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## Empathy and Repeated Offending of Young Offenders in Argentina

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# Empathy and Repeated Offending of Young Offenders in Argentina

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## Abstract

Despite the high prevalence of youth offending in Argentina, there are relatively few investigations of the factors that may be associated with persistent youth offending in Argentina. The identification of these factors may help to inform the development of interventions which could be delivered to young offenders to reduce repeated offending. Low empathy, or a diminished ability to experience and/or understand emotions, is an important psychological construct for understanding persistent criminal and antisocial behavior. There is, however, an absence of evidence about how low empathy may relate to repeat offending of young offenders generally and in Argentina specifically. In this study the affective empathy (the capacity to experience the emotions of others) and cognitive empathy (the capacity to understand the emotions of others) of 100 young male offenders (aged 16-17) in Buenos Aires was assessed using a translated and revised version of the Basic Empathy Scale. The level of empathy of young offenders who were repeat offenders (N=51) was then compared to those who were one-time offenders (N=49). In addition, data on family criminality, school achievement and socioeconomic status was also obtained for both groups. The results showed that repeat offenders had significantly lower affective and cognitive empathy, and that these relationships held independent of the other related factors. These findings suggest that low empathy may be an important explanatory factor for repeat offending in juveniles in Argentina, and therefore may be a useful target for interventions designed to reduce repeat offending.

**Key words: Empathy-Repeated offending -Young Offenders-Argentina.**

## INTRODUCTION

Criminal behavior of young people is a major societal issue in numerous countries (Arnull et al., 2005), including Argentina. Most developmental criminologists distinguish between two types of criminal behavior of young people, sporadic low-level offending (often termed 'adolescence-limited offending') and high frequency offending (termed life-course-persistent offending; Farrington, 2003; Moffitt, 1993). Research has suggested that the low-level offending is typically related to experimentation with adolescent roles, and heavily influenced by peer relationships and situational factors. This type of offending is almost 'normative', with natural desistance occurring with aging (Moffitt, 1993). However, those who undertake the more serious frequent form of offending tend to start committing these offences at a relatively young age and continue with this offending into later adulthood. This type of offending has serious implications for societies in terms of the harm these individuals cause and the associated societal and criminal justice costs (Jolliffe, Farrington, Piquero, MacLeod & Van de Weijer, 2017). Research in North America and Europe has shown that those who are life-course-persistent offenders tend to possess a number of deleterious social, family and individual risk factors, such as living in poor neighborhoods, having low socioeconomic status, having poor parental supervision, parental offending, and poor school achievement (Jolliffe, Farrington, Piquero, Loeber & Hill, 2017).

### ***Youth Crime in Argentina***

Despite the relatively high prevalence of youth offending in Argentina, there have been relatively few studies which have attempted to determine the potential risk factors for more serious or persistent offending. From a theoretical perspective, it is important to create an evidence base to help understand the causes of youth offending in Argentina. From a more practical perspective this knowledge base is essential in developing risk-focussed rehabilitation for serious juvenile offenders (e.g., Koehler, Losel, Akonsei & Humphreys, 2013;). In North America and Europe interventions which address the individual (e.g., self-control, antisocial thinking), and family risk factors (e.g., family communication) of serious juvenile offenders have been established to successfully reduce reoffending by up to 20% (Garrido & Morales, 2007). The first step to developing these interventions in Argentina would be to

