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Editor's Note

To our esteemed readers, contributors, and advocates of interdisciplinary research,

On behalf of the Editorial Board, I present Volume 23 of the ECCSSA Journal. This volume underscores our commitment to exploring global issues through an interdisciplinary lens. Indeed, it reflects the association's 50th conference theme: Global Perspectives: The Social Sciences in a Connected World. The conference offered essential insights from disciplines including anthropology, economics, history, and sociology. Scholars highlighted the global interconnectedness of their research through topics such as digital nomadism, the emotional history of antebellum Southern culture, the transnational roots of nursing and teaching, and the global exchange of educational methods. Despite the variety of disciplines and topics, key themes across the disciples emerged such as the investigating the role of gender, giving voices to the silenced, and improving lives within disadvantaged communities. The conference was a testament to the importance of interdisciplinarity within all areas of study and work.

Collectively, the articles within this volume reflect the journal's mission to bridge disciplines, generate dialogue, and encourage actionable insights. Whether in the context of expanding financial opportunities for the disadvantaged in India, exploring key frameworks within the criminal justice system, considering the global view of the American Revolution, or exploring books that deal with war and genocide, the research discussed here continues to emphasize the world as perpetually interconnected.

We thank our contributors for their rigorous and meaningful work and readers for their continued support of ECCSSA's vision. Finally, we thank our peer reviewers for their dedication to upholding the high standards of social science research and discourse. Undoubtably, this journal would be unsustainable without their invaluable contributions to the process.

We hope this volume stimulates reflection, dialogue, and innovation in your fields of practice and study.

With sincere appreciation,

Allison R. Millward, M.A.

Editor-in-Chief, The ECCSSA Journal

Financial Inclusion in India: Driving Economic Growth and Reducing Poverty

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Abstract

Financial inclusion has become an important policy tool for promoting economic growth and reducing poverty in India. This study examines the relationship between financial inclusion, economic growth, and poverty reduction using a quantitative research approach based on secondary data from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), the World Bank, NITI Aayog, and the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MOSPI). Trend analysis and descriptive statistics are used to evaluate changes in financial inclusion, poverty, and economic growth over time. The findings show significant progress in financial inclusion, with India's Financial Inclusion Index increasing from 53.9 in 2021 to 67.0 in 2025. During the same period, India experienced strong economic growth and a substantial decline in poverty levels. Government initiatives such as the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY), digital payment systems, and direct benefit transfers have expanded access to financial services and improved economic participation. However, challenges remain, including inactive bank accounts, low financial literacy, and unequal access to digital technologies. The study concludes that while financial inclusion has contributed to economic development and poverty reduction, its effectiveness depends on complementary investments in education, digital infrastructure, and employment opportunities.

Introduction

Financial inclusion means equal and affordable access to financial services, including credit, savings, loans, and efficient payment services. According to the World Bank, financial inclusion fosters economic growth and employment, promotes economic empowerment of women, and contributes to eliminating poverty (World Bank, 2025). India makes an interesting case study because it has historically been a developing nation with a large share of the population lacking access to formal banking and financial services. Millions of Indians were 'unbanked' due to limited government initiatives, which led them to use cash or informal lenders that significantly limited their economic opportunities. Expanding financial access has been seen as a strategy to reduce poverty and support economic development by helping people securely save, borrow for investments, and receive government benefits directly. This paper will examine, through empirical evidence, how expanding access to banking and credit services impacts poverty reduction and economic growth in India. Consequently, this research focuses on core questions: Does financial inclusion promote economic growth in India? Does financial inclusion reduce poverty in India? How these programs expanded access to financial services among underserved populations and members of the lower castes; how this access influenced household welfare, entrepreneurship, and delivery of government benefits; and what barriers still prevent complete inclusion.

In 2014, India launched landmark financial initiatives like the *Pradhan Mantri Jan-Dhan Yojana* (PMJDY), which campaigned for households to open bank accounts. This initiative, along with digital payment systems, marked a major step toward financial inclusion (Ministry of Finance, 2014). As a result, bank account ownership increased from 35% of adults in 2011 to 80% in 2017 (Pruthi, 2018). This growth outpaced most low-income countries and even exceeded the average for lower-middle-income countries.

Through financial inclusion, poor households gained access to formal credit and savings tools that support entrepreneurship and investment. As a result, the overall economy benefitted because an increase in bank savings and loanable funds, boosted economic productivity. During this time, poverty fell from 22.5% in 2011 to around 10% in 2019, and over 271 million people were lifted out of multidimensional poverty (Economic Times, 2019; McCarty, 2019). The link between poverty reduction and financial inclusion shows that increased access leads to better economic outcomes. This paper supports that connection by analyzing PMJDY bank accounts, MUDRA microloans, and UPI digital payments all of which improve financial access. India's experience offers a model for other developing countries on how easy, widespread financial access can help build a more productive and inclusive economy.

Literature Review

Previous literature has indicated overarching theme: expanding credit and banking penetration increases the magnitude of growth and poverty alleviation. This, therefore, leads to development goals becoming more attainable and boosts the collective potential of the country. The World Bank has found that India can attain this boon through job creation, reducing vulnerability, and increasing investments in human capital (Klapper et. al., 2022). India has also increased investments in Human Capital by creating programs for the youth, which help develop their skill sets to better aid businesses of all sizes. More specifically, a 2023 analysis has shown that various measures to include the socioeconomically disadvantaged have positively correlated with the indicators India uses to trace its sustainable development (Pushp et. al., 2023). Pushp et. al. defines one measure as the number of bank accounts and credit uptake (2023). Despite the strides made, some problems continue to exist.

However, the literature leads in a direction of intent as researchers argue that account ownership is not enough as it does little to include the socioeconomically disadvantaged if there is no intent to use the bank account (Demirgüç-Kunt et al., 2018). Moreover, the quality of the service and the continuous usage of bank accounts play a crucial role in financial inclusion. What has been observed is that "35% of bank accounts remain inactive," although "78% of adults own a bank account" (Klapper et.

al., 2022, para. 1). Even though in 2021, the Indian government broke the gendered split in bank account ownership, the observed reality is still that women use bank accounts less than their male counterparts. One such example is that women are less likely to make digital payments due to lower digital literacy and access to technology. India needs to address this concern to continue its progression. Additionally, other methods have successfully bridged the gap in financial inclusion.

Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and Microfinance Institutions (MFIs) have played an equally crucial role in developing India's financial inclusion. Studies like that conducted by Banerjee et. al. has provided some critique of MFIs and their effect on poverty (2015). Specifically, MFIs have been a boon to women business owners who rely on these loans. SHGs are equally vital to developing India's financial inclusion, and women also rely on SHGs.

Research Methodology

This study applies a quantitative research methodology based on secondary data analysis. A time-series approach will be employed to analyze trends and relationships among financial inclusion, economic growth, and poverty indicators in India. The data is collected from reliable government and international organization sources, including the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), the World Bank, NITI Aayog, and the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MOSPI). The study covers the period from 2017 to 2025, based on the availability of the data, RBI's Financial Inclusion

Index (FI-Index), which was introduced in 2020; and poverty data collected over a range of ten years. The FI-Index serves as the independent variable, while economic growth and poverty reduction are measured using GDP growth rates and the Poverty Rate. Financial Inclusion Indicators includes, RBI Financial Inclusion Index (FI-Index), PMJDY accounts, and Digital payment transactions (UPI). The analysis will begin with trend analysis to examine changes in financial inclusion, economic growth, and poverty levels over time. It is expected that higher levels of financial inclusion will be associated with increased economic growth and lower levels of poverty, reflecting the role of accessible financial services in promoting inclusive economic development in India.

