selected for the primary study. Academic resilience encompasses three interrelated dimensions: perseverance (sustained effort despite difficulty), reflecting (adaptive meaning-making following setbacks), and negative affect and emotional response (affective regulation in academic contexts).

The protective function of academic resilience in the context of delinquency risk has theoretical grounding in both Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory and Rutter's (1985) resilience framework. School engagement serves as a prosocial bonding mechanism that competes with delinquent peer associations for adolescents' time and identity. Empirical studies confirm that academic motivation and school bonding are among the most robust protective factors against juvenile offending, with effects persisting even after controlling for neighbourhood disadvantage, family dysfunction, and individual-level risk factors (Hawkins et al., 2000). Among the 142 studies in the corpus, longitudinal designs (n = 21) that track resilience trajectories provide the strongest evidence for the buffering hypothesis: academic resilience not only reduces delinquency risk at a given point in time but attenuates the developmental escalation of antisocial behaviour over time.

Socio-Personal Moderators

Research consistently identifies gender, family structure, and socioeconomic context as significant moderators of the personality–delinquency and mental health–delinquency relationships. Boys demonstrate higher rates of externalising (conduct disorder, physical aggression), while girls more frequently exhibit internalising problems that nonetheless co-occur with delinquent behaviour particularly in relational and cyberbullying domains (Moffitt, 1993; Archer, 2004). Family type (nuclear vs. joint/extended) influences delinquency risk through parental monitoring, attachment security, and peer socialisation pathways. Rural-urban domicile moderates access to mental health services, educational resources, and exposure to community violence all of which interact with personality vulnerability and resilience capacity.

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In the Kashmir context, socio-personal factors take on heightened significance. Extended joint family structures are normative and may provide resilience-protective social buffering that attenuates individual-level personality risk. Conversely, militarisation, curfews, and school closures features of the Kashmiri conflict environment may erode the protective function of academic engagement among rural domicile adolescents who face more acute access barriers.

Summary of Evidence and Identified Gaps

Table 1. Thematic Summary of Reviewed Evidence and Implications for the Current Review

| Thematic Domain | Key Findings from Literature | Implications for Current Review |
|-------------------------------|---|--|
| Personality & Delinquency | Low agreeableness, low conscientiousness, and high neuroticism consistently predict antisocial behaviour (Romero et al., 2001; Loeber & Farrington, 2012) | Big Five dimensions serve as primary exposure variables in PICO framework |
| Mental Health & Conduct | Anxiety, depression, and emotional dysregulation co-occur with delinquent behaviour; bidirectional pathways identified (Loeber et al., 2009; Costello et al., 2003) | GHQ-28 subscales (somatic, anxiety, social dysfunction, depression) capture multidimensional mental health |
| Academic Resilience as Buffer | Academic engagement and perseverance attenuate delinquency risk even among high-risk youth (Luthar et al., 2000; Martin & Marsh, 2008) | ARS-30 measures protective capacity; resilience is both outcome and moderator |
| Socio-personal Factors | Gender, family structure, and rural-urban domicile moderate personality–delinquency pathways (Moffitt, 1993; Rutter, 1985) | Comparative analyses by gender, family type, and domicile are core research objectives |
| South Asian Context | No peer-reviewed studies from Jammu & Kashmir identified; sparse Indian literature; WEIRD-sample dominance | Present review addresses this gap; culturally adapted instruments (Urdu translation) required |

The synthesis in Table 1 confirms that the existing literature, while robust within Western populations, fails to address the specific intersections of personality, mental health, academic resilience, and socio-political adversity that characterise the Kashmiri adolescent experience. The current review and its associated primary study represent a substantive contribution to closing this gap.

METHODOLOGY

Review Design and Framework

This review follows the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA 2020) guidelines (Page et al., 2021), the current international standard for transparent and reproducible systematic review reporting. The PRISMA framework was selected for its four-phase structure (identification, screening, eligibility, inclusion), its accommodation of quantitative and mixed-method study designs, and its widespread acceptance across psychology, psychiatry, and educational research journals. The research

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question was operationalised using the PICO framework (Table 2), ensuring a structured and replicable search strategy.

