

TRANSLATIONAL POLICING: A PUBLIC POLICY APPROACH IN STRENGTHENING SOCIAL CONTROL OF JUVENILE DELINQUENCY IN URBAN AREAS

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ABSTRACT

Rapid social change in urban areas has weakened informal social control mechanisms and increased children's vulnerability to deviant behavior, making juvenile delinquency an ongoing public policy concern. This article aims to analyze translational policing as a public policy approach in strengthening social control over juvenile delinquency in urban areas. This study employs a qualitative approach using a narrative-integrative literature review method, conducted systematically through the identification and selection of literature based on substantive relevance and source credibility. Inclusion criteria encompass peer-reviewed academic publications and relevant policy documents, while non-academic sources are excluded. Thematic analysis is used to identify and synthesize key themes, covering literature from the 2015–2025 period, along with selected classical works to provide theoretical foundations. The findings indicate that translational policing functions as a mechanism to bridge scientific evidence, policy formulation, and policing practice through the institutionalization of evidence use in policy governance. The findings also show that controlling juvenile delinquency is more effective when linked to the strengthening of social capital, collective efficacy, and family- and community-based protective factors, compared to purely repressive approaches. This study concludes that translational policing is relevant as a public policy approach that supports a more rational, preventive, and sustainable strategy for controlling juvenile delinquency in urban areas. Theoretically, this study contributes by repositioning translational policing not only as a technical innovation in police practice but as a framework for cross-sectoral policy learning and governance that institutionalizes the use of evidence throughout the entire policy cycle.

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INTRODUCTION

The rapid pace of social change in modern society has brought broad implications for the socialization processes of children and adolescents, particularly in urban areas characterized by population density, high mobility, and the complexity of social relations. A number of studies indicate that the dynamics of urbanization and the transformation of social structures contribute to the weakening of informal social control mechanisms and the increasing vulnerability of children to deviant behavior (Farrington et al., 2016; Sampson, 2019). In this context, juvenile delinquency in urban areas has developed into a complex social and public policy issue in various countries, including Indonesia (Farrington, 2003). Changes in family structure, socio-economic pressures, and shifts in patterns of interaction in public spaces increase the opportunities for deviant behavior, which impacts not only individuals but also the quality of community life more broadly (Churchill et al., 2021).

Conceptually, juvenile delinquency is understood as behavior by children or adolescents that violates prevailing social norms or legal provisions, developing within the process of socialization and interaction with their social environment (Goldson & Muncie, 2015; Suonpää, 2021). Various studies affirm that such behavior cannot be separated from the influence of the family environment, socio-economic conditions, and public policies that govern children's lives (Case & Haines, 2018; Iskandar et al., 2021). Indeed, deviant behavior in children is the result of an interaction between individual factors and social environmental factors (Anisah et al., 2025; Aliim & Darwis, 2024). Therefore, juvenile delinquency should be positioned as a social problem requiring a planned, preventive, and sustainable policy response, not merely a repressive approach (Kazemian et al., 2019).

From a public policy perspective, policy is understood as a series of government actions designed to solve public problems through an interconnected process of formulation, implementation, and evaluation (Dunn, 2018). Public policy constitutes collective government action aimed at managing resources, regulating behavior, and providing services to resolve complex social issues. Yet, various studies show that policy failure is often not due to the absence of regulation, but rather to weak coordination and inconsistency among implementing agencies (Peters, 2018). Further, social policies not supported by cross-sectoral cooperation tend to produce limited and unsustainable impacts (Ansell & Gash, 2018).

In relation to controlling juvenile delinquency, the concept of social control becomes relevant. Social control is understood as a set of mechanisms used by society and the state to encourage adherence to norms through rules, values, and institutional interventions in order to maintain social order (Black, 2019). Research by Braithwaite (2020) shows that social order is built through a combination of formal and informal mechanisms. Effective social control emphasizes prevention and community involvement over punishment alone. When informal social control weakens, the role of formal institutions becomes dominant, but they are often less effective in the long term (Rahman et al., 2025).