Analysis

Financial inclusion has been a long-term goal for India, and they've made serious progress over the past decade. In the 1960s, the Indian government nationalized several major banks to increase access in rural and underserved areas. But even though this helped build a basic banking presence, by 2011, only about one-third of Indian adults had a formal bank account (World Bank, 2022). Most low-income Indians still depended on risky informal systems like moneylenders or cash savings. It showed that a stronger push was needed to bring these people into the formal financial system.

This shift came in 2014 with the launch of *Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana* (PMJDY). The goal was to ensure each household had at least one bank account. These accounts were low barrier, meaning that there was no minimum balance, free debit cards, and minimal paperwork. Aadhaar IDs also made it easier for people without documents to open accounts.[1] The result was massive growth: over 125 million accounts were opened in the first year, and by 2023, that number passed 500 million (Ministry of Finance, 2023). It was called one of the largest financial inclusion drives in the world and earned a spot in the Guinness World Records (See Appendix A: Figure 1).

PMJDY made a big impact because it was linked with India's digital tools. The government introduced the JAM Trinity—Jan Dhan accounts, Aadhaar IDs, and mobile phones— to make Direct Benefit Transfers (DBTs) possible. People received subsidies or pensions directly into their accounts without intermediaries. This made payments faster and reduced fraud. It also saved the government around $33 billion by avoiding duplicate or fake beneficiaries (IMF, 2023). The World Bank argued that without JAM, it would have taken India 47 years to hit 80% inclusion, but with it, India did it in only six (World Bank, 2022).

Next, the government launched the MUDRA scheme in 2015, which offered small, collateral-free loans through the *Pradhan Mantri MUDRA Yojana* (PMMY). These loans were split into three types, *Shishu*, *Kishore*, and *Tarun*, and their allocation depended on how much the borrower needed. Generally, they were meant for people like

[1] An Aadhaar ID is a 12-digit identifier ID issued by the Indian government. See: What is Aadhar? https://uidai.gov.in/en/my-aadhaar/about-your-aadhaar.html

vendors, artisans, or microbusinesses who didn't have access to traditional credit. By mid-2024, over 487 million loans were disbursed, worth around ₹29.79 trillion[2] (~$360 billion) with 66 million from 2023–2024 alone (Business Standard, 2024; Press Information Bureau, 2023).

However, MUDRA's biggest accomplishment was its outreach to women, who made up 68% of account holders; indeed, many of the women were from disadvantaged groups like Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (STs), and Other Backward Classes (OBT) (Ministry of Finance, 2023). (See Appendix A: Figure 1). MUDRA helped the women start or grow small businesses and support their families. Another major part of this inclusion experiment is the rise of Unified Payments Interface (UPI). Launched in 2016, UPI allows individuals to send and receive money instantly through a mobile app. It was hailed as fast, free, and super simple — it was even accessible to first-time users. Back in 2016, barely anyone used UPI, but this changed especially during the COVID-19 pandemic when UPI helped people avoid using cash. By October 2024, it was handling 16 billion transactions per month. It now handles about 75–80% of all retail digital payments in India (NPCI, 2024). Today, even auto drivers and fruit vendors have QR codes taped to their carts to facilitate UPI transactions (See Appendix A: Figure 2).

[2] Indian Rupee.

In addition to PMJDY, MUDRA, and UPI, India launched other efforts to expand inclusion — like Payment Banks, Small Finance Banks, and banking correspondents who bring services to rural areas. The government also pushed financial literacy; though only 24% of adults are financially literate, the Financial Inclusion Index rose from 53.9 in 2021 to 67 in 2025, showing steady improvement (Klapper, et al., 2015; RBI, 2025). Consequently, there is a steady increase in India's Financial Inclusion Index (FI-Index) from 53.9 in 2021 to 67.0 in 2025, indicating significant progress in expanding access to and usage of formal financial services (See: Appendix A, Table 2). The index increased by 13.1 points over the five-year period, representing an overall growth of approximately 24.3 percent. This rise suggests continuous improvements in the availability, accessibility, and quality of financial services across the country. The data further indicates the trend in India's Financial Inclusion Index from 2021 to 2025 (See: Appendix A, Figure 3). This growth was the result of Government initiatives discussed before such as the *Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana* (PMJDY), the rapid adoption of digital payment platforms such as UPI, increased mobile banking usage, expansion of financial literacy programs, and greater access to insurance and pension products have all strengthened financial inclusion.

Overall, the trend indicates that India has made substantial progress toward creating a more inclusive financial system. The consistent rise in the FI-Index suggests that a larger share of the population is gaining access to banking, credit, savings, insurance, and digital payment services. This improvement is expected to support economic growth by encouraging savings and investment while also contributing to poverty reduction through greater financial security and access to economic opportunities. Strong policies, digital tools, and a focus on equity helped India build an inclusive system in under a decade. However, changes impacted poverty, business growth, and the economy, and what challenges remain.

India's financial inclusion initiatives have significantly contributed to poverty reduction through multiple channels. The expansion of bank account ownership allowed poor households to securely save and access modest interest-bearing accounts (World Bank, 2026). Before PMJDY, families relied on cash savings or gold, which were vulnerable to theft or depletion. Millions of low-income individuals now have access to bank accounts to build small financial buffers, increasing their ability to manage economic shocks. These accounts have also become key vehicles for government welfare schemes. In 2022–23 alone, over ₹690,000 crore (~$85 billion) was dispersed via DBTs (Press Information Bureau, 2024). Households receiving DBTs through PMJDY accounts showed improved welfare outcomes due to predictable, direct payments (World Bank, 2026).

Access to credit through the MUDRA scheme has further supported poverty reduction. By mid-2024, over 487 million MUDRA loans were disbursed (Business Standard, 2024). Many first-time borrowers used small loans for productive investments—like farmers purchasing better equipment or micro-entrepreneurs expanding their businesses. With 69% of these loans going to women (Ministry of Finance, 2023), inclusion efforts have economically empowered marginalized groups. Research on microfinance confirms positive impacts on business expansion for borrowers compared to non-borrowers (Banerjee et al.). Financial inclusion has also increased resilience. PMJDY accounts provide overdrafts up to ₹10,000, acting as safety nets. During COVID-19, these accounts were used to quickly deliver ₹500 monthly payments to women and gas subsidies to millions (IMF). Additionally, over 70 million citizens enrolled in government micro-insurance schemes like PMJJBY and PMSBY via their bank accounts, providing critical protection against income shocks (Klapper et al.). Research demonstrates the share of India's population living below three international poverty thresholds—$3.00, $4.20, and $8.30 per day (2021 PPP)—from 1977 to 2022. The data show a substantial decline in poverty over the period, reflecting significant improvements in living standards, economic development, and income levels (See: Appendix A, Table 3). At the $3.00 per day poverty line, the poverty rate declined dramatically from 59.7% in 1977 to 5.3% in 2022, representing a reduction of more than 54 percentage points. The most significant decline occurred after 2004, when rapid economic growth, rising employment opportunities, and expanded social welfare programs contributed to lifting millions of people out of extreme poverty. The poverty rate fell from 46.4% in 2004 to 27.1% in 2011 and further to 5.3% in 2022, indicating remarkable progress in reducing extreme poverty. A similar trend is observed at the $4.20 per day poverty line, where the poverty rate decreased from

82.9% in 1977 to 23.9% in 2022. Although a larger proportion of the population remains below this higher threshold, the decline demonstrates substantial improvements in household incomes and economic well-being over time. At the $8.30 per day poverty line, poverty remains relatively high but has still declined from 97.4% in 1977 to 82.1% in 2022. This suggests that while extreme poverty has fallen sharply, a significant share of the population continues to face economic vulnerability and has not yet reached higher income levels associated with greater economic security.

