**EVALUATING THE ROLE OF STRENGTHS IN POSITIVE OUTCOMES FOR JUSTICE-INVOLVED YOUTH WITH FASD: A SCOPING REVIEW**

**Chantel Ritter1, C. Meghan McMurtry1,2, Margaret Lumley1, Muhammad Baig1,   
& Kaitlyn McLachlan1,3**

**1University of Guelph, Guelph ON**

**2McMaster Children’s Hospital**

**3Canada FASD Research Network**

**Objectives:** Individuals withFetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) have a wide range of strengths and difficulties, however, public perception of FASD and research within FASD has been predominantly deficit focussed. Despite a recent increase in investigations of strengths and protective factors for individuals with FASD, there remains a significant gap. Youth with FASD contacting the criminal justice system (CJS) are a particularly neglected group. This lack of attention to strengths and protective factors in this group has likely increased stigma and stress for individuals with FASD and their families. Therefore, the current study aimed to determine what strengths and protective factors have been investigated for youth with FASD involved in the CJS, and how these strengths and protective factors have been identified, defined, and measured.

**Method:** A scoping review methodology was used (Joanna Briggs Institute; Peters et al., 2019) to search four databases (PsycINFO, PubMed, Criminal Justice Abstracts, and Web of Science) using structured search terms. Inclusion criteria included youth/young adults (ages 12-25) with FASD with justice-system experience, as well as either/both strengths and protective factors. Following abstract and title (96 results) and full text screening (26 results), 15 peer-reviewed published articles were included in the review and coded using a structured abstraction form (see OSF protocol registration: DOI 10.17605/OSF.IO/6WAZE).

**Results:** Studies were published between 2004 and 2020. Most studies were conducted in Canada (n = 9; 60%), with three conducted in Australia (20%), one in New Zealand (7%), one in United States (7%), and one systematic review capturing multiple jurisdictions. The articles included 1022 individuals with FASD ages 12 to 25. While many studies included consideration of strengths and protective factors, they were often discussed indirectly and nested within deficit-based conversations. Eight studies (53%) specifically examined strengths, including those at individual (e.g., resilience, hope, kindness), familial/relational (e.g., structure, relationships, stability), and community levels (e.g., education, support). Across studies, there was a general lack of conceptual clarity and varied definitions in respect to strengths and protective factors. Varied measurement approaches were also applied, with only one study (7%) using a specific validated measure of strengths (the Child and Youth Resiliency measure), and only one study using a validated measure for protective factors (SAVRY; 7%).

**Discussion/Conclusions:** This review found a small number of studies that included strengths or protective factors for justice-involved youth with FASD. Many of the studies included in this review did not emphasize or directly study strengths or protective factors, but rather mentioned them tangentially along with other findings. Further, the literature lacks overall conceptual definitions of strengths within this population. Future research should focus on improving clarity when describing strengths and protective factors in this population. Overall, there is a need to utilize evidence-based tools to identify and assess individual strengths and protective factors that are rooted in conceptual frameworks to provide consistency and enhanced understanding to promote overall wellbeing and positive outcomes for this population.

**Correspondence:**

Chantel Ritter, University of Guelph, ritterc@uoguelph.ca

Meghan McMurtry, University of Guelph, cmcmurtr@uoguelph.ca

Margaret Lumley, University of Guelph, mlumley@uoguelph.ca

Muhammad Baig, Research Assistant, muhammadfbaig11@gmail.com

Kaitlyn McLachlan, University of Guelph, CanFASD, kmclac02@uoguelph.ca