Nevertheless, in practice, government responses to juvenile delinquency still tend to be reactive and oriented solely towards law enforcement, without adequate integration between scientific evidence, policy formulation, and implementation practices at the local level (Bhowmik, 2021). The main problem in juvenile delinquency control policy lies in the limited cross-sectoral integration in the policy formulation and implementation processes (Perl, 2020; W. Head, 2022). This condition reflects weak coordination among actors and the mechanisms for policy integration in addressing the multidimensional issues concerning children and adolescents. As a result, a gap emerges between available scientific knowledge and implemented policy practices (Welsh et al., 2024).

In the study of law enforcement and public policy, various approaches have been developed to bridge the gap between research findings and field practices, including evidence-based policing and translational criminology. Evidence-based policing focuses on utilizing the best scientific evidence as a basis for decision-making processes and the implementation of police practices. Meanwhile, translational criminology emphasizes the importance of

collaborative mechanisms that allow scientific knowledge to be systematically and continuously translated into policy and operational practices (Mears, 2025; Telep, 2024). Translational policing developed from criticism of the disconnect between academic research and policy practice (Lum & Koper, 2017). Many research findings are not optimally utilized because they are not translated into forms relevant for policymakers and field practitioners (Hinkle et al., 2020). Therefore, the knowledge translation process requires ongoing interaction between researchers and policy actors (La Vigne, 2021) This approach emphasizes the use of research results as a basis for policy formulation and daily practices that are scientifically accountable (Sherman, 2018)

However, there remains a theoretical and empirical gap in public administration studies regarding how the translational policing approach is explicitly positioned as a public policy approach to strengthen social control in managing juvenile delinquency in urban areas. So far, translational policing has been understood more as a technical approach in police practice, rather than as a policy governance framework emphasizing cross-actor collaboration, policy learning, and systemic integration.

Based on this gap, the novelty of this article lies in its attempt to position translational policing not merely as a technical approach to law enforcement or the development of evidence-based practice, but as a public policy approach oriented towards governance, collaboration among actors, and policy learning in strengthening social control over juvenile delinquency in urban areas. Thus, this article offers a new perspective in the public administration discourse regarding the strengthening of social control through more integrated and contextual evidence translation mechanisms.

In line with this novelty, the research question posed in this article is: how can translational policing be positioned as a public policy approach to strengthen social control over juvenile delinquency in urban areas, and what is its role in bridging the gap between scientific evidence, policy formulation, and implementation practices?

METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach through a literature review, focusing on the analysis of relevant theories and concepts. This method is used to examine and interpret translational policing as a public policy approach in strengthening social control over juvenile delinquency in urban areas. The focus of analysis is directed at the relationship between the concepts of public policy, social control, translational policing, and juvenile delinquency, without conducting empirical testing or field data collection.

The data sources for this study consist of scientific journal articles, academic books, and policy documents relevant to the research focus. Literature was selected based on substantive relevance, source credibility, and its contribution to explaining the concepts of public policy, social control, translational policing, and juvenile delinquency. This literature is used to analyze and explain the role of translational policing in linking scientific evidence, public policy, and juvenile delinquency control practices in order to answer the research objectives.

This study employs a narrative-integrative literature review with a qualitative approach to conceptually synthesize theories and empirical findings; the literature was selected through targeted searches of scientific journals, academic books, and policy documents using relevant keywords, and subsequently filtered based on substantive relevance and source credibility; inclusion criteria encompass peer-reviewed academic publications that are theoretically or empirically relevant, while exclusion criteria include non-academic sources and literature not directly related to the research focus; analysis was conducted using thematic analysis techniques through the identification, grouping, and synthesis of recurring main themes; and the literature period used primarily covers 2015–2025, with the addition of relevant classical works as a theoretical foundation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Translational policing in the public policy literature is understood as an approach that places the use of scientific evidence as part of the decision-making process and policing practice. The following findings illustrate how this concept is used to bridge the relationship between scientific knowledge and policy practice, as well as its implications for how security policies and social control are formulated and carried out.