1 understand what the risk factors for repeated offending of Argentinian youth might be,  
2 but only a few such studies have been conducted.  
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4 Orlando (2017) examined the social determinants of desistance, understood as  
5 the circumstances in which people are born, grow and live, including the health system  
6 (World Health Organisation, WHO, 2009), which decrease offending, in a sample of  
7 young offenders in Argentina. The results suggested that those who had (1) integrated  
8 families, (2) educational and cultural opportunities, (3) made good academic progress,  
9 (4) healthy relationships that support and help, (5) stable living arrangements, (6)  
10 social conditions which reduced the use of psychoactive substances and alcohol  
11 abuse, were more likely to desist from offending.  
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20 In another Argentina study, Bobbio, Arbach and Illescas (2020) assessed 211  
21 young males aged 13 – 20 from the province of Cordoba. Of these 136 young males  
22 were from four secondary schools, and the remaining 75 were from a juvenile  
23 detention center. The results showed that offenders were significantly older, and less  
24 likely to be living with both their parents. In addition, the offender group scored  
25 significantly higher on each of the six risk factors assessed (low self-control, alcohol  
26 abuse, drug abuse, poor maternal parenting, antisocial peers, criminogenic  
27 neighbourhood). Interestingly, when the school and detention groups were mixed and  
28 then compared on their level of self-reported offending, those who had higher self-  
29 reported offending were higher on five of the six factors (not poor maternal parenting).  
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39 In their case-control study of 195 young incarcerated homicide offenders  
40 compared to 305 young offenders incarcerated for other crimes (e.g., robbery and sex  
41 offenses) in Argentina, Wiese et al. (2019) found that the two groups only differed on  
42 one of the many factors that were assessed. The two groups did not differ on  
43 considering the future consequences of one's actions, psychological adjustment,  
44 resistance to peer influence, or on an inventory of callous unemotional traits. The  
45 homicide group did score significantly higher on factor 4 of the psychopathy checklist  
46 PCL-YV; Forth, Kosson, & Hare, 2003), but this factor is based on an assessment of  
47 antisocial behaviour so is potentially tautological.  
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### 56 ***Low Empathy*** 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65

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One factor that has consistently been linked to an increased likelihood of offending in North American and Europe, and, in particular, to more serious repeat offending, is low empathy (e.g., Jolliffe & Farrington, 2021a). Eisenberg and colleagues (2018:2) defined empathy as “an affective response that stems from the apprehension or comprehension of another’s emotional state or condition and is similar to what the other person is feeling or would be expected to feel”. This definition is similar to that of Cohen and Strayer (1996, p. 988), who suggested that empathy is “the ability to understand and share in another’s emotional state or context”. Importantly, these definitions highlight that empathy is both a cognitive process (i.e., the ability to understand another’s emotional state) and an affective capacity (i.e., the sharing of the emotional state of another).

Empathy has been studied in relation to prosocial behavior and the inhibition of aggression and antisocial behavior (Eisenberg, Eggum & Di Giunta, 2010). In addition, there is evidence that those who commit offenses have lower empathy than those who do not. For example, a systematic review and meta-analysis of 35 studies which compared the levels of empathy (based on responses to questionnaires) of those who had committed offenses and those who had not, showed that offenders had both lower affective and cognitive empathy (Jolliffe & Farrington 2004). Interestingly, this study also showed that the difference in empathy between offenders and nonoffenders was greater for young offenders than for adult offenders. A more recent systematic review also showed that offenders had significantly lower empathy than nonoffenders, and that these differences were, again, greater for young males (van Langen, Wissink, van Vugt, Van der Stouwe, & Stams, 2014).

Given the link between low empathy and offending, it is perhaps not surprising that increasing empathy is commonly viewed as viable treatment target for reducing antisocial and criminal behavior. For example, empathy enhancement is commonly employed to reduce behavioral problems in children to reduce school bullying (Gaffney, Ttofi & Farrington, 2019), and to prevent criminal and sexual reoffending (Day, Casey & Gerace, 2010).

While an inverse relationship between the number of offenses and levels of affective and cognitive empathy might be theoretically anticipated, with those with lower empathy committing a greater number of offenses, the evidence for this is quite

