

*Review Paper*

**Systematic Literature Review on Influencing Factors on Involvement of The Minorities  
in The Deviant Acts**

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**Abstract:** Deviant acts such as murder, sexual victimization, bullying, mental health issues, substance use, violent crimes and theft represent behaviors outside of social norms. These acts are often closely associated with minority, youth and marginalized groups, who may be subjected to such behaviors due to systemic discrimination, exclusion and adverse social conditions. This systematic literature review examined 31 articles focusing on deviant acts experienced or committed by these groups. Thematic analysis categorized deviant behaviors into five main types which is substance use and HIV/AIDS, sexual crimes, criminal offenses, bullying victimization and discrimination. The review also identified the communities most frequently represented, including African Americans, Hispanic, LGBTQ, Palestinian Arab, Russian, homeless, and Latino. Findings reveals that deviant acts occur at a disproportionately high rate among these groups, particularly in urban contexts such as United States where its often driven by structural inequalities and marginalization. This paper highlights the importance of understanding the relationship between minority status and deviant behavior to foster safer environments and promote equity. The study concludes by outlining directions for future research in criminology and minority as well as youth studies.

**Keywords:** Deviant; deviance act; youth; young people; crime; gang

## **Introduction**

What defines a deviant act is the presence of a social audience that views a behavior or appearance as abnormal and takes action to discourage it (Ferrante, 2011). According to Humphrey & Schmalleger (2021), two key perspectives that are the normative and the situational are used to explain deviant behavior. The normative perspective sees deviance as conduct that violates established and widely accepted social norms. For instance, labelling a man running naked down a crowded street and screaming as "deviant" would likely receive little objection, as such behavior typically breaches widely shared behavioral expectations and is viewed by many as inherently wrong or repulsive. Hence, from a normative standpoint, the act and the person performing it are both considered deviant. Ferrante (2011) defines deviance as any behavior or appearance that is socially challenged or condemned because it strays from the norms and expectations of a group. Nalah et al., (2013) describe social deviance as behavior or characteristics that violate significant social norms and are negatively regarded by a large portion of society. Goode (2011) adds that deviance encompasses behavior, beliefs, or characteristics that provoke disapproval, punishment, or hostility. Clinard (1957) points out that even routine actions like drinking alcohol or engaging in certain business practices may either conform to or deviate from

societal norms. Meier and Clinard (2011), emphasize that deviance involves violations of norms standards defining what people should or should not do under specific circumstances.

Albert Cohen's broad description of deviance includes dishonesty, crime, corruption, unfairness, and sin, painting a kaleidoscopic image of what society may perceive as deviant (Douglas & Waksler, 1982; Cohen, 1955). In the context of this study, deviant acts are understood as behaviors among young people that violate legal or social norms such as gang involvement, substance abuse, bullying or violence that disrupt community cohesion and challenge accepted standards of conduct. This working definition situates deviance within the lived realities of marginalized youths and provides the lens through which this study examines its causes. Gangs are one such expression of deviance, particularly in marginalized communities across the globe. According to Petrus & Kinnes (2018) and Hagedorn (2005), gangs give voice to those excluded by the processes of globalization. Gangs often become masculine environments emphasizing hierarchy, risk-taking, individualism, and violence (Baird, 2012). As the World Health Organization (2022) reports, youth violence often involves bullying and physical attacks with or without weapons and is closely tied to gang activity. During the Foundation Phase, when learners are in their most formative years, exposure to violence such as bullying, aggression or verbal abuse can seriously harm their emotional development and hinder their academic progress (Sikhwari, 2025). Gangs exist in the social margins, they are interstitial, formed in spaces left out of mainstream society (Trasher, 1927; Kinnear, 2009). They are typically composed of lower-class individuals, isolated and ignored by society. Members of lower-class groups are frequently the ones who participate in class conflict behaviors (Liu et al., 2023).

In the U.S., racial disparities in incarceration have intensified over time. In 1930, 75% of all prison admissions were White and only 22% were African American. By 1992, those figures had nearly reversed: 51% of admissions were African American, 20% Hispanic, and only 19% White (Marshall, 1997; Donziger, 1996). Globally, certain racial and ethnic minority groups are disproportionately arrested, convicted, and imprisoned for crimes involving violence, drugs, or property (Coomber et al., 2015; Tonry, 1994). These groups often suffer social, political, and economic disadvantages. The infamous Rodney King case illustrates the deep mistrust between law enforcement and minority communities. As Marshall (1997) reports, police brutality against minorities is so pervasive that any encounter with law enforcement may carry the risk of abuse or death.