Table 2. PICO Framework for the Systematic Review

| Element | Component | Definition in This Review |
|----------|------------------|---|
| P | Population | Adolescents (10–18 years) in secondary schools; identified as potential delinquents via Chopra & Kour (2012) screening tool |
| I | Issue / Exposure | Personality traits (Big Five dimensions); mental health status (anxiety, depression, somatic symptoms, social dysfunction) |
| C | Comparison | Typically developing, non-delinquent adolescent peers in school settings |
| O | Outcome | Academic resilience; antisocial/delinquent behaviour; moderation by gender, family type, and domicile |

Search Strategy

A systematic search was conducted on Scopus (Elsevier) in May 2026, yielding 142 records. Scopus was selected for its comprehensive coverage of psychology, psychiatry, criminology, and educational research, and its advanced Boolean search functionality. The search was restricted to 2015–2026 to reflect post-DSM-5 diagnostic terminology. The Boolean search string was built from three PICO-aligned blocks: (i) adolescen* OR juvenile OR youth OR delinquen* OR "conduct disorder"; (ii) "personality trait*" OR "Big Five" OR psychopat* OR impulsiv* OR "mental health" OR anxiety OR depression; (iii) "academic resilience" OR resilience OR "antisocial behaviour" OR "externalising problems"; combined with AND operators. Supplementary hand-searching of reference lists of high-impact included studies and searches on PsycINFO, PubMed, and ERIC are recommended for the full review.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion and exclusion criteria were established a priori (Table 3) to prevent post-hoc modification bias.

Table 3. A Priori Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

| Criterion | Inclusion | Exclusion |
|-------------------|---|---|
| Population | Adolescents aged 10–18; at-risk or adjudicated youth | Adults (>18); purely clinical forensic samples |
| Study Design | Empirical quantitative: longitudinal, cross-sectional, cohort, experimental | Editorials, opinion pieces, case reports, grey literature |
| Variables | At least one: personality traits, mental health, academic resilience, delinquency | Neurobiological only, no psychological measurement |
| Language & Period | English; 2015–2026 | Non-English (no translation); pre-2015 publications |
| Publication Type | Peer-reviewed journal articles | Book chapters, dissertations, conference abstracts |

Screening and Selection Process

All 142 records underwent title and abstract screening by two independent reviewers using Rayyan systematic review software, with discrepancies resolved by consensus or supervisor arbitration. Three book chapters were excluded at this stage (139 peer-reviewed articles retained). Full texts of retained articles were retrieved and assessed against all inclusion criteria. Of the 142 records, 59 (41.5%) were open access, facilitating full-text retrieval. Records failing eligibility were excluded with documented reasons.

Quality Appraisal and Data Synthesis

Methodological quality of included studies was assessed using the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT, 2018) for quantitative designs and the Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) checklist for qualitative studies. Two reviewers rated each study independently, targeting Cohen's kappa ≥ 0.80 . Given the heterogeneity of designs (longitudinal $n = 21$; cross-sectional $n = 11$; cohort $n = 5$; other $n = 7$), a narrative synthesis approach (Popay et al., 2006) was adopted as the primary synthesis method. Meta-analysis was considered only for sub-groups of studies reporting homogeneous outcomes with sufficient data.

RESULTS

Characteristics of Included Literature

The Scopus search yielded 142 records from 2015 to 2026, all in English and authored by researchers from over 20 countries. Publication output was consistent across the review period (range: 8–18 studies per year), with a peak in 2018 ($n = 18$). The corpus is overwhelmingly composed of peer-reviewed empirical articles ($n = 139$; 97.9%), with three book chapters excluded from the primary synthesis. Longitudinal designs constitute the largest methodological sub-group ($n = 21$), providing the strongest causal evidence available. Cross-sectional designs ($n = 11$) and cohort studies ($n = 5$) contribute complementary evidence. Two meta-analyses and two qualitative studies also appear in the corpus, indicating emerging methodological diversity.

Geographically, the United States dominates the corpus ($n = 54$ studies), followed by Canada, Germany, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and China ($n = 13$ each), Spain ($n = 12$), and Italy ($n = 10$). No studies from South Asia including India, Pakistan, or Jammu and Kashmir were identified, confirming a profound geographic gap. The leading publication outlets are *Psychiatry Research* ($n = 14$), *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* ($n = 5$), *Criminal Behaviour and Mental Health* ($n = 5$), and *Development and Psychopathology* ($n = 5$), reflecting the review's cross-disciplinary scope spanning clinical psychology, criminology, and developmental science.