1 limited. For example, both Deardorff, Finch, Kendall, Lira, & Indrisano (1975; 2  
3 independent studies) found that juvenile offenders showed lower cognitive empathy  
4 (measured using the Hogan Empathy Scale; Hogan, 1969) than a comparable group  
5 of nonoffenders. However, within the juvenile offending groups, no differences in  
6 empathy were noted between repeat offenders and one-time offenders. Similarly, in a  
7 Canadian study of 15 first-time young offenders and 14 repeat young offenders (mean  
8 age 17.4,  $sd=0.68$ ), Paluka (1997) found that these two groups did not differ  
9 significantly ( $d= -.12, -.85$  to  $.60$ ) in their levels of affective empathy as measured using  
10 the Questionnaire Measure of Emotional Empathy (QMEE; Mehrabian & Epstein,  
11 1972). Also, In a study of 216 incarcerated youth (mean age 16.4,  $sd=1.3$ ), in Portugal,  
12 Pechorro, Jolliffe & Nunes (2021) found only limited evidence of a relationship  
13 between the number of offenses that youths had committed and their level of affective  
14 ( $r= -.07, n.s.$ ) and cognitive ( $r= -.05, n.s.$ ) empathy measured using the Basic Empathy  
15 Scale (Jolliffe and Farrington, 2006).  
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26 The relationship between empathy and reoffending in young people has rarely  
27 been studied. Using a sample of first-time incarcerated young men in Germany (mean  
28 age 20.7,  $sd=2.0$ ), Bock and Hosser (2013) examined whether levels of empathy,  
29 measured using the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (Davis, 1983), was related to later  
30 reoffending. The results suggested that low Perspective Taking and low Empathic  
31 Fantasy were significantly related to reoffending 5 years after release, controlling for  
32 age, IQ, duration of imprisonment and type of index offence. Low empathy has been  
33 related to reoffending in adult samples in England (Jolliffe & Farrington, 2021b) and  
34 Canada (Koegl, 2021), with the results proving inconsistent.  
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44 To date there have been no studies in Argentina which compare the levels of  
45 empathy of one-time and repeat offenders. In fact, empathy has only recently been  
46 examined in Argentina as a possible explanation for prosocial (e.g., Urquiza & Casullo  
47 2006) or antisocial behavior. Moreno, Segatore & Tabullo (2019) examined the  
48 relationship between bullying in schools and empathy among Argentinian children and  
49 adolescents between the ages of 10 and 15 (162 girls and 116 boys). The authors  
50 found that higher levels of bullying correlated with lower scores on a measure of  
51 empathy, but this was only the case for cognitive empathy. In another important study,  
52 Nardecchia, Casari & Briccola (2016) examined the relationship between impulsivity  
53 and empathy, measured using the IRI (Davis, 1983), in a sample of 40 young offenders  
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1 (aged 16-18). The results suggested that impulsivity and empathy were negatively  
2 related.  
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4 There is a clear need for more research examining the cognitive and affective  
5 aspects of empathy in young offenders in Argentina, particularly to understand  
6 repeated offending in this group. The main aim of this paper is to evaluate whether  
7 repeat offenders have lower affective and/or cognitive empathy than one-time  
8 offenders and further, whether this relationship holds after controlling for other  
9 potentially important risk factors.  
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## 11 **METHOD**

### 12 ***Data collection procedure***

13 The current study was approved by the National Supreme Court of Argentina  
14 (NSCA), of which the first author is a member, having responsibility for the supervision  
15 of young offenders in juvenile tribunals.  
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17 Potential research participants and their parents/caregivers were informed  
18 about the purpose of the research study and were also informed that their participation  
19 was entirely voluntary. Furthermore, participants were instructed that their responses  
20 would be anonymous, but also that there were limits to this confidentiality because of  
21 the duty of care of the first author. Informed consent was also obtained from the  
22 parents/caregivers of the young people. Those who did not give informed consent, or  
23 whose parents/caregivers did not give consent, were not included in this study.  
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25 A standardized interview schedule was developed to assess the factors of  
26 interest in this study<sup>1</sup>. This schedule was administered verbally and registered in  
27 manuscript by the first author, who has wide experience in interviewing and  
28 supervising young offenders over decades, and this significantly contributed to the  
29 overall validity of the data collected. It is acknowledged that verbal administration  
30 risked introducing socially desirable responding (Sassenrath, 2019), but this approach  
31 was selected to overcome the potential limited literacy of the respondents (Creese,  
32 2016). After the data collection, the data was entered onto SPSS version 19.0 and  
33 analyzed.  
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<sup>1</sup> This study was part of a larger investigation (see Orlando, 2020).