Willis (2009) identified key motivations for joining gangs, including the desire for recognition, status, protection, power, and excitement. These motivations align with Maslow's hierarchy of needs, which outlines five categories of human needs: physiological, safety, social, esteem, and self-actualization. According to McLeod (2018), when individuals cannot meet these basic and psychological needs such as protection, belonging, and self-worth due to structural barriers, they may turn to deviant subcultures for fulfilment and identity. A study by Ikoh et al., (2019) identified factors that push youths into drug use, thereby affecting community security. Peer approval, weak family bonds, and easy access to drugs were among the major contributors. Many youths turn to drugs to cope with anxiety, unemployment, loneliness, or parental neglect. In neighbourhoods with high drug availability, deviance becomes normalized. Often, these youths resort to criminal activities like theft and robbery to sustain their addiction. Families with histories of substance abuse also played a major role in perpetuating this cycle. Media portrayals of deviant acts are often gender-biased. Dziewanski (2020) highlights on how women involved in deviant behavior are portrayed differently than men, with coverage focusing on their gendered attributes rather than their actions. Even in cases of jihadi terrorism, news narratives reflect persistent gender stereotypes, despite growing awareness of such biases (Krona & Caskey, 2023).

Dauids et al. (2022) studied young males in South Africa who resisted gang involvement despite facing poverty, unemployment, and social challenges. They found that factors like religious faith, family support, strong father figures, education, and involvement in constructive activities provided protective buffers. The fear of losing freedom, limited mobility, and disrupted routines were among the deterrents that kept them from joining gangs. Despite this growing body of research, there is still limited focus on understanding the root causes behind minority and youth involvement in deviant acts and the social mechanisms that either facilitate or prevent such behavior. This gap is critical, as without a deeper understanding of the social, economic and

psychological drivers of deviance among young people, policymakers and communities may struggle to design effective interventions to reduce youth violence, gang involvement, and related social harms. The research aims to achieve two primary objectives: (1) to identify the deviant act that has been carried out by the young people and (2) to analyse the factors that influence young people to be involved in such behaviors.

## Methodology

In this section, there will be a specific discussion on the methodology of the previous articles that has discussed on the deviant acts that has been carried out by the young people. This systematic literature review had used the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) to carry on with the methodology of this systematic review in finding related studies in the Scopus and Web of Science (WoS). According to Alina et al., (2021), the PRISMA has been designed primarily for the systematic reviews of studies that evaluate the effects of health interventions, irrespective of the design of the included studies, however, the checklist items are applicable to reports of systematic reviews evaluating other than non-health-related intervention, and many items are applicable to systematic reviews with objectives other than evaluating interventions. The use of PRISMA in this study helped in focusing on the screening criteria needed and to obtain a specific data that can be used in this systematic literature review. The research objectives were formulated by adapting the Population, Interest and Context (PICO) framework, which is commonly applied in qualitative systematic reviews. In the study, the “Population” referred to young people involved in deviant acts, the “Interest” focused on factors influencing their involvement, and the “Context” related to global community settings. This framework ensured that the objectives were specific, clear and aligned with the scope of the review.

### 1. Systematic Search Strategy

To find the related articles to the research topic, a wide search was used by searching the most commonly used databases related to the subjects. Hence, the search strategy has been divided to 5 steps which is identification, screening, eligibility, quality appraisal and data abstraction.