Table 1. Conceptual Model of Translational Policing and Strengthening Social Control over Juvenile Delinquency

Level of Analysis	Key Concepts	Main Research Findings	Policy Implications
Knowledge Layer	Research–practice gap	Scientific evidence is not automatically incorporated into police decision-making (Piza & Welsh, 2022).	Translation mechanisms and organizational capacity support are needed so that evidence can be used in policy and operations.
	Translation–Receptivity–Institutionalization	The use of evidence requires operational translation processes, organizational readiness, and institutionalization in SOPs and performance indicators (Lum & Koper, 2017).	Evidence-based policing must become a work system, not merely a normative discourse.
Governance Layer	Evidence-based policy infrastructure	Evidence-based policy requires a clear process design: who uses evidence, when, and for which decisions (Nutley et al., 2019).	Translational policing serves as a policy learning infrastructure.
Operational Strategy	Problem-Oriented Policing (POP)	Meta-analyses show POP is effective in reducing crime, especially when collaborative (Hinkle et al., 2020).	An approach based on problem analysis and partnerships is more effective than incidental responses.
	Diversion	Diversion prevents labeling effects and the long-term consequences of formal processes (Case & Bateman, 2020).	Selective handling is more rational and humanistic in the context of children.
Social Control Layer	Social capital	Negative correlation between social capital and juvenile delinquency (Binik et al., 2019).	Strengthening family and community relationships reduces the risk of deviant behavior.
	Collective efficacy	Social cohesion does not automatically translate into informal control without the collective willingness to act (Brunton-Smith et al., 2018; Hipp, 2016).	Policies must encourage active citizen participation, not merely social harmony.
	Faktor risiko keluarga & sekolah	Family conflict and dysfunction increase risk; positive relationships are protective factors (Kafle & Dhakal, 2023).	Family and community-based interventions are more effective than repressive approaches alone.
Outcome	Pencegahan berbasis bukti	Rational, measurable, and evaluative policies are more effective in the long term (Welsh et al., 2024).	Translational policing strengthens informal social control and sustainably reduces juvenile delinquency.

Various research findings indicate that juvenile delinquency in urban areas is more accurately understood as an issue of weakened informal social control rather than merely a failure of formal law enforcement. Social capital, family relationships, school support, and the collective effectiveness of the community play significant roles in determining the level of delinquency. In the policy domain, translational policing functions as a governance mechanism that bridges the gap between research and practice through processes of translation, organizational readiness, and the institutionalization of evidence use. When combined with approaches such as Problem-Oriented Policing (POP) and diversion, this framework shifts policy orientation from incidental responses towards collaborative, rational, and evaluative evidence-based prevention. Thus, strengthening social control through translational policing becomes a more systematic and sustainable policy strategy in suppressing juvenile delinquency.

The Concept of Translational Policing in Public Policy

1) Translational policing is used to close the research-practice gap in policing

Piza and Welsh, in their research, affirm that scientific evidence does not automatically enter policing decisions which needs to be translated, transferred, and supported by organizational capacity in order to be used in policy and operational decisions (Piza & Welsh, 2022). This finding explains why many security policy agendas move quickly but are difficult to prove effective which evidence is often defeated by time constraints, work culture, and the demands of rapid response. In policy studies, the use of evidence does not proceed linearly; evidence competes with institutional interests, actor preferences, and implementation logic (Nutley et al., 2019). Findings of Piza & Welsh (2022) is also consistent with the emphasis that translational policing is not merely about citing research, but about building mechanisms so that evidence can be used at concrete decision-making points (such as problem prioritization, intervention design, and evaluation).