## **Sample**

The convenience sample comprised young offenders who were convicted for at least one crime registered in the juvenile delinquency database from Buenos Aires (NSCA). Out of N=106 young offenders between the ages of 16 and 17 who were asked to collaborate, all agreed. These 106 young offenders comprised all juvenile cases during a two year time period, which is the period of monitoring of young offenders in Argentina, spanning from age 16 (which is the minimum age of criminal responsibility) until 18 (when individuals are held fully responsible for committing crimes).

A final sample of N=100 young offenders was available for data collection: 49 repeated young offenders ( $M = 16.3$ ,  $sd = 0.44$ ), and 51 one-time young offenders ( $M = 16.5$ ,  $sd = 0.51$ ). Six cases were excluded because they were acquitted of the crime by the Juvenile Law Court before the interview. Of the 57 young offenders who were initially one-time offenders, six of them became repeat offenders during the follow-up period and were included in the repeated offender group.

## **Measures**

**Empathy:** To assess empathy, the Spanish adaptation of the Basic Empathy Scale (Oliva Delgado et al., 2011; Jolliffe and Farrington 2006) was used. This version was validated on a sample of 2400 adolescents aged between 12 and 17 in Andalucía with a 9-item solution (4 affective items, 5 cognitive items) providing the best fit for the data. The affective scale assesses one's emotional reaction caused by the feelings of other people. An example item is: "after being with a friend who is sad for some reason, I usually feel sad". The cognitive scale refers to the extent to which the individual understands the emotions of others. An example item is: "when someone is depressed, I usually understand how they feel". In the current sample, the Cronbach's alpha of the affective empathy scale was 0.89, and for the cognitive scale it was 0.94.

**Family Criminality:** Family criminality was assessed by asking the participants and parents/caregivers whether an immediate family member (mother/father/sibling) had been convicted of a crime.

1 **School Achievement:** School achievement was assessed by asking the participants  
2 and parents/caregivers whether the young person had been required to repeat a year  
3 of schooling.  
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6 **Socioeconomic Status:** Socioeconomic status was assessed by asking the  
7 participants and parents/caregivers about their main form of income and where they  
8 lived. This was categorized into working class, poor class, or homeless. For the  
9 purposes of this research the categories of poor class and homeless were combined.  
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12 **Repeat Offending:** Repeat offending was coded for each young offender according  
13 to the official criminal records of delinquency from Buenos Aires, which belong to the  
14 National Supreme Court of Argentina (NSCA). Repeat offending was defined as any  
15 new contact with the criminal justice system after a first crime was committed,  
16 irrespective of crime type. Those who committed just one crime during the two-year  
17 monitoring period were classified as one-time offenders. In most cases, the offending  
18 status of the young people was known before the interview.  
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### 27 **Research Questions:**

- 28 1. Do repeat offenders have lower cognitive or affective empathy than one-time  
29 offenders?  
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- 31 2. If a relationship between empathy and repeat offending does exist, is this  
32 explained by family criminality, low school achievement or low socioeconomic  
33 status?  
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## 36 **RESULTS**

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38 Table 1 shows the average age and average scores on the affective and  
39 cognitive empathy scales, as well as the prevalence of family criminality, low school  
40 achievement and low socioeconomic status for the repeat and one-time offenders. For  
41 example, one-time offenders were significantly older than repeat offenders (16.5,  
42  $sd=0.5$  compared to 16.3,  $sd=0.4$ ,  $t=2.7$ ,  $p<.008$ ,  $d=0.66$ ). In addition, repeat offenders  
43 were found to have significantly lower affective empathy and cognitive empathy  
44 compared to one-time offenders. The standardized mean differences of these  
45 comparisons were  $d=2.4$  and  $d=2.3$  respectively, which are very high and suggest  
46 considerable differences. Repeat offenders were also significantly more likely to have  
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1 experienced family criminality, to be of low socioeconomic status and, in particular, to  
2 have low school achievement.