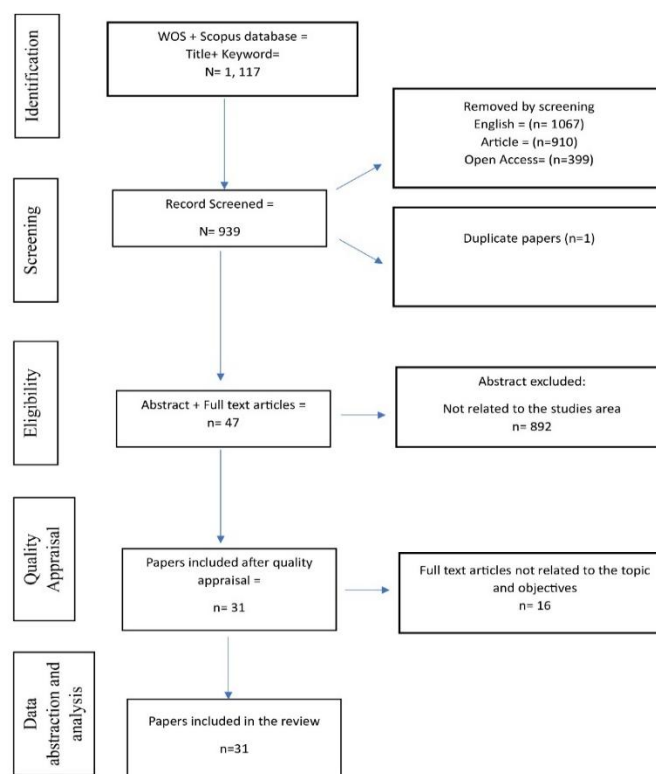


Figure 1. The execution stages of the systematic literature review

## 2. Identification

The literature search started by using the keywords “deviant”, “crime”, “factors” and “young people.” The development of keywords was carried out in three stages: (1) preliminary scoping searches were conducted to identify common terms used in previous studies, (2) synonyms and related terms were added using Boolean operators such as OR/AND, and (3) keywords were refined in consultation with two subject experts to ensure relevance to criminology and sociology contexts. From the title, we filtered out accordingly to the research that had discussed on the methodology as we obtained its full reference including authors, year, title, methodology and abstract for further evaluation. We searched Web of Science (WoS) and Scopus. A search thru WoS was used by using these keywords returned a total record of 26 articles. A search on Scopus filtered a total of 1,091 documents before filtering them accordingly related closely to the relevant articles. The keyword search strings are as per the Table 1 below:

Table 1. Keyword Search Strings

Database	Search Strings
Wos	(“deviant” OR “crime”) AND (“factors”) AND (“youth” OR “young people”).
Scopus	TITLE-ABS-KEY ( ( "deviant" OR "crime" ) AND ( "factors" AND "youth" OR “young people” ) )

## 3. Screening and Eligibility

Out of the 1,117 articles, a screening process has been done to make sure they are relevant to the research topic. As this research is based on a global context, the first screening was done to filter in only the English language related topics. The next screening was done to focus it to article only. As well as the articles were only focused on the open access articles. Excluding one articles that has been filtered to minus the duplicated paper which left a total of 939 articles for the next step which is eligibility. A total of 939 articles passed the screening step and was passed to the eligibility step. The abstract, full text articles and studies not related to the research area has been filtered that left a total of 47 articles.

## 4. Quality Appraisal

Looked through the full text articles to further evaluate the quality and eligibility of the studies. The quality and eligibility assessment task were also performed by two researches in parallel and independently (Xiao & Watson, 2017). To ensure consistency, both researchers used the same inclusion and exclusion checklist derived from the PRISMA guidelines. In cases of disagreement, a third reviewer was consulted and consensus was reached through discussion. This procedure enhanced the reliability and objectivity of the article selection process. Only a total of 31 articles were included after the articles that’s not related to the topic and objectives were deducted as a total of 16 articles.

## 5. Data Abstraction and Analysis

This segment was undertaken to gather details regarding the definition, purpose of conducting a literature review, and the process involved in it. Instead of a broad statement, the extracted data were structured around key fields such as author, year of publication, country, study population, methods used, type of deviant acts examined and major findings. This ensured that the review captured both the depth of existing research and scope. The literature review process will be subdivided into several stages, including defining the research problem, developing and validating the protocol, searching for relevant literature, screening for inclusion, assessing quality, extracting data, analysing and synthesizing data, and finally, reporting the findings. While reading the literature that has been focused on, the themes that has been shortlisted will be type of deviants, people who involved in committing the deviant and as well as the community involved. Below is the complete data of the 31 articles that has been extracted.

## The Findings

As the research has been focussing on a global scale, hence Figure 2 shows the research area that has the majority articles been included in this study.

### 1. Research Countries

The majority of the papers included in this review which is 24 out of 31 publications were from the United States, with two articles each from the Netherlands and Israel. The United Kingdom, Russia and Norway each submitted one essay. This is indicative of a Western centric bias in the literature that is now available, especially given its heavy emphasis on minority groups in the United States, including African Americans, Latinos and Hispanics. Minority adolescents in the United States are overrepresented in research pertaining to deviant conduct because they are more likely to be arrested than white youth, as stated by Rogers and Peterson (2014).