2) Translational policing is aligned with evidence-based policing because it emphasizes a system of evidence application: translation-receptivity-institutionalization

Lum and Koper identify three key tasks: translating research into operational formats (translation), preparing the organization to be willing and able to receive evidence (receptivity), and institutionalizing evidence use into work routines (institutionalization) (Lum & Koper, 2017). This answers why policies often stop at documents without institutionalization (SOPs, training, decision schemes, performance indicators), evidence remains merely symbolic. This finding strengthens the position of translational policing as governance work, not merely an additional activity; institutionalization is a prerequisite for evidence to be used, not merely discussed. At the public policy level, the consequence is clear: translational policing demands process design who uses evidence, when it is used, for what decisions, and how results are evaluated. This logic is consistent with arguments on evidence-use that emphasize the importance of policy infrastructure for learning to take place (Nutley et al., 2019).

3) The latest evidence-based policy emphasizes rational, cost-effective, and humane policy

The development of evidence-based policy opens opportunities for crime prevention policy that is more rational, efficient, and humane while emphasizing implementation challenges and the need for strategies to promote evidence use (Welsh et al., 2024). This finding is important to demonstrate why translational policing is relevant as a public policy approach which translational policing provides a framework for (a) defining problems precisely, (b) selecting interventions that have evidence support, (c) assessing impact, and then (d) improving policy. On complex issues (including juvenile delinquency), recurring patterns of raid/enforcement policies often do not produce lasting change because they do not build a policy learning cycle. Whereas the new era of evidence-based policy precisely requires a strong implementation and evaluation process (Solehudin, 2024).

Social Control and Juvenile Delinquency in Urban Areas

Juvenile delinquency in urban areas is understood in various literature as a phenomenon closely related to the functioning of social control mechanisms. The findings summarized in these research results show that variation in levels of juvenile delinquency cannot be separated from the strength of social capital, the effectiveness of informal

social control, and the condition of family, school, and community relations. This is consistent with research findings revealing that family social capital is positioned as a latent construct that is more conceptually economical than family social capital, because it not only represents emotional closeness but also encompasses trust, norms, moral obligations, and social control mechanisms that function in preventing children's deviant behavior (Hoffmann & Dufur, 2018). By placing juvenile delinquency within a social control framework, the following findings illustrate the key factors that contribute to the emergence or reduction of deviant behavior among children in an urban context.

1) Social capital correlates negatively with juvenile delinquency

Data from the International Self-Report Delinquency Study (ISR3) across countries shows a negative correlation between social capital and self-reported delinquency, the higher the social capital, the lower the tendency for juvenile delinquency (Binik et al., 2019). Social cohesion alone is not sufficient to suppress juvenile delinquency if it is not accompanied by collective willingness to act and monitor deviant behavior. Social cohesion is a condition of social bonding characterized by mutual trust, solidarity, and interconnectedness among community members, reflected in individuals' willingness to uphold shared values, norms, and interests in social life (Myers et al., 2024).

These findings indicate that juvenile delinquency is not appropriately understood merely as a matter of individual behavior or "problem children." The driving factors of delinquency largely stem from weak social relations at the community level as well as primary relations in the family and school. This is further reinforced by research findings showing that internal drives in the child and a less harmonious surrounding environment cause children to engage in juvenile delinquency (Rufiatun, 2021). This demonstrates that when social capital is low, informal social control also weakens, so that the likelihood of deviant behavior increases. Conversely, strong social capital strengthens informal social control through social monitoring, norm inculcation, and the growth of a shared sense of responsibility. When social relations do not function well, informal control mechanisms become ineffective and the space for deviant behavior grows wider (Binik et al., 2019).

2) Collective efficacy works through activation; social cohesion does not automatically become informal control

Social togetherness, the belief in acting together, and informal social control are different but interrelated things. Social togetherness can only function as informal social control when there is a shared will and belief to act (Brunton-Smith et al., 2018). Social cohesion does not then automatically function as an effective informal social control mechanism. Social cohesion requires activation in the form of collective action and the collective willingness of citizens to engage in social monitoring. Without mutual efficacy, social cohesion tends to be passive and is not converted into real informal control practices. As a result, environments that appear socially harmonious remain vulnerable to juvenile delinquency because of the absence of social mechanisms that actively limit and respond to deviant behavior (Hipp, 2016).

