

Can Protective Factors Prevent Antisocial Behavior? Insights from the PROTECT-C Study on Portuguese Youth

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The relationship between socioeconomic challenges and the development of antisocial behaviors across an individual's lifetime is well-documented. This dynamic has become increasingly critical in societies facing escalating economic and social challenges, which expose children and adolescents to higher risks of negative outcomes, including educational failure, substance misuse, and involvement in criminal activities. Despite a clear understanding of these risks, an important question remains: how do some children from underprivileged backgrounds manage to steer clear of antisocial paths? The key might rest in protective factors that counter the negative effects of early risk exposures during their younger years. This research aims to delve into how school (e.g., student engagement and a supportive educational atmosphere), family (e.g., positive parenting), and community (e.g., neighborhood collective efficacy) factors can diminish the negative impacts of socioeconomic adversity on the development of children and adolescents. This ongoing quantitative study focuses on a nationally representative group of middle-school students aged 12 to 15, in grades 7 through 9, attending TEIP schools. It utilizes an online questionnaire directed at the child participants. The outcomes of this investigation will be presented and discussed, emphasizing its contribution to bridging a knowledge gap in the area of protective factors and supporting the formulation of universally accessible, evidence-informed prevention strategies.

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