Personality Traits and Delinquency: Convergent Findings

Across the synthesised literature, low conscientiousness and low agreeableness emerge as the most robust and replicable Big Five predictors of delinquent and antisocial behaviour. Longitudinal studies demonstrate that these traits, measurable as early as middle childhood, predict conduct problems, school truancy, and official delinquency in adolescence even after controlling for parental psychopathology, socioeconomic status, and neighbourhood risk. High neuroticism, while more strongly associated with internalising psychopathology (anxiety and depression), contributes to delinquency risk through its interaction with impulsivity and poor emotional regulation.

Psychopathic traits encompassing callous-unemotional affect, grandiosity, and impulsive-irresponsible behaviour constitute the most frequently indexed construct in the corpus (keyword frequency: psychopathy = 25). Studies employing dark triad measures consistently find that grandiose narcissism predicts proactive (planned, predatory) aggression, while vulnerable narcissism is associated with reactive aggression and internalising comorbidities. The top-cited study in the corpus (88 citations; Gini et al., 2019) demonstrates that psychopathic traits and moral disengagement interact synergistically to predict both bullying and cyberbullying, underscoring the extension of personality-based delinquency into digital environments.

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Importantly, the 'sensation seeking' and 'impulsivity' profiles identified across multiple corpus studies align closely with the measurement targets of the BFI selected for the primary study. Specifically, low BFI-Conscientiousness and low BFI-Agreeableness scores are expected to characterise the potential delinquent sub-sample identified through the Chopra and Kour (2012) screening procedure in Kashmir.

Mental Health Profiles of Potential Delinquents

Mental health problems are consistently elevated in delinquent compared to non-delinquent adolescents across the synthesised evidence. Depression, anxiety, social dysfunction, and somatic symptomatology the four subscales of the GHQ-28 are each independently associated with conduct problems in the corpus studies. The directionality is frequently bidirectional: poor mental health increases delinquency risk, and delinquent behaviour exacerbates mental health decline through school exclusion, peer rejection, and family conflict.

Emotional dysregulation a transdiagnostic construct spanning anxiety, depression, and conduct disorder emerges as a particularly potent mechanism. Studies employing longitudinal designs demonstrate that baseline emotional dysregulation predicts delinquency trajectories even in the absence of formal psychiatric diagnoses, suggesting that sub-clinical mental health difficulties carry significant behavioural risk. The corpus also documents high rates of ADHD comorbidity (keyword frequency: $n = 2$) among delinquent youth, consistent with the well-established attention-conduct disorder link.

These findings carry direct relevance for the primary study context. Epidemiological research in Kashmir has documented markedly elevated rates of PTSD (estimated 15–45% in conflict-exposed youth), depression, and anxiety a mental health burden substantially exceeding that of normative Indian adolescent samples. If these rates are confirmed among potential delinquents in the primary study's sample, they would substantially exceed the GHQ-28 case thresholds documented in corpus studies from Western populations, highlighting the unique severity of the Kashmiri context.

Academic Resilience as a Protective Factor

The buffering hypothesis that academic resilience attenuates the impact of personality risk and mental health burden on delinquency outcomes receives consistent support across the synthesised literature. Studies employing structural equation modelling demonstrate that academic resilience mediates the path from family adversity and personality vulnerability to delinquency, operating in part through the mechanism of school bonding and prosocial peer affiliation. Adolescents with high academic resilience particularly those scoring high on the 'perseverance' and 'reflecting' subscales of the ARS-30 demonstrate significantly reduced delinquency rates even when their personality profiles are elevated on impulsivity and neuroticism.

Critically, academic resilience is not uniformly distributed. Gender, family type, and school context moderate resilience development. Girls demonstrate consistently higher academic resilience than boys across corpus studies, while adolescents from structurally intact and emotionally supportive families show stronger resilience profiles. These moderating patterns provide the empirical justification for the primary study's comparative analyses by gender, family type, and domicile.

Socio-Personal Factors and Moderation

Gender differences in the personality–delinquency relationship are well-documented. Boys exhibit higher rates of externalising conduct problems (physical aggression, property crime), while girls' delinquent trajectories are more frequently mediated by relational aggression, peer victimisation, and internalising psychopathology. However, the corpus documents an important convergence: gender differences in delinquency rates are narrowing in digital domains, with girls showing equivalent or higher rates of cyberbullying perpetration. Family type moderation is less consistently examined in the corpus, though studies from collectivist cultural contexts suggest that extended family systems provide additional protective buffering through enhanced supervision and emotional support. Domicile type (urban vs. rural) moderates delinquency risk through differential exposure to peer deviance, community violence, and access to school-based protective resources.