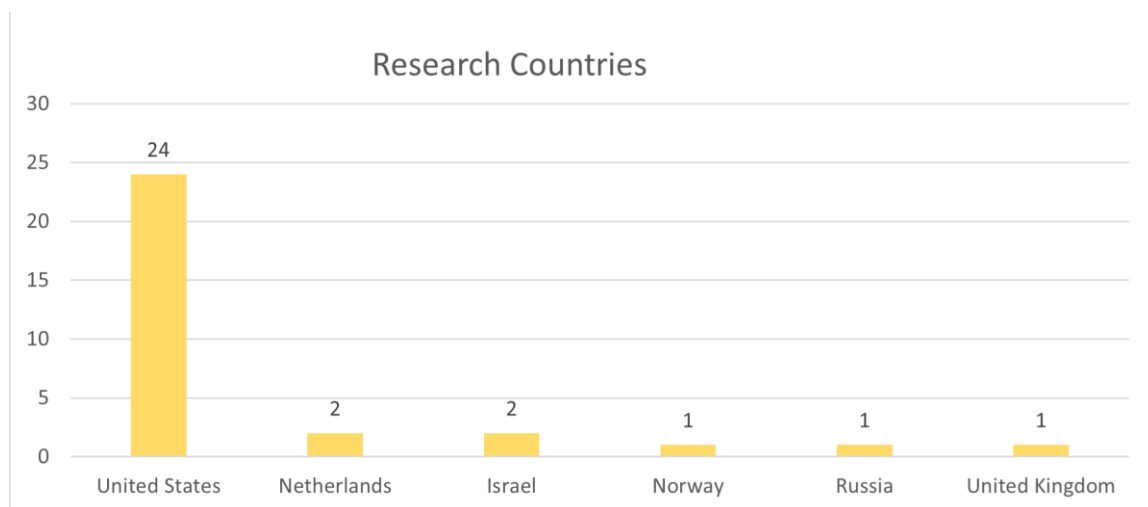


Figure 2. Research countries

### 2 Research Year

The publications cover a range of publication years, with the most research occurring in 2014 and 2019 with four each, followed by 2010, 2018 and 2020 having three each. While 2011 and 2021 each had one article, other years like 2013, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2022 and 2023 each had two. Over the past ten years, there has been an increasing but erratic level of scholarly interest in the relationship between deviance and minority status.

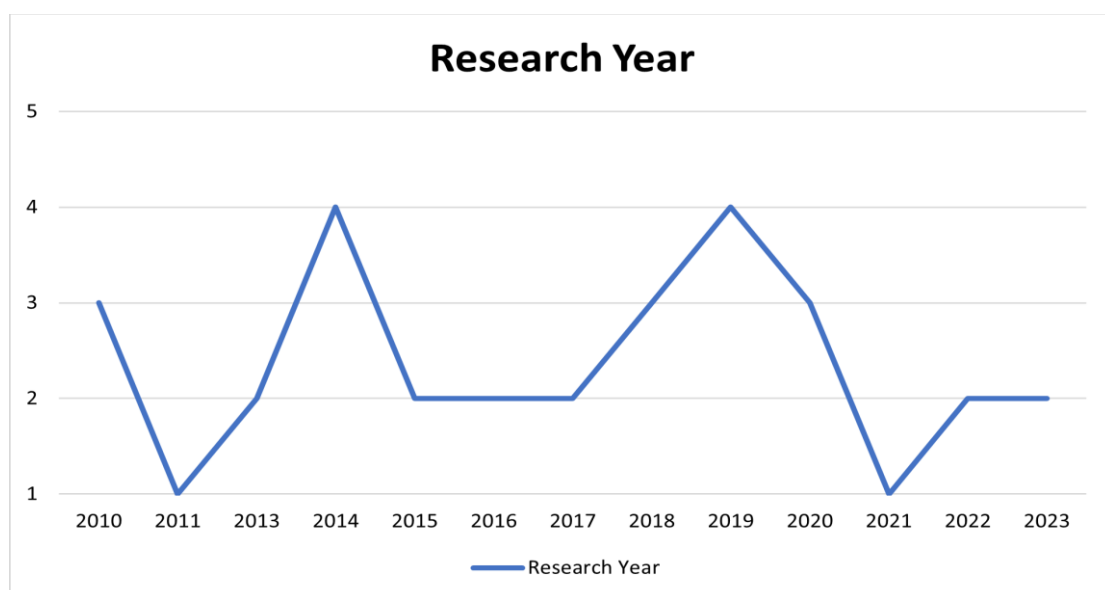


Figure 3. Research year

### 3. Research Method

This study analysed a total of 31 articles after a systematic and neat filter and analyses been done. Based on Figure 4, the research method that was highly used was questionnaire which is 8 in total. A questionnaire enables quantitative data to be collected in a standardized way so that the data are internally consistent and coherent for analysis (Roopa & Rani, 2012). Followed by interview, survey and data analysis which has a total of 6 articles. According to Sahoo (2022), the research interview has been defined as a two-person conversation initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research relevant information and focused by him on content specified by research objectives of systematic description, prediction or explanation. A survey consists if a predetermined set of questions that is given to a sample (Kabir, 2016). Data analysis literally where the information was collection from published sources as it is the secondary data. The process of turning collected data into useful information is known as data analysis (Taherdoost, 2020). Secondary data are gathered using secondary data method where it can be gathered from both qualitative and quantitative sources data (Taherdoost, 2021). Sampling method has 3 articles and a combination of questionnaire and interview has 1 article. Chi-square method as well has 1 article.