Overall, the data indicate that India has achieved considerable success in reducing poverty over the last four decades. The decline in poverty coincided with economic reforms, increased urbanization, expansion of education, technological advancements, and improved access to financial services. The findings support the view that sustained economic growth and greater financial inclusion have played important roles in improving living standards and reducing poverty. However, the relatively high poverty rate at the $8.30 per day threshold suggests that challenges remain in achieving broad-based prosperity and reducing economic vulnerability among lower income households. Extreme poverty dropped from 22.5% in 2011 to 10.2% in 2019 and rural poverty falling from 26.3% to 11.6% in the same period (World Bank, 2025). (See Appendix A, Figure 4) Between 2014 and 2017, as financial access surged, the income share of the bottom 40% improved slightly after years of stagnation (World Bank, 2005).

Beyond poverty reduction, financial inclusion has bolstered India's economic growth. During the early years of the study period, India maintained relatively high growth rates, with GDP growing by 7.5% in 2015 and 8.0% in 2016 (See: Appendix A: Table 4). However, growth gradually slowed to 6.8% in 2017 and 6.45% in 2018, before declining sharply to 3.87% in 2019. This slowdown reflected weakening domestic demand, reduced investment activity.

The most significant decline occurred in 2020, when GDP contracted by 5.78% due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Nationwide lockdowns, supply chain disruptions, reduced consumer spending, and business closures led to a severe economic downturn. Despite this setback, India demonstrated a strong recovery in the following years. GDP growth rebounded to 9.69% in 2021, reflecting the reopening of the economy, increased government spending, and recovery in consumption and investment. Growth remained robust at 7.61% in 2022 and 9.19% in 2023, supported by strong domestic demand, infrastructure investment, and rapid digital transformation.

In 2024, GDP growth moderated to 6.49%, but remained among the highest growth rates among major economies. Although lower than the post-pandemic rebound years, this rate indicates continued economic resilience and sustained financial inclusion expansion. The GDP growth trend also coincides with significant changes in financial inclusion during recent years (See: Appendix A, Figure 5). As access to banking services, digital payments, savings accounts, and credit facilities expanded, more individuals and businesses were able to participate in economic activities. This suggests that financial inclusion may have contributed to supporting economic growth by facilitating investment, entrepreneurship, and financial stability.

While the growth of financial inclusion in India has been impressive, scholars' debate whether increased access to financial services necessarily translates into economic growth and poverty reduction. Supporters argue that access to banking, credit, insurance, and digital payment systems enables households to save, invest, manage risks, and participate more effectively in the economy. Government initiatives such as *Jan Dhan Yojana*, Direct Benefit Transfers (DBT), and the expansion of digital payments have significantly increased financial access, particularly among low-income populations.

However, critics challenge that access alone does not guarantee meaningful financial inclusion and additional issues persist. Many bank accounts opened under financial inclusion programs remain inactive or have low transaction volumes. In addition, access to financial services does not automatically create employment opportunities or increase household incomes. Poor households may possess bank accounts but still lack sufficient savings, creditworthiness, or financial literacy to benefit fully from the formal financial system. Another concern is the digital divide. Although digital financial services have expanded rapidly, disparities in internet access, smartphone ownership, education, and digital literacy continue to limit participation among rural populations, women, and elderly individuals. Consequently, the benefits of financial inclusion may be distributed unevenly across different social and economic groups. Finally, the excessive access to credit can increase household indebtedness rather than reduce poverty. Without adequate financial education and consumer protection, vulnerable households may accumulate debt that worsens their economic situation. Therefore, financial inclusion should be accompanied by financial literacy programs, employment creation, income growth, and strong regulatory oversight.

The Indian experience suggests that financial inclusion is an important tool for promoting economic development, but it should not be viewed as a standalone solution to poverty. Sustainable poverty reduction depends on a combination of financial access, quality education, healthcare, infrastructure development, job creation, and inclusive economic growth. Thus, while the evidence indicates a positive relationship between financial inclusion, economic growth, and poverty reduction, the effectiveness of financial inclusion ultimately depends on broader socioeconomic conditions and the ability of individuals to utilize financial services productively.

Conclusion

India's experience over the past decade provides compelling evidence that expanding financial inclusion can be a powerful tool for poverty reduction and inclusive economic growth. By opening over half a billion bank accounts, extending credit to micro-entrepreneurs, and building a world-class digital payments infrastructure, India has empowered vast segments of its population that were previously excluded from formal finance. These efforts have led to measurable improvements in socioeconomic outcomes. Poverty has fallen to record lows, with millions of poor households benefiting from direct transfers, savings, and credit access. Economic growth has become more broad-based as rural and low-income communities join the formal economy. In short, India's recent growth story has been in large part due to the deliberate inclusion of the underprivileged into financial systems.

However, about one in three Indian accounts lie dormant, highlighting the need for customer education, relevant products, and trust-building. Financial literacy programs should be expanded through schools and grassroots efforts, while user-friendly digital tools (like voice assisted interfaces in local languages) can help semi-literate users engage more fully. There is also a need to bridge last-mile gaps so that no citizen is left outside the financial grid. Continued investment in rural banking infrastructure and mobile coverage remains crucial.

To increase usage, the government and financial institutions should develop tailored products like simplified loans, micro-savings with prizes, or insurance for health and crops. Linking *Jan Dhan Yojana* accounts with micro-insurance or offering higher interest for consistent savings are promising strategies. Partnering with SHGs, hiring more female agents, and expanding outreach to women can help close gender gaps.

Policymakers must also monitor for unintended consequences like over-indebtedness and expand financial education on responsible borrowing.

In conclusion, financial inclusion, economic growth, and poverty reduction have generally moved in favorable directions in India. Nevertheless, the relationship is not necessarily causal or automatic. Increased financial access may create opportunities for economic participation, but its impact depends on factors such as income levels, employment opportunities, digital literacy, and financial awareness. Therefore, policymakers should focus not only on expanding access to financial services but also on improving the effective usage of those services. Future policies should emphasize financial literacy, digital infrastructure, consumer protection, and income-generating opportunities to ensure that financial inclusion contributes meaningfully to long-term economic development and poverty reduction.

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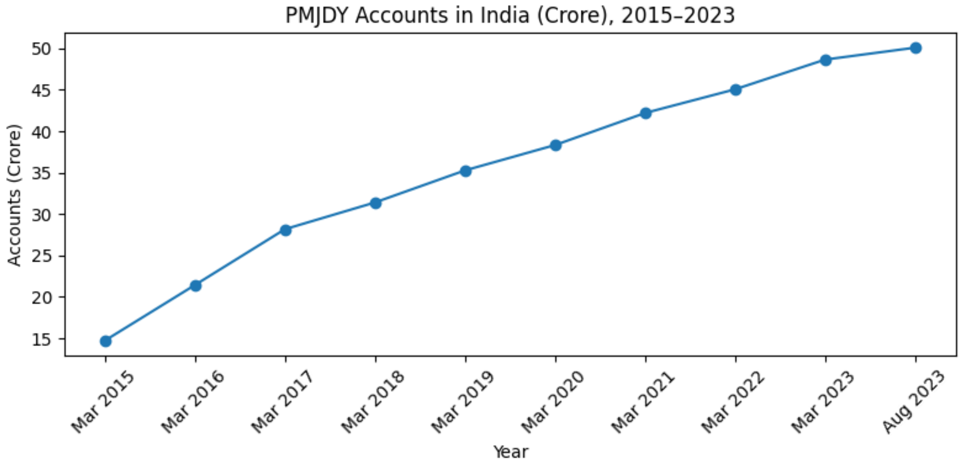
Appendix A

Tables and Figures

Figure 1

Growth in PMJDY Bank Accounts in India (2015–2023)



Note. The chart shows the cumulative growth of Jan Dhan accounts under the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana.

