

Presentation title:

After all, what weighs more in juvenile delinquency: effortful control, guilt or both? A longitudinal analysis with a Portuguese sample of children and youth

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Previous literature has demonstrated the relevance of both self-control and morality for the inhibition of several disruptive behaviors, including antisocial and delinquent behavior, throughout different developmental periods. Based on this framework and using a questionnaire to measure reactive and regulative temperament factors ((EATQ-R) and a scenario-based questionnaire (TOSCA) to measure moral emotions, this brief longitudinal study sought to explore the direct and interactive links between effortful control, guilt-proneness and delinquent behaviors in a sample of Portuguese 10-18-year-olds (n = 241 in T1; n = 185 in T2). Data was gathered using a multi-informant approach and self-report measures. Children and youth reported their propensity to feel guilt and their delinquent behaviors, and parents (n = 175 in T1; n = 86 in T2) reported their children and youth's effortful control. The results indicated that both effortful control and guilt-proneness negatively predicted future delinquency. Moreover, results supported a moderation model, suggesting that the association between effortful control and future delinquency was stronger when levels of guilt-proneness were lower in both children and youth. These findings are in line with previous studies conducted in different cultural contexts and using different measures of interest variables confirming the protective role of guilt in individuals who have deficits in self-regulation. The current paper seeks to discuss the theoretical, empirical and interventive implications of these data.