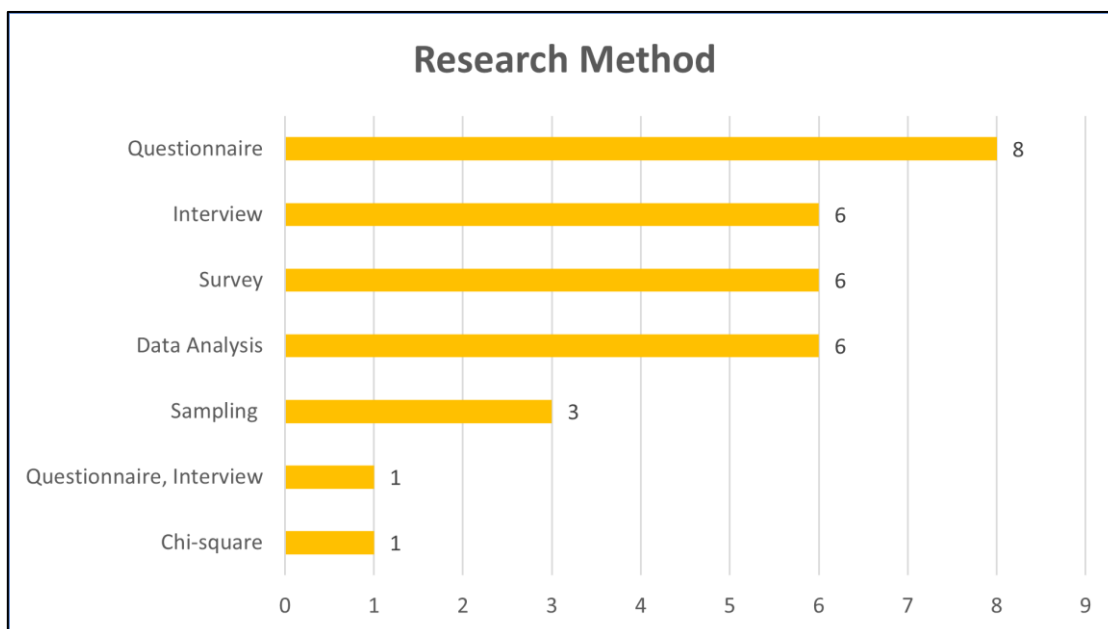


Figure 4. Research method

### 4. Age Category

According to the Figure 5, adolescents were the age group most often investigated with 11 research been done, followed by adults and young adults with 10 studies each. The extent of deviation among young people is demonstrated by the fact that juvenile courts in the US handled approximately 744, 500 delinquent cases in 2018 alone (Hockenberry, 2020). Adolescent involvement in deviant behavior is still a serious concern, even though there has been a documented decline in youth arrests over time.

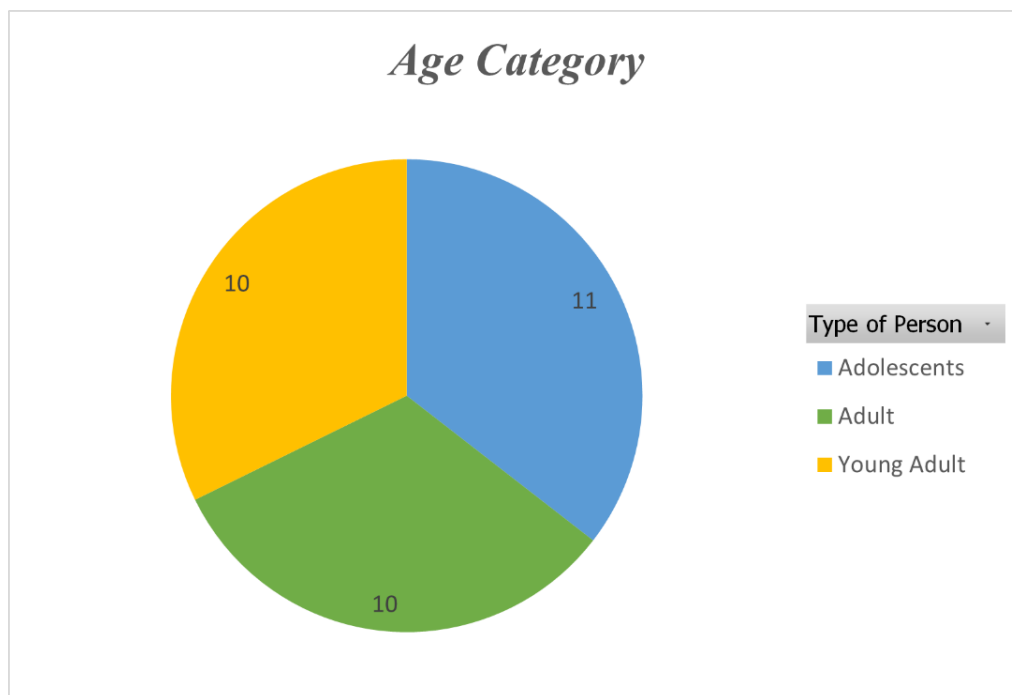


Figure 5. Age category

### 5. Type of Community

According to Figure 6, the data was categorized according to the type of community involved. The African American has the highest article been studied which is 9 articles. The LGBTQ community has 7 articles and followed by African American and Hispanic combined (4). Palestinian Arab and Hispanic has 2 articles in total. The rest Russian, homeless, African American and European combined, refugees, African American and non-European combined, LGBTQ, Black and Latino combined and Latino has 1 article each. According to Hockenberry (2020), referral rate for delinquency cases involving black youth was about three times the rates for white and Hispanic youth. Based on the data from the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program, black people were overrepresented among persons arrested for nonfatal violent crimes (33%) and for serious nonfatal violent crimes (36%) relative to their representation in the U.S. Population (13%) (Beck, 2021).