Table 1

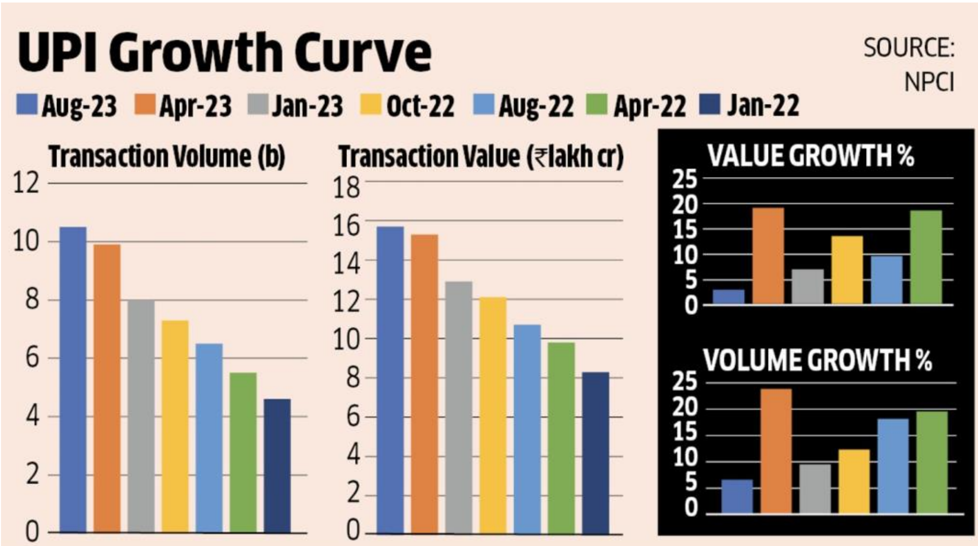
Share of MUDRA Loans Disbursed to Women Entrepreneurs (as of 2023)

	No. of A/Cs (in crore)	**Sanctioned Amount (in Rs. Lakh crore)**
All India	32.11	17.00
Out of which		
Women Entrepreneurs	21.73	7.42
% share of Women Entrepreneurs	**68%**	**44%**

Note: 68% of loan accounts and 44% of the sanctioned amount went to women entrepreneurs. Source: Ministry of Finance (2023).

Figure 2

Monthly UPI Transaction Volumes in India (2016–2023)



Note: Based on NPCI data. The chart shows UPI's rapid rise as India's dominant digital payment platform (Economic Times, 2023).

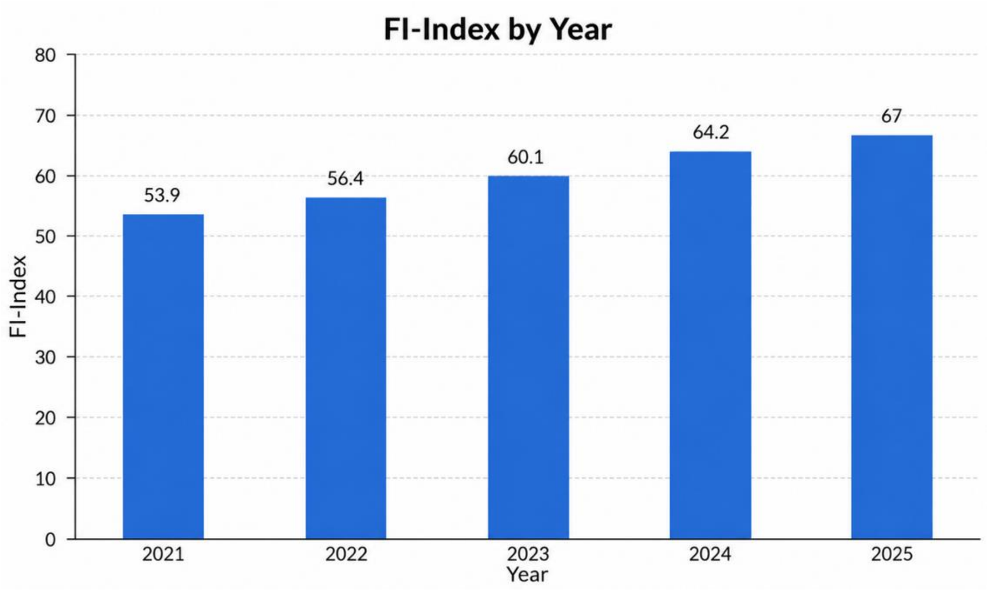
Table 2:

Financial Inclusion Index in India (2021–2025)

Year	FI-Index
2021	53.9
2022	56.4
2023	60.1
2024	64.2
2025	67.0

Figure 3

Trend in India's Financial Inclusion Index (2021–2025)



Note: This is from Financial Inclusion Index for India. RBI Bulletin (2025)

Table 3

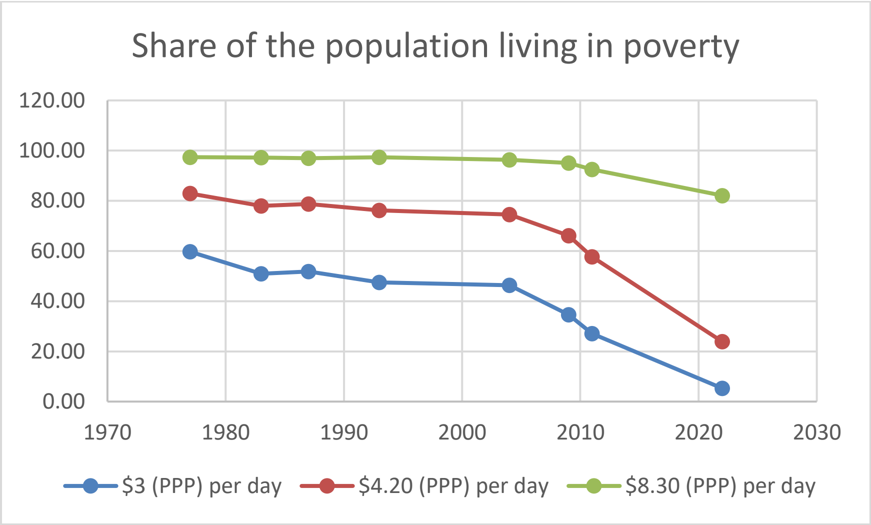
Share of Population at Poverty Level

Year	$3 (PPP) per day	$4.20 (PPP) per day	$8.30 (PPP) per day
1977	59.70	82.90	97.40
1983	50.90	78.00	97.20
1987	51.80	78.70	97.00
1993	47.50	76.20	97.30
2004	46.40	74.50	96.30
2009	34.60	66.10	95.00
2011	27.10	57.70	92.50
2022	5.30	23.90	82.10

Note: Share of the population living in poverty at $3.00 per day, $4.20 per day,
$8.30 per day (2021 PPP) (1977-2022) (World Bank, 2026).

Figure 4

Share of the Population Living in Poverty



Note. Chart retrieved from World Bank (2026).

Table 4

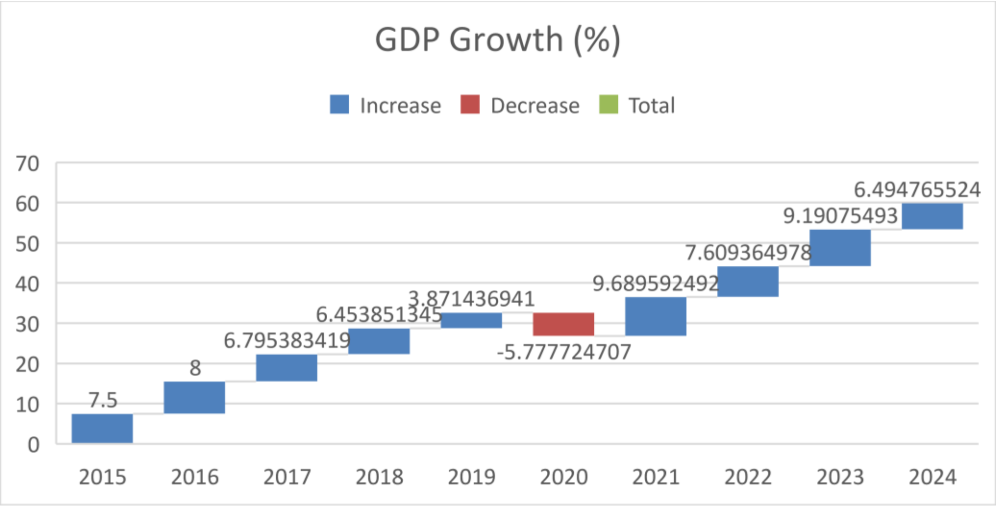
GDP Growth Rate in India

Year	**GDP Growth (%)**
2015	7.50
2016	8.00
2017	6.80
2018	6.45
2019	3.87
2020	-5.78
2021	9.69
2022	7.61
2023	9.19
2024	6.49

Note: Data retrieved from the World Development Indicators (2024).