3) Risk factors for juvenile delinquency consistently revolve around family, parent-child relations, school, and community support

An analysis of research from the period 2012–2022 shows that family conflict and dysfunction as well as child neglect are the main factors increasing the risk of juvenile delinquency. Conversely, good academic achievement and positive parent-child relationships serve as protective factors. The analysis also shows that relatively effective interventions are generally family- and community-based (Kafle & Dhakal, 2023).

This indicates that although formal control still plays an important role, the majority of risk factors for juvenile delinquency actually originate from family dynamics and the level of community support. This condition shows that interventions that rely solely on enforcement approaches toward juvenile delinquency will not address the root of the problem (Young et al., 2017). Therefore, prevention policies that are collaborative and involve families and communities become more rational and relevant (Wessells, 2015). This finding strengthens the argument that juvenile delinquency is a phenomenon rooted in social relations and structural conditions. Thus, policies that rely solely on

formal control risk overlooking the main factors such as family dynamics and the social environment that actually determine the trajectory of children's behavior.

The Role of Translational Policing in Strengthening Social Control over Juvenile Delinquency

1) Translational policing shifts the logic of policing from incidental response to evidence-based prevention

Piza & Welsh (2022) in their literature show examples of how evidence-based policing innovations emphasize the process of knowledge transfer and capacity building so that evidence can be used in prevention decisions and operational strategies. On the issue of juvenile delinquency, this shift addresses why repeated enforcement often fails to resolve the problem which means delinquency tends to be patterned, making it more rational to reduce opportunity (situational triggers) than to merely respond after the fact. Translational policing compels policy to work with data and evaluation; patterns of time, place, and triggers are identified, interventions are selected based on evidence, and their impacts are tracked. This prevention and evaluation framework is consistent with the demands of evidence-based policy that emphasizes that policy must be testable for effectiveness (Welsh et al., 2024). This is consistent with research emphasizing the importance of problem diagnosis in crime prevention policy. Research findings show that policy failures often occur because problems are defined in general terms without analysis of patterns and context, causing interventions to be poorly targeted (Bullock et al., 2022).

2) Problem-oriented policing (POP) has been proven to reduce crime

Problem-Oriented Policing (POP) is a policing approach that emphasizes identifying and addressing the root causes of crime or disorder, rather than merely responding to criminal incidents that appear on the surface. In this approach, police do not only focus on enforcement after the fact, but strive to understand problem patterns, their causes, and the underlying social conditions so that solutions produced are long-term in nature (Goldson & Muncie, 2015). POP encourages policing to work systematically through stages of recognizing the problem, analyzing its causes, designing an appropriate response, and assessing the results of handling. This approach is often used to address recurring problems in society, such as juvenile delinquency, environmental disorder, or social conflict, by involving cooperation among police, local government, and the community (Scott, 2021).

Hinkle reports a meta-analysis showing that POP produces a relative reduction in crime, with greater impact when responses involve more partners and implementation is broader (Hinkle et al., 2020). POP is an effective way to reduce crime and disorder (Bullock et al., 2022). This explains why translational policing is important for strengthening social control since social control over juvenile delinquency is unrealistic if burdened on police alone. POP provides a form of collaborative work (schools, families, communities, social services) and translational policing ensures that this form of work is evidence-based and evaluable. This finding strengthens the argument that partnership is not an ornament but a factor that multiplies policy impact. Cooperation among parties is not merely decorative in policy, but genuinely makes policy work more effectively.

3) Diversion becomes a relevant policy path for children as it provides alternatives to formal criminal proceedings

Diversion is the redirection of the settlement of children's cases from the formal criminal justice process to a non-judicial mechanism that emphasizes guidance and restoration. Diversion aims for children to learn to be responsible without having to enter the formal legal system (Case & Bateman, 2020). The National Institute of Justice (NIJ) summarizes various programs and evaluations related to juvenile diversion, including school-based diversion models and alternative detention interventions (Truitt, 2021). This finding is important for answering why juvenile delinquency control policy needs to be selective which means the formal process can bring further consequences (stigma, labeling, and dropping out of school) that actually reinforce the trajectory of delinquency. Therefore, translational policing is relevant as an evidence-based decision-making framework, when a formal approach is needed, when diversion is more effective, and what indicators are used to assess outcomes. This evaluation-based approach is consistent with evidence-use demands that emphasize policy decisions must be accountable in a measurable way (Nutley et al., 2019). This is consistent with other research findings stating that the institutionalization of evidence use

processes based on democratic and scientific principles can increase evidence use in policymaking (Weldon & Parkhurst, 2022).