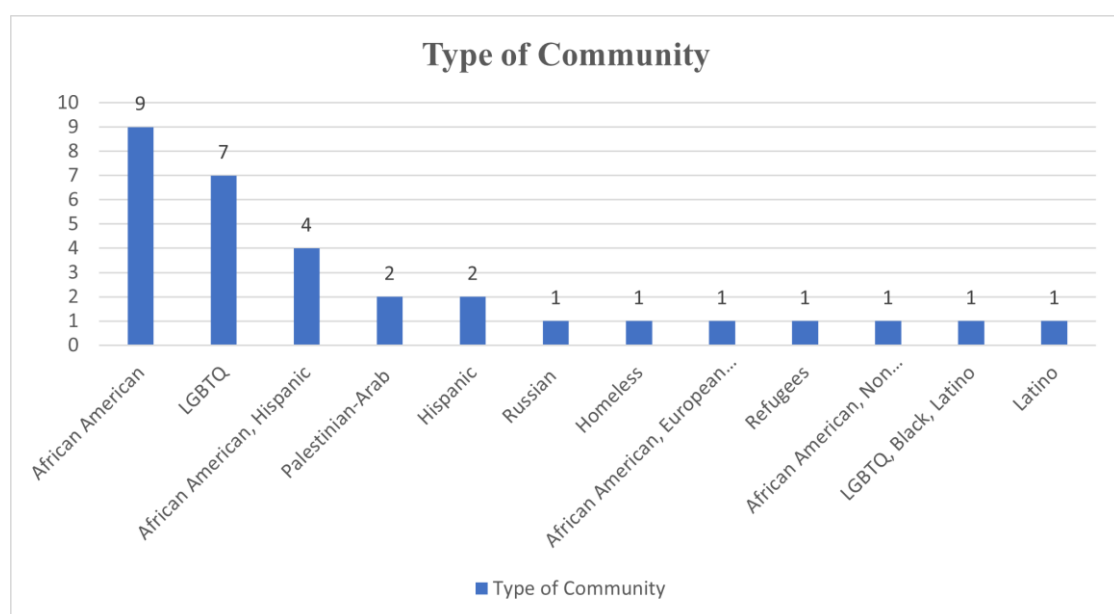


Figure 6. Type of community

## 6. Type of Deviant

Based on Figure 7, the highest deviant was substance use and sexual victimization which has 7 articles each. HIV/AIDS and mental health have 3 articles. Followed by sexual assault and aggressive behaviour which has 2 articles each. Criminal injustice, discrimination, violent crime, bullying victimization and criminal business has 1 article each. According to Bronson & Stroom (2017), more than half (58%) of state prisoners and two thirds (63%) of sentenced jail inmates met the criteria for drug dependence or abuse. According to Anderberg, Dahlberg & Wennberg (2022), the link between criminality and drug use is obvious by virtue of the fact that drug use is illegal in many countries, but the relationship can be complex and manifested in various ways. According to (Fisher et.al, 2003, Rennison, 1999), from 1993 to 1998, approximately 50% of victimization incidents were not reported to the police. Factors that involve in them not reporting the sexual victimization will be victim and offender relationship, victim characteristics, contextual characteristics and the classic rape (Fisher et.al, 2003).