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4 \*\*\*\*\*Table 1 about here\*\*\*\*\*  
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7 The scores for each of the items on the revised BES for repeat and one-time  
8 offenders can be seen in Table 2. For example, the average score of the 51 repeat  
9 offenders on item 1 'After being with a friend who is sad...', was 2.8 (sd=0.76)  
10 compared to 4.0 (sd=0.35) for the one-time offenders. This was significant (t=10.09,  
11 p<.001), with a very large standardized mean effect size of d = 2.03. Repeat offenders  
12 scored significantly different from one-off offenders on each of the items.  
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19 \*\*\*\*\*Table 2 about here\*\*\*\*\*  
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21 For ease of exposition, individuals were dichotomized into a low or high  
22 affective empathy group and a low or high cognitive empathy groups based on their  
23 scores on these scales (see Farrington & Loeber, 2000). Those who scored in the  
24 lowest 25% on affective empathy comprised the low affective group, with the  
25 remaining 75% being the high affective group. Similarly, those who scored in the  
26 lowest 25% of cognitive empathy comprised the low cognitive group, with the  
27 remaining 75% being the high cognitive group. This allowed for comparisons using  
28 odds ratios (and the corresponding confidence intervals) as a measure of effect size.  
29 The odds ratio is a measure of effect centered around 1.0, and as a rule of thumb odds  
30 ratios of 2.0 (a doubling of the effect), or 0.5 (a halving of the effect) are considered  
31 important (Cohen, 1996). The inter-relationships between affective and cognitive  
32 empathy as well as family criminality, low school achievement and low socioeconomic  
33 status can be seen in Table 3.  
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46 Not surprisingly low affective and low cognitive empathy were found to be  
47 strongly and significantly related (OR=11.56, p<.0001). Low affective empathy was  
48 also strongly associated with low school achievement (OR=4.83, n.s.) and low SES  
49 (4.43, p<.01), but not with family criminality. Low cognitive empathy was strongly and  
50 significantly associated with low SES, and the magnitude of this association  
51 (OR=13.87, p<.001) was stronger than that between low affective empathy and low  
52 SES. Low cognitive empathy was also associated with low school achievement (OR=  
53 5.24, n.s.), but not family criminality (OR=1.23, n.s.).  
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\*\*\*\*Table 3 about here\*\*\*

Binary logistic regression was employed to examine whether low affective empathy and/or low cognitive empathy were independently related to repeated offending after controlling for the other explanatory factors. Forward stepwise regression was used because of the explanatory nature of this research (Cramer, 2003), with the six independent variables (age, affective empathy, cognitive empathy, family criminality, school achievement and SES) predicting repeated offending. The results can be seen in Table 4. Three variables were found to be significantly associated with repeat offending: low affective empathy (Partial OR=2.08,  $p<.05$ ), low cognitive empathy (Partial OR=2.14,  $p<.008$ ) and family criminality (Partial OR=11.14,  $p<.05$ ).

\*\*\*\*Table 4 about here\*\*\*\*

To illustrate the predictive power of the variables independently related to repeat offending, each individual was allocated a score from 0 to 3 depending on whether they possessed any of: low affective empathy, low cognitive empathy or family criminality. A total of 57 individuals had none of these three factors, 23 possessed one, and 20 possessed two or three. Only 19.3% of those who had one of these factors was a repeat offender, but 78.3% of those who possessed one factor were repeat offenders. All of those who had two or three of the important factors were repeat offenders.

One way of evaluating the predictive validity of a risk score is using the Area Under the Curve (AUC) of the Receiver Operating Characteristic (ROC; Swets, 1986). This produces a score ranging from 0.5 (chance prediction) to 1.0 (perfect prediction). The AUC of this prediction score was found to be 0.86 ( $p<.0001$ ), suggesting that this very basic risk score had very strong predictive validity.

## DISCUSSION

This study found that low affective empathy, low cognitive empathy and family criminality were independently related to repeated offending in a sample of young offenders in Argentina. This is an important contribution to the research literature on empathy and offending because there have only been a few previous studies which have compared one-time offenders with repeat offenders, all of which have produced