Figure 5

GDP Growth Rate (2015-2024)



Note: Chart retrieved from World Development Indicators(2024).

Understanding Gang Membership and Neighborhood Factors Influence on Juvenile Perceptions of Police

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Abstract

As gatekeepers of society, police officers have been entrusted with an abundance of individual discretion, professional power, and legal authority over the citizens they serve, protect, and control. Police legitimacy studies have extensively focused on adults, neglecting adolescents' perceptions. Studying the juveniles' perception of police legitimacy is significant due to their extensive contact with the police (Finnane, 1994; Loader, 1996), and findings suggest that youth tend to have negative attitudes toward the police (Hurts & Frank, 2000), particularly among those with gang affiliation (Brown & Benedict, 2002; Duran, 2008). Youth's perception of police legitimacy, irrespective of their delinquent background, also varies based on their gender (Esbensen, 2009; Taylor et al., 2001) and race and ethnicity (Weitzer & Touch, 1999; Warren, 2011), which is rarely addressed in a single study. This study uses a nationally representative youth sample from the "Research on Pathways to Desistance [Maricopa County, AZ and Philadelphia County, PA]:2000-2010" to analyze the impact of demographics, gang membership, and neighborhood factors on the youth perceptions of police legitimacy. This study will examine the differences among gender, race, ethnicity, and neighborhood factors on the perceptions of police legitimacy among juveniles with gang membership.

Keywords: juvenile, gang membership, neighborhood factors, police legitimacy.

Introduction

Over the years, juvenile-related gang offenses have increased, and the extent of these offenses and their understanding has been on the rise recently. Recent studies have extensively categorized juvenile gang involvement and its related factors into risk and protective factors (Decker et al., 2013; Howell, 2012; Katz and Fox, 2010; O'Brien et al., 2013; Tobin, 2008). These risk and protective factors can be categorized into individual, family, neighborhood, and school factors (Higginson et al., 2018).

Individual factors include psychological and biological characteristics of adolescents that increase their susceptibility to engage in delinquent behaviors (Herrenkohl et al., 2000). Family-related factors include single households, family socio-economic status, and socialization (Howell & Egley, 2005; Thale & Falkenburger, 2006). Neighborhood factors include crime levels, gun violence, and drugs (Katz & Fox, 2010; Sanders et al., 2009; Tobin, 2008), along with neighborhood disorganization (Howell, 2012).

Studies have shown that neighborhood disadvantage increases gang activity and membership (Rosenfeld et al., 1999; Tita & Ridgeway, 2007). Neighborhood disadvantage provides adolescents with limited legitimate economic opportunities and lower positive perceptions of the future, making them susceptible to engaging with gangs that provide status, protection, and also provide the prospect of income (Bellair & McNulty, 2009). Bellair and McNulty (2009) study results indicate that gang membership and its related activities are high in disadvantaged neighborhoods and also limit the legitimate economic opportunities, leading to engaging in delinquent behavior, which increases their interaction with the police.

Literature Review

Procedural Justice

Procedural justice refers to the process by which citizens assess whether they were treated fairly (Tyler & Wakslak, 2004) and whether they are satisfied or dissatisfied with the treatment. Procedural justice includes the following. First, citizen participation, which refers to meaningful interaction between citizens and the police. Second, fairness and neutrality where police are perceived as exhibiting neutral decision-making ability and treating citizens equally. Third, dignity and respect, which refers to police treating citizens courteously through interpersonal treatment. Fourth, trustworthy motives, including those of the police, are perceived as involving honest intentions (Novich, 2016).

Therefore, experiences of procedural justice instill belief in police legitimacy (Sunshine & Tyler, 2003). Procedural justice also enhances conformity to the law and to the police (Sunshine & Tyler, 2003) and inspires greater compliance with the law (Lind & Tyler, 1988; McCluskey et al., 1999) by creating a sense of moral obligation. Citizens who perceive officers as employing their powers through a fair and just process are more likely to be supportive of police use of discretion (Sunshine & Tyler, 2003)

Whereas, citizens who believe that the police were unfair (including racially discriminatory policing) have lower trust and support for police officers (Tyler & Wakslak, 2004). Perceptions of police legitimacy are influenced by citizens' satisfaction with police encounters, compliance with police rules and cooperation with the police (Sunshine & Tyler, 2003; Tyler, 1990; Tyler & Huo, 2002). The previously mentioned perceptions are specifically about adults (Hinds, 2009). However, studies have found that people's attitudes are largely influenced by age. Higher negative perceptions have been found among adolescents (Hurst et al.,2024).

Neighborhood Factors on Police Protections

Neighborhood factors such as increased presence of adolescents and young adults, higher levels of disorder, and low social control increase cynicism towards the law, resulting in more crime (Bucci, 2021). Scholars have proposed that an individual's obedience to the law results from their neighborhood conditions (Bursik & Grasmick, 1993). For example, higher levels of perceived neighborhood disorder influence individuals' perceptions towards police earlier than the racial effect (Berg et al., 2016; Wolfe et al., 2016).

It is believed that the tension between citizens and police in disadvantaged neighborhoods may weaken the perceptions of procedural justice. It is in disadvantaged neighborhoods that police are more likely to engage in misconduct (Kane, 2002) and abuse their authority (Fagan & Davies, 2000), distributing police coercion resulting in under- or over policing in such communities (Kane, 2003; Kubrin & Weitzer, 2003).

Walker (1992) suggests that among residents of disadvantaged neighborhoods, two concerns are articulated regarding under- or overpolicing. Firstly, police are overly aggressive during pat-down searches, arrests, and coercive authority, which leads to alienation and conflict between police and adolescents due to their increased contact with the police (Kane, 2005). Secondly, residents also argue that police are overtly unresponsive to crime and deviance, leaving them unprotected from offenders (Kane, 2005).

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Demographics and Perceptions towards Police Legitimacy

Female Juvenile Perceptions towards Police Legitimacy. Academic research has examined gender disparities among juveniles in perceptions of police legitimacy, but explanations for weaker female perceptions are often underdeveloped (Fine et al., 2022; Hinds, 2008; Morrow & Vickovic, 2023). By understanding the unique issues that shape female youths' perspectives, it is possible to implement a reform focused on improving police-community relations through gender-specific policies (Correia et al., 1996; Piccirillo, 2024). Lack of seriousness in investigations, victimization, and vicarious experiences, such as officers' neglect of duty, physical abuse, or rude and unfair citizen treatment (Hurst et al., 2005) are all driving factors in diminished bonds between females and law enforcement (Hitchens et al., 2018; Hurst et al., 2005; Piccirillo, 2024).

As a child, exposure to misconduct involving a third party can leave a lasting impression on law enforcement (Harris & Jones, 2020). Expanding on this concept, Novich & Hunt (2018) investigated that vicarious experiences can contribute to negative attitudes, distrust, and fear towards the police, all of which undermine the fundamental principles of police legitimacy. Female juveniles have been found to have higher empathetic distress when compared to their male counterparts (Smith & Rose, 2011), which can explain the unique impact of vicarious police misconduct on female perception (Hitchens et al., 2017; Hurst et al., 2005).

