Exploring the Relationship between Delinquency Patterns and Academic Performance of Undergraduates' Students in Rivers State University: Implication for Counselling.

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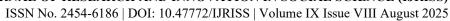[2,3]Department of Educational Psychology, Guidance and Counseling

ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to investigate the relationship between delinquency patterns and the academic performance of undergraduate students at Rivers State University. The research specifically explored the implications for counseling. Guided by three research objectives and three research questions, the study employed a correlational survey research design. The target population consisted of 15,340 final year students from all faculties within Rivers State University. A sample size of 415 students was determined using the Taro Yamane formula , and a proportionate stratified sampling technique was utilized to select students from various faculties. Data were collected using two structured questionnaires: the "Students' Delinquency Patterns Questionnaire" and the "Students' Academic Performance Questionnaire. The reliability of these instruments was assessed using the Cronbach's alpha method, yielding coefficients of 0.82 for delinquency patterns and 0.91 for academic performance, with an overall reliability coefficient of 0.87 for the entire questionnaire. The collected data were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC) to address the research questions. The findings revealed significant negative relationships between specific delinquency patterns and academic performance. A high negative correlation ($r = -0.89$) was found between drug abuse and academic performance among others. Based on these findings, the study recommended, among other things, education and support programs for families to build positive and supportive relationships with their children and provide guidance to help them overcome academic challenges.

Keywords: Counselling, Delinquency Pattern, Academic Performance

INTRODUCTION

Delinquency Behaviour among students is a growing concern in educational institutions. Delinquency behavior basically is the undertaking of inconsiderate or illegal activity by a student (below 17 years for boys and under 18 years for girls) which disrupts the law. It occurs when a minor infringes a criminal statute. (Obibuba, 2020). He further states that a student below the age of seven years is incapable of committing a crime. When a crime is committed by a juvenile then the processes which take place vary from that of an adult offender. In all the states Juvenile court systems and juvenile detention facilities are there which deal specifically with underage offenders. Delinquent patterns or Behaviour is something that should be dealt with as soon as possible because delinquency is a gateway to the adult criminal world because many adult criminals have had criminal backgrounds since they were juveniles. The sociological view is well expressed by the definition given by Manaze (2019) which stated that delinquency pattern refers to the anti-social acts or behaviours that are considered unacceptable, inappropriate typically exhibited by young people under the age of 18. Such actions are either specifically banned by law or may be lawfully interpreted as constituting delinquency, or as requiring some form of official action. It means deviation from normal Behaviour. The future of the nation depends on its youth. They become responsible citizens when they are given proper care, nourishment, training and values along with materialistic necessities.

Delinquency is a deep problem that not only affects the victims of the delinquents, but also affects their families, schools and society as a whole. Students' delinquents cannot envisage the outcome of their crimes by themselves, but they are badly affected by these crimes, mostly these crimes lead the students to lose their freedom as they might be placed on trial. This also negatively affects their academic performance because the student will miss academic activities that will happen during the trial. In some cases, the student may be influenced by more experienced student delinquents when the student is placed in a residential centre for detention. Because of these the students are more likely to suffer the consequences of re-offense. Sometimes it becomes a trauma for the members of the family to have a student delinquent in their family, and this creates instability and a sense of insecurity for other members. The delinquent pattern or behaviours of adolescents is perhaps one of the subjects that have received or attracted the attention of many people from all works of life, and from all parts of human behaviours. Industrialists, businessmen, groups, educational leaders, community councils, social scientists, politicians, sociologists' economists, anthropologists and psychologists and many others, made their contributions on ways to addressing delinquency among adolescents. ((Vintenaba, Ndidi, Harry & Kennedy 2021)). Rivers State University, like many other institutions faces challenges related to student's delinquency such as, sexual activities, cultism, stealing, drug use, gang involvement, truancy, underage drinking, assaults, cyberbullying aggressiveness and violence etc. All these hurt the university because they make the university environment unsafe, lead the school authorities to spend colossal sums of money for safety and law enforcement, this also affect students' academic performance (Gubbels, Van der Put, & Assink, 2019).

Academic performance can have a significant impact on delinquency patterns among undergraduate students. It is the extent to which he or she achieved their short or long-time educational goals. Poor academic performance can lead to feelings of frustration, disengagement, hopelessness, and stigmatization which can affect a student's self-concept and increase the likelihood of delinquency pattern, thereby affecting students psychologically. Abasiubong, Abiola, and Udofia, (2011) stated that academic performance of students is affected by psychological, social, personal and environmental factors, these includes cultism, aggressiveness and violence. Although these factors could strongly affect the academic performance of students, these may differ from student to student. Repeated academic failure can erode a student's self-esteem, making him more susceptible to negative influences of delinquent patterns. The condition associated with delinquency are: Defective home discipline, specific instincts, general emotional instability, family history of anti-social vices or crime, intellectual dullness and backwardness in courses. Delinquency patterns or behaviors have strong relationship with school academic performance because it predicts how well students adapt and perform academically, socially and emotionally within the school environment, government, various social organizations, and educators, (Abasiubong, Abiola, & Udofia, 2011)