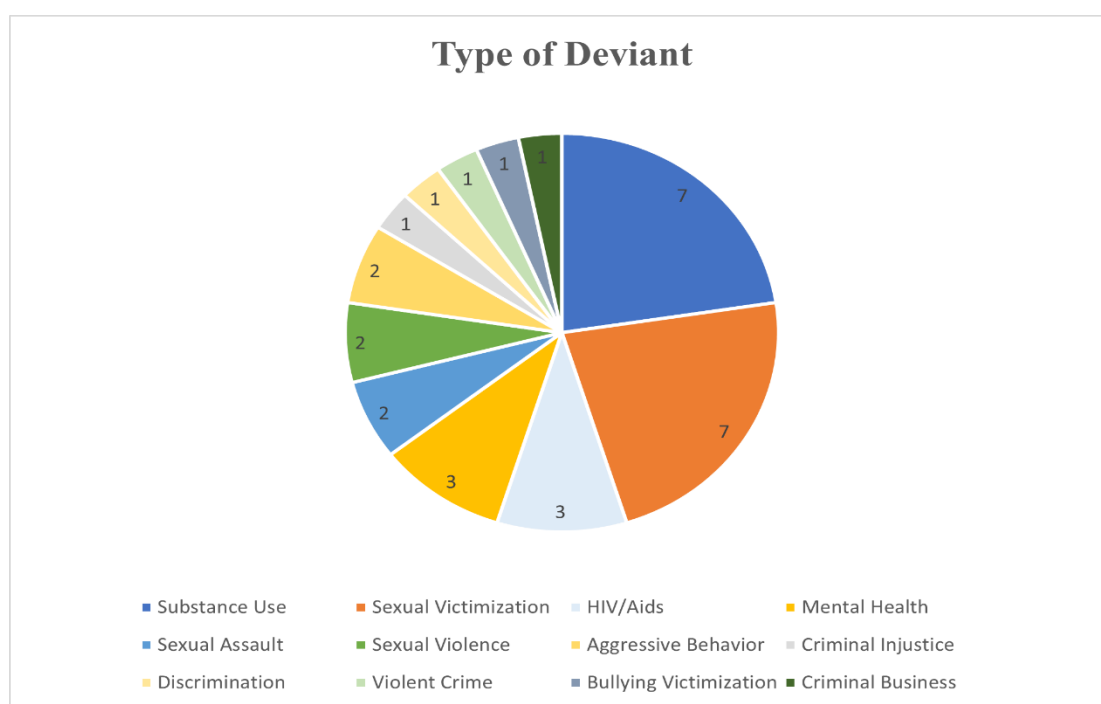


Figure 7. Type of deviant

## Discussion

This section discusses the findings of the selected studies by examining the authors and publication years, the contexts in which the studies were conducted, their methodological approaches, the key outcome and their relevance to the current study. By comparing these across the literature, this discussion highlights both consistencies and variations in how the topic has been explored, as well we are able to identify the gap that remain unaddressed. Through this comparative lens, the discussion positions the current study within the broader body of knowledge and explains how it contributes new insights to the field.

Author(s) & Year	Study Context	Methodology	Key Findings	Relevance to Current Study
Anthony & Brunson (2015); Bloomberg (2013)	New York City, USA	Crime reports	Black and Hispanic individuals made up to 90% of violent crimes and homicides.	Highlights racial disparities as well as supports conflict theory's view of systemic inequality.
Hinton (2018)	Southern USA	Qualitative	Post-Emancipation, Black Americans targeted through policing and sentencing	Shows institutionalized deviance and marginalization



Braga & Brunson (2015); Cooper & Smith (2011)	USA	Statistics	Homicide victimization rate: 27.8 of Black people versus 4.5 of White people per 100,000	Overrepresentation of minorities as victims and offenders.
Ryan & Vigne (2022)	USA	Qualitative	424,300 arrests under 18 years old on 2020 which brings 38% declined versus 2019.	Youth remain central to deviance debates despite declining numbers
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2016); United Nations (2001)	Global (Injection Drug Use cases: Argentina, Brazil, India, Spain, Thailand, Puerto Rico, China, Myanmar, Russia and Ukraine)	Epidemiological Data (Quantitative)	HIV prevalence among injection drug users ranged between 30 to 70%	Links substance abuse to broader health risks.
Australian Bureau of Statistics (2023)	Australia	Survey	6.1% men and 22% of women experienced sexual abuse since 15 years old.	Connects deviance to gendered vulnerabilities.
Ericson (2001); Olweus & Limber (1999)	South Carolina, USA	Survey	20% admitted bullying, 23% reported victimization	School based deviance as formative stage
National Public Radio (2018)	USA	Survey	50% of Black Americans and 29% of Native Americans report police discrimination	Confirms systemic inequality to conflict theory lens.

This discussion set out to explore the factors influencing youth involvement in deviant acts across different global contexts. The findings aimed to understand not only the prevalence of deviant behaviors but also the structural inequalities and social conditions that shape them. The literature spanned diverse regions, though most of the studies were based in the US, with fewer contributions from non-Western contexts. A strong focus was observed on African American communities, juveniles and substances related deviance. Less emphasis was placed on Asian or other minority populations, pointing to a gap in geographic and cultural coverage. Throughout all these studies, there's a recurring pattern emerged such as overrepresentation of minorities in crime statistics where the Black and Hispanic communities in the US consistently appeared as both victims and offenders (Anthony & Brunson, 2015; Braga & Brunson, 2015).