1 non-significant results. However, these previous studies used measures of empathy  
2 (Hogan Empathy Scale and Questionnaire Measure of Emotional Empathy) that have  
3 been heavily criticised for being poor measures (see Jolliffe & Farrington, 2006; van  
4 Langen et al., 2014). The importance of low empathy in explaining repeat offending is  
5 well supported by theory (e.g., Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990; Jolliffe & Farrington, 2007)  
6 and even by consensus amongst criminologists (Ellis, Cooper & Walsh, 2008), and  
7 now by empirical evidence using a stronger measure of empathy, the BES (Basto-  
8 Pereira & Farrington, 2021).  
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15 In addition, this research makes an important contribution to knowledge about  
16 potential risk factors for repeated offending in Argentina. There have only been a few  
17 such studies (e.g., Orlando, 2017) and some of these have focused on explaining self-  
18 reported persistent deviance (Bobbio, Arbach & Redondo Illescas, 2020), rather than  
19 official offending. As well as low affective and low cognitive empathy being related to  
20 repeated offending, in this study, family criminality, low school achievement and low  
21 SES were also strongly related. These risk factors have also been identified as  
22 important in explaining persistent and repeated offending in North America and  
23 Europe (Farrington, 2021a).  
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33 To the extent that more research conducted in the future continues to show that  
34 the same risk factors are related to persistent offending then the knowledge created  
35 in North America/Europe about theories (e.g., Moffitt, 1993) and approaches to reduce  
36 repeated offending could be translated to the Argentinian context. However, if different  
37 risk factors are implicated or if similar risk factors are implicated but with different  
38 magnitudes or combinations, then theories and approaches to reduce repeat offending  
39 unique to Latin America and Argentina will need to be developed.  
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47 It would be desirable to provide evidence-based interventions to reduce  
48 repeated offending as an alternative, or alongside incarceration. There is considerable  
49 evidence about the effectiveness of interventions in North America and Europe  
50 (Garrido & Morales, 2007; Koehler et al., 2013) as well as the overarching factors  
51 associated with their success (Lipsey, 2009). The findings of the current study have  
52 suggested that, in Argentina, low affective and low cognitive empathy could be  
53 considered promising intervention targets to reduce repeat offending among young  
54 offenders. However, low affective and low cognitive empathy were not the only factors  
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that were found to be independently related to repeat offending, and future research should test the extent to which low empathy may be related to repeat offending controlling for other risk factors.

The evidence about the effectiveness of interventions designed to address the empathy of offenders is relatively limited. In Singapore, Zhou, Gan, Hoo, Chong and Chu (2018) evaluated changes in empathy (measured using the BES) following an intensive six to eight-month violence prevention programme administered to 156 young offenders. The results showed that there were desirable increases in both affective and cognitive empathy, but this was only amongst those who were low on empathy at the commencement of the intervention. Similarly, in a study of 97 sex offenders detained in a therapeutic prison regime in Canada, Koegl (2021) found that increases in cognitive empathy were associated with a reduction in reoffending two years after release, controlling for age, the number of previous convictions and abstract reasoning. It therefore appears that empathy can increase for some young offenders and certain types of adult offenders, and that these desirable changes may be associated with corresponding reduction in repeat offending.

While low affective empathy and low cognitive empathy were strongly and significantly related to repeated offending, as this research was cross-sectional it is not possible to establish whether low empathy precedes repeated offending, or equally whether repeated offending may reduce empathy. It could also be that the criminal justice response to repeated offending results in a reduced capacity for empathy (e.g., Obsuth, Eisner, Malti & Ribeaud, 2015).

Further research needs to be carried out to understand the direction of the relationship between low empathy and repeated offending in Argentina. Prospective longitudinal studies are needed in which children's levels of empathy, as well as the presence of other important risk factors, are comprehensively assessed before the onset of antisocial behaviour. This would address a key shortcoming of the present and other studies that have thus far been conducted, namely establishing temporal ordering. In North America and Europe, these studies have produced a wealth of knowledge about persistent offenders (e.g., Jolliffe, Farrington, Piquero, Loeber, & Hill, 2017; Jolliffe, Farrington, Piquero, MacLeod, Van de Weijer, 2017), and the results have informed the development of evidence-based approaches to address this

undesirable behavior (Farrington, 2021b; Farrington & Welsh, 2006 Garrido & Morales, 2007).