There is also a widely held view that the police are ill-equipped to deal with violence against women (Piccirillo, 2024; The Office of Community Oriented Policing Services et al., n.d.; Vopni, 2006). Greeson et al. (2015) in their study identified that the adolescent females were often met with victim blaming, judgment, and skepticism by law enforcement when reporting sexual assault. Not only do these negative experiences impact the individual themselves, but as discussed earlier, they evoke weakened perceptions of police legitimacy in the broader community through empathetic connections.

Racial Minority Gang Membership Perceptions towards Police Legitimacy. Racial minority gang members may hold less favorable attitudes towards police due to excessive use of force, verbal harassment, and policing practices applied discriminatorily (Borrero, 2001; Novich & Hunt, 2016; Novich & Hunt, 2018; Ortiz, 2023). Oftentimes, law enforcement will concentrate on communities with a large population of racial and ethnic minorities and use their discretion in an unlawful manner (Miller, 2015). In these disadvantaged neighborhoods, police have been found to use higher levels of force than in white, non-ethnic minority communities (Chapman, 2012; Terrill & Reisig, 2003). Herbert (1997) suggests that law enforcement is highly aware of the social dynamics or gang presence in an area and will patrol in accordance with neighborhood order rather than the law.

Stop-and-frisk, a practice largely attributed to racial profiling (see Floyd v. City of New York), disproportionately impacts lower socio-economic, nonwhite, and younger individuals at an alarming rate, with inappropriate uses of force often being coupled with this practice (Legewie, 2016; Lenehan, 2017). For racial/ethnic minorities, use of force may look like subjection to arm-twisting, being shoved against a car or other structure, and bodily force by an officer (Borrero, 2001; Fratello et al., 2013). On top of physical abuse and discriminatorily applied policing practices, gang members are often exposed to verbal harassment (Novich, 2016; Weitzer & Tuch, 2004).

Novich and Hunt (2017) concluded that participants reported that when they were stopped due to legitimate suspicion of criminal activity, police frequently used foul language, threatening statements, and/or disrespectful tones of voice. Borrero (2001) substantiates this claim by expanding verbal threats to include killing, injuring, sexually harassing, or arresting the individual. To conclude, earlier literature supports that physical and verbal harassment found in police interactions with minority gang members largely contributes to weakened attitudes and perceptions of police legitimacy (Borrero, 2001; Fratello et al., 2013; Novich, 2016; Weitzer & Tuch, 2004).

Purpose of the Study

The importance of studying adolescents' perceptions of police legitimacy is due to juveniles having excessive contact with the police (Finnane, 1994), unsupervised contact with the police (Cunneen & White, 1995), and police use of discretionary power while dealing with youth (Cunneen & White, 1995). It is also significant to note that contacts with the police leave a lasting impression on juveniles and shape their perceptions of procedural justice (Easton & Dennis, 1969).

Despite these explanations of the importance of understanding the relationship between perceptions of police legitimacy among youth, research examining youth is scant. Adolescence is the period where attitudes are formed towards police (Hinds, 2009) and such attitudes tend to have a lasting impact on the juveniles. According to Hinds (2009) adolescents with higher negative perceptions towards police are more likely to oppose police authority, and other legal and social institutions.

Among police-citizen interactions, the most influential factors are gender, race, neighborhood factors, and policing styles. There is limited emphasis on how gang members experience procedural justice and how their perceptions of procedural justice are established. Gang members have constant encounters with police and particularly minority groups from low socio-economic neighborhoods (Duran, 2008; Madeleine, 2016), and such encounters are strengthened by higher gang activities

(Papachristos et al., 2012). The common problems gang members experience with police officers are intimidation, abuse, and stereotyping (Katz &Webb, 2006).

Demographic variables, such as race/ethnicity, gender, age, and neighborhood factors, significantly influence youth's perceptions of police legitimacy (Brown & Benedict, 2002). Race is one of the prominent factors predicting the perceptions of police legitimacy (Weitzer & Tuch, 1999). African Americans have higher rates of negative attitudes toward police than Whites and other racial minority groups (Warren, 2011). In contrast, Latinas have a more favorable attitude toward police than African Americans but less favorable than Whites (McCluskey et al., 2008). Females have more favorable attitudes towards the police than men (Brick et al., 2009).

Studies have shown that gender, race/ethnicity, and excessive neighborhood policing strategies do influence perceptions towards police legitimacy (Novich, 2016), fewer studies have examined gang-involved youth perceptions of legitimacy. Gang-involved youth may have excessive police contact, indicating the need to study gang members from disadvantaged neighborhoods about their perceptions of police legitimacy. Earlier studies with regards to gang membership and neighborhood disorganization have emphasized the association between these two variables with regards to gang violence (Fagan, 1989; Howell & Decker, 1999; Klein, Maxson, & Cunningham, 1991), gangs and crime (Bellair, 1997, 2000; Markowitz et al., 2001; Morenoff et al., 2001) and limited emphasis on gang membership and neighborhood factors impacting procedural justice views.

Therefore, this study examines the relationship between youth demographic characteristics, gang membership, neighborhood factors and perceptions of police legitimacy. This study is particularly important for the following reasons. First, limited studies have examined the relation between gang membership, neighborhood factors, and procedural justice. Second, procedural justice studies have emphasized the importance of legitimacy afforded to all individuals, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, neighborhood factors, or delinquent behavior. Including gang membership to explain procedural perceptions and neighborhood factors provides a better understanding of how procedural justice opinions form. Third, it is vital to understand how juveniles with gang membership perceive legitimacy and procedural justice perceptions since not all gang members engage in delinquent behavior. Therefore, including White, Black, and Hispanic male and female adolescents will explain the following research questions.

RQ1: Do gender, race/ethnicity, gang membership, and neighborhood factors influence youth perceptions of procedural justice?

> **H01:** Gender does not influence youth perceptions of procedural justice.
>
> **H02:** Race/ethnicity does not influence youth perceptions of procedural justice.
>
> **H03:** Gang membership does not influence youth perceptions of procedural justice.

H04: Neighborhood factors do not influence youth perceptions of procedural justice.

RQ2: Does the interaction between gang membership and race/ethnicity, gang membership and neighborhood factors influence youth perceptions of procedural justice?

H02a: The interaction between gang membership and race/ethnicity background has no influence on youth perceptions of procedural justice.

H02b: The interaction between gang membership and neighborhood factors has no influence on youth perceptions of procedural justice.

Research Methodology

This study uses a quantitative research approach and a secondary dataset, Research on Pathways to Desistance [Maricopa County, AZ and Philadelphia County, PA]: Subject Measures, 2000-2010, from the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR). This longitudinal dataset includes 1,354 adjudicated serious juvenile offenders, aged 14 to 18 at the time of recruitment for the study (Mulvey, 2016). It assessed their transition into early adulthood from November 2000 through March 2010, using data from Juvenile and adult courts in Maricopa County (Phoenix), Arizona (N = 654), and Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania (N = 700) (Mulvey, 2016). Data collection for the study was through the enrollment of juveniles, conducted over 26 months from November 2000 to January 2003. The study relied primarily on selfreports from serious juvenile offenders collected through baseline and follow-up interviews (Mulvey, 2016).

The Pathways dataset was collected through computer-assisted interviews. At baseline, the juveniles were White (20%), Black (41%), Hispanic (34%), and other racial/ethnic groups (5%). This dataset has a predominantly male population (86%). For the current research, baseline interviews are utilized. Since the procedural justice variable examines different factors across the interview period, the current study used baseline interviews. For example, the procedural justice measure assesses his/her experiences with staff treatment at the facility (Mulvey, 2016).