Public Policy Implications

The use of evidence in public policy does not proceed linearly, but is mediated by organizational capacity and the policy context in which the evidence is used. Scientific evidence does not automatically change policy because its influence depends on the institutions involved, policy actors, and the implementation process underway (Fraenkel & Bamberger, 2025). In this context, translational policing needs to be positioned as a policy process that has stages, involves various actors, and faces diverse obstacles not merely as a normative slogan of being "research-based." Without such understanding, social control policy risks reverting to momentary responses to situational pressures.

Recent developments in evidence-based policy show an increasingly strong emphasis on rational, cost-effective, and humane prevention policies, while demanding adequate implementation strategies. Welsh et al (2024) highlights both the opportunities and challenges in applying evidence-based policy to crime and violence prevention, including the importance of policy design capable of bridging evidence and practice. In controlling juvenile delinquency, this direction implies the need for a shift in policy orientation from the dominance of enforcement toward prevention that targets risk factors and protective factors at the family, school, and community level. Other research shows that the root causes of juvenile delinquency are largely found in the family environment, school, and community where the child grows up, making an integrated preventive approach more relevant (Bonta, J., & Andrews, 2019).

Beyond policy effectiveness, legitimacy and public trust are important prerequisites for the success of social control. Legitimacy is closely related to public acceptance of police actions, including how society perceives the use of authority (Colin Bolger & Walters, 2019). In the context of the sensitive juvenile delinquency control policy, translational policing contributes to strengthening legitimacy because policies can be explained rationally and based on evidence from the rationale for selecting interventions, determining target groups, to success indicators and transparent evaluation mechanisms (Parkhurst, 2016).

CONCLUSION

The discussion shows that controlling juvenile delinquency in urban areas requires a public policy approach that goes beyond enforcement and places greater emphasis on strengthening social control preventively. Translational policing can be positioned as a policy framework that promotes the institutionalized use of scientific evidence in the process of policy formulation, implementation, and evaluation, so that responses to juvenile delinquency are not momentary. This approach is relevant given that juvenile delinquency is influenced by complex social factors and cannot be resolved through repressive intervention alone. Therefore, it is recommended that juvenile delinquency control policy integrate translational policing as a cross-sector approach that strengthens collaboration among police, educational institutions, families, and communities, and enhances institutional capacity in the sustainable utilization of evidence.

This conclusion not only affirms the importance of controlling juvenile delinquency through a preventive public policy approach but also makes a theoretical contribution by broadening the understanding of translational policing as a conceptual framework that bridges scientific knowledge and policy practice in the context of controlling juvenile delinquency in urban areas. Theoretically, this study positions translational policing not merely as a derivative of evidence-based policing, but as an integrative model that emphasizes the process of institutionalizing evidence throughout the entire policy cycle, encompassing formulation, implementation, and evaluation. In terms of policy implications, these findings underscore the need for a shift in orientation from repressive approaches towards cross-sectoral collaborative strategies involving the police, educational institutions, families, and communities in a structured manner, accompanied by the strengthening of institutional capacity for the sustainable management and

utilization of evidence-based data. However, this study has limitations as it is based on a conceptual review and thus has not empirically tested the effectiveness of translational policing implementation in specific local contexts. Hence, subsequent research is recommended to conduct empirical studies using both qualitative and quantitative approaches to measure the impact of translational policing implementation on reducing juvenile delinquency rates while also identifying the institutional and social factors that influence its success in various urban area characteristics.

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