

Abstract

Objective: The present study investigates the effect of age of defendants on public perception of children's criminal responsibility and identifies possible mediators. **Method:** A total of 282 participants were recruited to complete a scenario-based survey and assess their crime-related perception and perceived defendant's capability in 7-point Likert scale. Finally, they were instructed to allocate sentences to the defendant. Two independent variables were manipulated: type of crime (violent v. non-violent v. self-defense) as within-subject variables, while the age of defendant (7 v. 10 v. 14 v. 17) as between-subject variable. **Result:** A 4 x 3 mixed-model ANOVA was conducted. There is significant main effect of two independent variables to the perceived criminal responsibility but their interaction effect is not significant. Hierarchical multiple regression and Sobel Test were performed to examine the mediation effect of proposed model. Defendants' risk assessment ability and legal competence were significant mediators in predicting criminal responsibility in violent crime and self-defense cases respectively. **Implication:** The study provided statistical support for age-specific legal arrangement of juveniles to the government. It also highlighted areas of public concern on juvenile-related policy making and sentencing and can be referenced for crime prevention.

Keywords: juvenile, criminal responsibility, age of defendants, types of crime, hierarchical multiple regression