Variable Measurement

The demographic variables, such as gender, race and ethnicity, are included in the study. Gender (both males and females), race and ethnicity (White, Black, and Hispanic). The independent variables in this study are gang membership and neighborhood factors. The gang membership variable is a dichotomous variable with a yes/no response. The neighborhood factors variable comprises 21 items, categorized into physical and social neighborhood disorder. Physical disorders of the neighborhood variable include questions such as cigarette butts on the street or in the gutters, graffiti or tags. Social disorder of the neighborhood variable measures adults fighting or arguing loudly, and people using needles or syringes to take drugs. The neighborhood factors variable was measured on a 4- point Likert scale ranging from

"Never" to "Often," with higher scores indicating a greater degree of disorder within the community (See Appendix A: Table 1).

The dependent variable, procedural justice, includes 14 items, such as during your last contact with the police when you were accused of a crime, how much of your story did the police let you tell?; Police were honest in how they handled the case. The variable was measured on a 5-point scale, with 1 indicating strongly disagree and 5 indicating strongly agree. The variable procedural justice, direct experiences with police, has an alpha value of .74 (See Appendix A: Tables 2 and 3).

Analysis and Conclusion

Studies suggest that juveniles have negative perceptions of procedural justice (Brick et al., 2009; Brunson, 2007; Flexon et al., 2009; Leiber et al., 1998; Taylor et al., 2001). Studies also suggest that juveniles have less favorable attitudes than adults (Cheurprakobkit, 2000; Hurst & Frank, 2000; Lasley, 1994; Sampson & Bartusch, 1998). Earlier studies suggest that females have a more favorable attitude towards the police (Weitzer & Tusch 1999; Taylor et al., 2001). The current study did not find a significant relationship between female perceptions of police legitimacy.

Piquero et al. (2006) recommend that adolescents' perceptions of legitimacy are shaped by interpersonal experiences with the justice system. This is true for gang members since they have more contact than non-gang-involved adolescents with the police. This study also found that adolescents from disorganized neighborhoods are more likely to have lower procedural justice views, which could be similar to the findings of Bellair and McNulty (2009), indicating that neighborhood factors increase gang membership and its related delinquent activities, resulting in increased contact with the police. Such experiences with the police are the strongest predictor of procedural justice (Hinds, 2007). This study found that adolescent gang members from minority racial backgrounds have less favorable attitudes towards police, and this could be due to the differential treatment they receive from police compared to non-gang members (Duran, 2008).

There have been several measures taken by the United States to build relationships between youth and police officers, as juveniles have historically had less favorable attitudes towards police (Geistman & Smith, 2007; Leiber et al., 1998; Sanden & Wentz, 2017). In recent years, several programs have been created to enhance juvenile-police relations. Some of these include The Juvenile Justice Curriculum (JJC), which focuses on educating youth about the legal challenges following delinquent behavior, the impact of arrest/court records, and youth's interactions with the police (Fix et al., 2023).

Similar initiatives that have been central in improving perceptions towards police officers include the Law Enforcement Advocate (LEA) program developed in partnership with the Denver Police Department and the Treatment Accountability for Safer Community (TASC) program (Rajaee et al., 2013), and the Police and Youth Interaction Programs (Goodrich & Anderson, 2014). While there are several other programs that emphasize improving police-juvenile relations. Whether it be through a school-based initiative, community-oriented approaches, or targeting at-risk youths, it is possible to improve the police-juvenile relationship across the United States.

Globally, the juvenile justice system struggles to promote positive juvenile-police relationships. Although international standards like the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child aim to protect children's rights, implementing these protections remains challenging (Abou-Alwan, 2025). Difficulties in identifying the origins of negative perceptions toward police (Watkins & Maume, 2012) and the significant influence of media portrayals (Asad & Zia, 2025) further complicate reform. Both positive and negative media representations affect views of procedural justice. Addressing these challenges, future research should specifically investigate how media portrayals and other contributing factors shape juvenile-police relationships globally, as this study does not address these gaps.

This study has several limitations, including the fact that the dataset used was collected from 2000 to 2010; perceptions may have changed since then. The changes could be due to the aggressive anti-gang programs and other strategies, such as aggressive order maintenance interventions specifically focusing on the disorderly behavior of violent gang members and hot spot policing focusing on gang-related offenses (Braga et al., 2015), leading to officers targeting individuals because of their race, age, gender, and neighborhood contexts (Katz & Webb, 2006). Therefore, the study results cannot be generalized at this time. The second limitation of this study is that the data are inclusive of juvenile offenders who are in the system, therefore the study cannot be generalized to all juvenile gang members. The third limitation is that the adolescents with gang membership are low in the sample, which could have impacted the study findings and using a larger sample size would yield better results.

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Appendix A

Table 1

Demographic Statistics

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	916	85.7%
Female	153	14.3%
Race/Ethnicity		
White	250	23.4%
Black	510	47.7%
Hispanic	309	28.9%
Gang Membership		
Yes	81	7.6%
No	988	92.4%
	Mean	**S.D**
Neighborhood factors	2.33	.75
Procedural Justice	2.82	.56

N = 1069

Table 2

Impact of gender, race/ethnicity, gang membership, and neighborhood factors on youth perceptions of procedural justice

Variables	Estimate	SE	95% CI		*p*
			LL	UL	
Gender	.08	.15	-.21	.38	.56
Race					
White	.01	.14	-.27	.31	.90
Black	-.38	.12	-.63	-.13	.00*
Gang membership	-.18	.20	-.58	-.21	.36
Neighborhood factors	-.25	.07	-.39	-.10	.00*

Note. In this model, for race and ethnicity variable, race Hispanic is taken as a reference category it being a significant predictor of procedural justice adolescents.

Table 3

Interaction between gang membership and race/ethnicity, gang membership and neighborhood factors' influence on youth perceptions of procedural justice?

Variables	Estimated	SE	95% CI		*p*
			LL	UL	
Gang membership* Race/Ethnicity	-.17	.18	-.54	.18	.33
Gang membership* Neighborhood factors	.06	.17	-.26	.40	.69

Note. Ordinal Regression; SE= standard error; CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit

Book Review: Spufford Gives Life to Five

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Light Perpetual by Francis Spufford,

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Light Perpetual

Part historical fiction and part fantasy, Francis Spufford takes the bombings during The Blitz of World War II and slows down time to describe the horrors of such attacks. He opens the novel with a bomb hitting a Woolworth's store where everyone, including five children, were instantly killed, but within the milliseconds, Spufford describes the destruction. "Jo and Alec, as it happens, are looking in the right direction. Their gaze is fixed on the gap between the shoulders of Mrs. Jones and Mrs. Canaghan where the rocket is gliding into view… The children won't have eyes anymore (Spufford, 2021, p. 5)." His choice of imagery shows how the children looked to their mothers for guidance only to find headless bodies and soon the children's eyes are gone as well. Wide gaping holes. Nothingness. Spufford provides detailed descriptions of disintegrating and burnt human flesh to destruction of property. "What it touches, it breaks. A spasm of deformation, of dislocation, passes every solid thing, shattering it to fragments that then accelerate outward themselves at the forefront of the wave (Spufford, 2021, p. 6)." According to The National World War II Museum (2025), over 23,000 civilians were killed during the Blitz, including the five: Vern, Jo, Alec, Ben, and Valerie (Val).