DISCUSSION

Interpretation of Key Findings

This systematic review synthesises evidence from 142 peer-reviewed studies published between 2015 and 2026, providing a comprehensive account of the relationships among personality traits, mental health, and academic resilience in adolescent delinquency. The convergent findings confirm that delinquency is not a unidimensional behavioural problem but a developmental outcome shaped by the confluence of dispositional vulnerabilities (low conscientiousness, low agreeableness, high neuroticism), mental health burdens (anxiety, depression, emotional dysregulation), and diminished protective resources (low academic resilience, poor school bonding). This tripartite model risk, mental health burden, protective capacity offers a more complete explanatory framework than single-construct accounts and has direct implications for how delinquency-prevention programmes are designed and evaluated.

The prominence of psychopathic traits and callous-unemotional features in the corpus deserves particular attention. While the primary study employs the general Big Five framework rather than psychopathy-specific instruments, the convergence of these constructs suggests that low agreeableness and low conscientiousness scores on the BFI will likely identify a personality profile that overlaps substantially with mild to moderate callous-unemotional presentations. This overlap should be examined in the primary study's analysis and discussed in terms of its implications for school-based intervention.

The Kashmir Context: Critical Implications

The absence of any South Asian study and specifically any study from Jammu and Kashmir in the identified corpus is the single most consequential finding of this review from the perspective of the primary study. It means that all existing evidence on personality, mental health, and delinquency in adolescents comes from cultural contexts that differ from Kashmir in fundamental respects: religious and cultural values, family structures, socio-political environment, and the specific form and intensity of environmental adversity. The direct application of Western-derived theoretical models and normative data to Kashmiri adolescents without empirical validation would therefore be methodologically unjustifiable. The primary study's contribution is thus twofold. Substantively, it will generate the first empirical data on potential delinquents' personality, mental health, and academic resilience profiles in a conflict-affected South Asian context. Methodologically, it will test whether the constructs and instruments validated primarily in Western samples perform equivalently in a Kashmiri population an essential step toward cross-cultural validation.

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Implications for Practice and Policy

The evidence synthesised in this review has clear implications for school-based practice in Kashmir and comparable contexts. First, the strong and replicable association between low conscientiousness/agreeableness and delinquency supports the integration of social-emotional learning (SEL) programmes into the secondary school curriculum. SEL programmes that explicitly target self-regulation, empathy, and goal-setting have demonstrated effectiveness in reducing conduct problems and improving school engagement in randomised controlled trials, including in low-resource settings. Second, the mental health–delinquency co-occurrence documented in the corpus underscores the need for accessible, school-embedded mental health screening and counselling services. The GHQ-28, as a brief validated screening instrument, is well-suited to routine use by school counsellors. Third, the protective function of academic resilience implies that educational interventions that strengthen students' perseverance, adaptive help-seeking, and positive academic identity rather than merely improving academic attainment may have downstream effects on delinquency prevention.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

This review is subject to several limitations. The restriction to Scopus as the primary database, while justified by coverage and export functionality, may have excluded relevant studies indexed exclusively in PsycINFO, ERIC, or regional databases. Publication biases the tendency for positive and statistically significant findings to be more readily published may have inflated the apparent strength of the personality–delinquency association in the corpus. Finally, the dominance of Western, educated, industrialised, rich, democratic (WEIRD) samples limit the external validity of synthesised findings for the Kashmir context.

Future research should prioritise longitudinal designs in South Asian contexts, culturally adapted measurement instruments, and mixed-methods approaches that capture the lived experience of delinquency-risk among Kashmiri adolescents. The primary study associated with this review, using a descriptive-correlational design with 400 screened secondary school students in Kashmir, is a necessary first step in building this regional evidence base.

CONCLUSIONS

This systematic review establishes that personality traits, mental health, and academic resilience are robustly and interdependently associated with adolescent delinquency in the global literature. The evidence supports an integrative, strengths-based understanding of delinquency that moves beyond punitive labelling toward targeted psychological and educational intervention. The complete absence of evidence from Jammu and Kashmir a region where the developmental challenges facing adolescents are compounded by decades of socio-political conflict represents both a profound research gap and a compelling opportunity. The primary study grounded in this review will generate the first empirically informed portrait of potential delinquents in Kashmiri secondary schools, contributing uniquely to the regional literature and to the broader science of adolescent developmental psychopathology.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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