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Considering the lack of both national and international researches (Farrington 2007; Loeber and Farrington 2012) in the juvenile population, this article contributes relevant information for the design and implementation of interventions aimed at the prevention and reintegration of young offenders. In understanding the relationship between empathy and offending, both affective and cognitive empathy would be expected to provide a unique contribution to this relationship (Jolliffe & Farrington 2006). In view of the necessity to investigate the causal links between empathy and offending the findings of the present study are relevant because they show factors which discriminate between recidivist and one-timer young offenders.

In this study repeat offenders in Argentina tended to have low affective and cognitive empathy. While further research and replications are needed to firmly establish this finding, the results suggest that interventions which increase the low empathy of repeat offenders may have a beneficial impact in reducing the likelihood of future offending in Argentina.

In summary, although empathy is not the unique cause of engaging in offenses, empirical evidence indicates that a lack of empathy is associated with certain types of offenses (Eisenberg, 2010). Whereas high empathy is considered as an individual protective factor, which decreases the probability of certain types of criminal behavior, a lack of empathy is assumed to have a facilitating influence on offending (Jolliffe & Farrington, 2004). In this respect, the findings of the present study provide evidence that contributes to the prevention of recidivism, since empathy training can be considered useful in reducing offending (Jolliffe & Farrington, 2004).

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# Empathy and Repeated Offending of Young Offenders in Argentina

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Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for the Sample

	Repeat Offenders	One-Time Offenders			
	<b>n=49</b>	<b>n=51</b>			
	<b>M (sd)</b>	<b>M (sd)</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>d</b>	<b>p</b>
<b>Age</b>	16.20 (0.41)	16.45 (0.50)	2.70	0.66	0.008
<b>Empathy</b>	<b>M (sd)</b>	<b>M (sd)</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>d</b>	<b>p</b>
Affective Empathy	9.45 (2.26)	13.69 (1.21)	11.65	2.33	0.0001
Cognitive Empathy	14.37 (3.62)	21.57 (2.26)	11.89	2.38	0.0001
Total Empathy	23.82 (4.99)	35.25 (2.87)	13.98	2.80	0.0001
<b>Other Factors</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>chi</b>	<b>d</b>	<b>p</b>
Family Criminality	20.4	7.8	3.3	0.61	0.07
Low School Achievement	98.0	76.5	10.2	1.49	0.001
Low Socioeconomic Status	75.5	39.2	13.4	0.87	0.001

Table 2. Comparison of BES Items Between Repeat and One-time offenders

Item	Repeat Offenders		One-time Offenders		t	d
	M	SD	M	SD		
After being with a friend who is sad for some reason, I usually feel sad	2.80	0.76	4.00	0.35	10.09	2.03
The feelings of others affect me easily	2.41	0.61	3.29	0.46	8.18	1.63
I get sad when I see people crying	2.35	0.69	3.29	0.5	7.80	1.55
When someone is depressed, I usually understand how they feel	2.78	1.05	4.12	0.48	8.20	1.65
I almost always realize when my friends are scared	3.12	0.78	4.47	0.58	9.84	1.97
I am often sad to see sad things on TV or in the movies	1.90	0.84	3.10	0.46	8.76	1.76
I can often understand how others feel even before they tell me	2.27	0.97	3.84	0.64	9.51	1.90
I can almost always notice when others are happy	2.94	0.90	4.51	0.58	10.43	2.09
I usually quickly realize when a friend is angry	3.27	0.81	4.63	0.53	9.92	1.99

All comparisons  $p < .0001$ .



Table 3. Interrelationships Between Factors

	Aff Emp	Cog Emp	Family Crim	Low Sch Achiev.	Low SES
Aff Emp		11.56***	1.11	4.83	4.43**
Cog Emp			1.23	5.24t	13.87***
Family Crim				2.49t	2.08
Low Sch Achieve					21.74***
Low SES					

\* p<.05, \*\* p<.01, \*\*\* p<.001 t= odds ratio calculated using the Haldane Anscombe correction

Table 4. Independent Predictors of Repeat Offending

<b>Variables</b>	<b>LRCS</b>	<b>p</b>	<b>Partial Odds Ratio</b>	<b>p</b>
Cognitive Empathy	87.91	0.0001	2.14	0.008
Family Criminality	8.78	0.003	11.14	0.05
Affective Empathy	7.34	0.007	2.08	0.05