But what if the Blitz never happened? What if the five children, along with the others, lived? Enter the fantasy portion. Spufford imagines a life for each of the five children and what their lives could have been. He breaks the book into seven major sections: t+0:1944 (the historical event); t+5: 1949; t+20: 1964; t+35: 1979; t+50: 1994; t+65: 2009; t + infinity (death). Instead of counting down, the typical use of the jargon, Spufford counts up, adding time and events the children may have missed out, creating an alternate universe. After The Blitz, Spufford imagines the children in a 5th grade music class, foreshadowing Jo's journey, where Vern, Alec, Jo, and Val are questioned by the headmaster about the meaning of "The Ballad of London River." Through this, readers learn a little of each: Jo sees color when she hears music, Val wants to be with the rowdy boys who sit behind her, Vern is direct with his answer, and Alec stands up to the headmaster, who is a bully. Each description is a snippet of their journeys. However, separate from the others, the character Ben is introduced on the soccer field where he hits the ball so high, "the sky might be going to keep it…the sun, breaking through, catches it, and it flares into a point of molten gold (Spufford, 2021, p. 26)." A symbol of hope.

Spufford himself stated that he wanted to give five imagined, ordinary lives to the five children. They did not accomplish anything special. They did not become rockstars or write the next great British novel nor cure cancer. Instead, he wanted the children to experience the stages of life and die in old age, which is the greatest feat. However, in the ordinary, extraordinary events do exist. For example, Vern owns Featherstone Estate and "it's amazing how much his business model is based on selling back to people a sanitized, touristic version of the grimy old city (Spufford, 2021, p. 224)." An analogy of what the author if doing by giving sanitized lives to the children. Or Val who watches her boyfriend Mike, a skinhead, kill a foreign student. "Val swallowing and saying 'That's enough now,' and trying to grab his arm and Mike who has never once hit her throwing her off and Val bouncing off the Cortina next along and falling on the concrete…(Spufford, 2021, p. 179)." She experiences violence just like so many women do. She stayed with Mike to help him only to be part of his rage. Alec tries to make a decent living for his family but is being stalled. "All Alec hears, in Hobson's 'could,' is an appeal to an imaginary world in which none of the last ten years have opened… (Spufford, 2021, p. 38)." He must stand up to another bully who is preventing his professional growth to provide for his family. All the characters encounter struggles, and in some cases, they can use their mistakes to change their lives. Ben accepts a job working for Marsha and she helps him get clean. The two became intimate, and Ben becomes part of her family. Val served time for being an accessory to murder, and after, she worked a helpline to help others who are in a dark place. Jo became a music teacher. However, some still are haunted by their ghosts. Vern feeling "a thread of unhappiness tightening inside of him, a faint signal, growing stronger, that something is wrong? (Spufford, 2021, p. 227)." He fills the void with food.

Spufford argues that fiction is a revealer of the author. It shows what is the most important to the author, or how the author understands the world. *Light Perpetual* is the work that the readers can see what is important to Spufford: the slow moments in life where people go through adversity and change to help themselves and others, the dedication to serving others, and the long drawn out descriptions of people and things as if the author is trying to appreciate everything. “Only now can [Ben] admire her slowed, vague, languorous, with little impulses moving in her round face that come to nothing, but buffer back into stillness before they can expand into real expressions (Spufford, 2021, 184).” His attention to detail, even in nothingness, gives importance to the story to draw attention to the need to notice and remember the most minute, mundane parts of life. *Light Perpetual* is a reminder to live a life full of extraordinary in the ordinary. Spufford revels in the what if, creating alternate lives to real people just like his other novel *Nonesuch.*

This novel is not meant to be read quickly and haphazardly but slowly and intentionally, paying attention to detail and taking stock of one’s life. It is a moralistic novel, examining the what if one could have time instead of being lost to the abyss. Do not begin if one is not ready to explore the meaning of life.

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Editor's Feature: American Independence, A Global Perspective

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Abstract

This feature explores the reactions to the American fight for Independence across the Atlantic world. It uses available newspapers from the summer of 1776 to analyze the different reactions and opinions of the American independence movement and its subsequent break from the British Empire.

Editorial Note: The Editor's Feature was submitted for publication only after all selected authors were invited to contribute to the journal and communicated their decisions regarding their publication with ECCSSA and another call for papers was announced. This sequencing was intended to maintain fairness, transparency, and impartiality within the editorial and publication process.

American Independence, A Global Perspective

With the ongoing celebrations of America's 250th birthday, public memory has confined much of its efforts to the minutemen—farmers from across the colonies who launched a universal, united front against the greatest empire in the world. Occasionally the patriotic narratives will include The Marquis de Lafayette, a French aristocrat who served alongside George Washington, and the French providing aid to America after the Battle of Saratoga in 1777. However, when examining the broader history of the Revolutionary War and America's independence more global links emerge, demonstrating how deeply rooted America had already been in world trade and politics.

In fact, since the thirteen colonies were embedded in the global trade of the Atlantic world, and had been since the first permanent colony at Jamestown in 1607, their political actions also reverberated across the Atlantic. From the onset of the war and break for independence, Americans were acutely aware of this interconnectivity and prepared to engage in political and economic relations independent of the Crown. The Continental Congress drafted the Model Treaty in the summer and fall of 1776 just as it was declaring its independence from England. The treaty accepted, "a firm, inviolable, universal Peace, and a true and sincere Friendship between the most serene and mighty Prince, Lewis the Sixteenth (Continental Congress, 1776, p. 576)." This 'peace and sincere friendship' offered American trade benefits for protection on the seas as far as "The States of Algers, Tunis, and Tripoli (Continental Congress, 1776, p. 578)," showing the extent of the United States' real and anticipated global positioning. Later that year, the Plan of Treaties, as it was called by Congress, was adopted to serve as a blueprint for the new countries' relationship with the older kingdom.

However tentative the relationship, as no actual alliance with France was established that year, early news articles from the era indicate that Europeans anticipated some sort of alliance between the American colonies and France. Afterall, England and France had a contentious relationship at best, and France was still soured from its most recent loss to Britain in the Seven Years' War (1756-1763). In the midst of hostilities between America and England, even before the Declaration of Independence was signed, newspapers abroad reported on a French-American connection. *The Caledonian Mercury* in Scotland reported on rumors that "three different parties" of opinions existed in America, one of which was "the smallest" but still of importance: Those who believed Americans were "seeking the protection of France, a counterpointe to the foreigners hired by Great Britain for the purpose of conquering them ("Extracts…", 1776, para. 4).[1] This comment suggests that America was simulating a European-style

[1] These "foreigners" were the Hessians, German soldiers from Hesse who the British Crown paid to fight on their behalf alongside regular British troops.

war whereby each side would take on foreign alliances to achieve their goals. Coming from England a few days after the Scottish review, the editor of *Cambridge Chronicle and Journal* issued a scathing overview of the situation across the Atlantic, accusing France of playing a waiting game where at the right time, they would strike their global nemesis, England: "It is clearly a work patronized by the government of France, and politically calculated at their crisis to prejudice the French nation against Great Britain…[French diplomats] would step in as soon as France shall find it expedient to throw off the [mask] and openly avow her protection of America ("London", 1776, para. 2)." In other words, America was just another pawn in the global political, trade, and sometimes literal, war between France and England and they were just waiting for the right moment to engage. However, there seemed to be other reasons for French interest in the war besides destabilizing Great Britain's empire. As *The Public Register* noted, American goods benefited the world, including, but not limited to, France: "I have not touched the absolute reliance of France, Spain, Portugal, Germany, and Italy during the last eight years, on America…that the last two years even Great Britain herself would have starved but for her *rebellious subjects* ("To the Printer", 1776, para. 1)." The article suggests that America's 1776 offer to France of trade benefits was warranted and built on a foundation that France could provide military-style protection in exchange for America providing the kingdom with much-needed and much-desired goods from America available on the world markets.

Ultimately, the two treaties signed in 1778 between America and France solidified the long-awaited Franco-American alliance. On February 6, 1778, the Treaty of Amity and Commerce established trade favor between the new allies while the Treaty of Alliance affirmed France's military support for the new country. Both treaties bridged together the years of conversations and diplomacy about economics and protection. Indeed, the American Revolution was not just an isolated incident in a distant land. Though just a cursory view of the situation, the documents alluded to how deeply entrenched America was in world affairs.

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