Besides, youth vulnerability where the studies show the adolescents were the most studied group, with high arrest and victimization rates despite recent declines (Ryan & Vigne, 2022). Institutional bias and systemic inequality where the studies highlighted discriminatory policing and sentencing practices (Hinton, 2018; National Public Radio, 2018). Substance abuse and health risks as well was focused in the studies where drug related offenses linked directly to wider public health concerns such as HIV/AIDS (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2016; United Nations, 2001). Countries like Argentina, Brazil, India, Spain, Thailand and Puerto Rico had HIV prevalence rates among IDU that ranged from 30% to 70% in 1999 (United Nations, 2001). If learners believe they have enough support and resources such as counselling or encouraging friends to resist drug use, they are more likely to intend to avoid it (Singwane & Ramoshaba, 2024). Orsolini et al. (2021) found that tele-mental health can also improve access to care for young people, while Madrid-Cagigal et al. (2025) reported that digital programs help reduce stress and substance use among students. These findings suggest that future research on deviance should also look at how new interventions can prevent or reduce risk, not only the factors that cause it.

Women reported disproportionately high levels of sexual victimization (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2023). School bullying and peer related aggression were recurrent in youth focused studies (Ericson, 2001). Based on U.S Department of Education (2024), in the year of 2021 to 2022 school year, 19.2% of students nationally who were in the grades 6 to 12 reported having been bullied. Between 1992 and 1994, there were an average of 4.3 million serious violent victimizations per year among U.S residents aged 12 or

older (Perkins, 1997). The violent crime rate in the United States was 398.5 in 2020 and dropped somewhat to 387.0 in 2021, according to Buchholz (2023). However, it is still unclear why there was such a jump in murders and severe assaults in 2020. According to mid-year 2023 figures, crimes against property accounted for 58% of all crimes in the San Diego area, followed by crimes against persons (24%), and crimes against society (18%) (Bulletin, 2023).

While most US based studies showed strong connections between race, policing and deviance, findings from Australia (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2023) emphasized gender-based vulnerabilities rather than ethnicity. Similarly, global health-focused research (United Nations, 2001) situated deviance in the context of substances abuse rather than institutional discrimination. Additionally, in 2023, there was one drunk driving fatality in the United States every 42 minutes, despite the fact that driving under the influence is outlawed in every state (United States Department of Transportation, 2025). This indicates that deviance is context-dependent, shaped differently by racial, gender, and socio-economic factors across societies. This systematic literature review highlights that deviant behavior among minorities is not merely an outcome of individual choice but often emerges from inequalities, social exclusion and structural constraints. From the conflict theory perspective, the findings reinforce the idea that deviance reflects power struggles and unequal access to resources. Moffitt (2018) shows how individual development trajectories interact with structural inequalities, reinforcing the long-term cycles of deviance among marginalized people. Institutional practices such as policing, sentencing and social stigmatization disproportionately impact minorities, sustaining cycles of marginalization. At the same time, deviant acts such as substance abuse or youth delinquency can be seen as both adaptations to inequality and forms of resistance within constrained environments.

This reveals consistent themes of racial disparity, youth vulnerability, institutional bias and health-related risks. However, the underrepresentation of non-Western contexts limits the global applicability of these findings. Future research should expand its focus to Asian and other minority populations, particularly in urban settings, to build a better understanding of deviance.

## Conclusion

This systematic literature review set out to explore the deviant behaviors commonly associated with young people and marginalized groups and the social, psychological and structural factors influencing their involvement. By analysing 31 academic articles across different locations and approaches were examined, two main themes surfaced which are (1) the types of deviant acts minorities are involved in and (2) the characteristics of the communities most affected by those acts. The findings highlight substance use and sexual victimization as the most prevalent deviant behaviors. Importantly, these behaviors are not only personal struggles but are closely tied to broader structural disadvantages such as institutional bias, poverty, social exclusion and discrimination.

The largest number of research came from the United States, with a significant emphasis on the LGBTQ+ and African American groups. This Western concentration reveals a gap in global representation, particularly in Asia, where large minority and migrant populations remain understudied. Despite having major minority populations such as migrants, ethnic and indigenous people, Asian countries were mostly left out of the sample. This is a significant research gap that has to be filled in further researches. Furthermore, although being serious types of criminal activity, several deviant behaviors like murder, domestic abuse and theft received little attention in the literature studied. Additionally, gang-related deviance received less attention, despite the fact that it is essential in large cities where the presence of gangs affects local crime rates, drug trafficking, and juvenile engagement in violent crimes.

Most studied relied on surveys and questionnaires, which only provide surface level insights. This reliance limits the ability to capture lived experiences and complex social dynamics. Future research should adopt more diverse approaches such as incorporate participatory, longitudinal or ethnographic methods that provide a more in-depth understanding of lived experiences and community based viewpoints. In summary, this review contributes to sociology, criminology and youth studies by illuminating the relationship between marginalization and deviance. It emphasized the importance of context sensitive research and the development of inclusive policies that address root causes of deviant behavior rather than focusing solely on outcomes. A

more comprehensive understanding of deviance will require expanding research beyond Western contexts, incorporating underrepresented cultures and diversifying methodological approaches.

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