Empirical evidence from various contexts suggests that poor school performance is a more severe problem among serious violent delinquent's children (e.g., low grades, truancy, suspension, and dropping out) than nonviolent children. Even psychological or sociological discussions on delinquency could probably receive quite high rating for general academic interest (Vintenaba, Ndidi, Harry & Kennedy 2021). Zhu, and Shek, (2021) worked on the parents' management of diligence, she reported that parent over indulge their children and that some are too busy to care for their children, as a result of that, those types of children are difficult to control while they get to school, this lead them to delinquent pattern and as such affect their academic performance. Thompson, Rindfleisch, and Weiss, (2017) worked on factor contributing to delinquent pattern, the finding showed that secondary school students are gradually taking after students of higher institutions in the pattern of crimes like riot, arson and rape that were common among secondary school students in conformation of this for example, Olowodunoye, and Titus, (2018) reported that six (6) secondary school students in Lagos State were caught raping an 18 years SS 111 female students within the school premises.

Moreover, it is vital to ensure that families influence children positively due to the contribution of its influence to delinquent pattern in juveniles. It can be achieved by showing that there is strong emotional bonding in the family, and it is laying out effective strategies for communication. This research aims to address these knowledge gaps by exploring the relationship between delinquency patterns and academic performance of undergraduates' students in Rivers State University. Implication for Counselling.

By evaluating the factors of student's delinquency patterns, its implication and academic performance of student to educational success, this study seeks to contribute to both theoretical understanding and practical strategies

for reducing juvenile delinquency in tertiary institutions. The findings will have implications for parents, students', government and future researchers on factors impelling school relationship among juvenile lawbreakers in universities

Statement of the Problem

Despite numerous interventions to promote academic success among university students, increasing trends of delinquent behaviours such as cultism, examination malpractice, substance abuse, absenteeism, and violence remain prevalent in Nigerian universities, including Rivers State University. These delinquency patterns have been widely reported to adversely affect students' academic performance, psychological wellbeing, and overall university climate. However, there is limited empirical evidence exploring the specific relationship between different delinquency patterns and academic performance among undergraduates in Rivers State University.

The absence of such evidence poses a major challenge to university counsellors and administrators in designing targeted preventive and remedial counselling interventions. Without a clear understanding of which types of delinquent behaviours most significantly influence academic achievement, counselling efforts may remain generic and ineffective, thereby failing to address the root causes of academic underperformance and social maladjustment.

This problem is particularly critical in Rivers State University, which, like many other tertiary institutions, is striving to improve graduation rates, enhance students' academic outcomes, and promote a peaceful learning environment. Therefore, investigating the relationship between delinquency patterns and academic performance among undergraduate students is crucial to inform data-driven counselling strategies and student development programmes aimed at reducing delinquent behaviours and fostering academic excellence.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between delinquency patterns and academic performance of undergraduate students in Rivers State University: Implication for Counselling. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. ascertain the relationship between drug abuse and academic performance of undergraduates' students in Rivers State University
2. investigate the relationship between internet fraud and academic performance of undergraduates' students in Rivers State University
3. determine the relationship between cultism and academic performance of undergraduates' students in Rivers State University.
4. find out the relationship between counseling interventions to address delinquency patterns and academic performance of undergraduate students in Rivers State University.

Research Question

1. What is the relationship between drug abuse and the academic performance of undergraduates' students in Rivers State University?
2. What is the relationship between internet fraud and academic performance of undergraduates' students in Rivers State University?
3. What is the relationship between cultism and academic performance of undergraduates' students in Rivers State University?
4. What is the relationship between counseling interventions to address delinquency patterns and academic performance of undergraduate students in Rivers State University?

METHOD

This study adopted a correlational research design. The population of this study was 20,340 final students of Rivers State University. (Office of the Registrar 2025). The sample size of the study was 415 final year (4/5)

students determined using Taro Yamane formula. The purposive sampling technique was adopted in selecting final year students in the 14 faculties in the university. the proportionate stratified sampling technique was also adopted in selecting 415 students of these faculties. The distribution isas follows: 20 faculty of basic medical sciences, 25 faculty of clinical sciences, 15 faculty of medical laboratory, 40 faculty of communication and media studies, 45 faculty of education, 50 faculty of engineering, 30 faculty of environmental sciences, 20 faculty of humanities, 33 faculty of law, 34 faculty of management sciences, 30 faculty of sciences, 23 faculty of social sciences, 35 faculty of agriculture, and 15 faculty of entrepreneurial making a total of four hundred and fifteen (415) students.

The instrument for data collection were two sets of structured questionnaires titled: "Students Delinquency Patterns Questionnaire" (SDPQ) and "Students' Academic Performance Questionnaire" (SAPQ). The questionnaire consisted of 20 items organized into two sections: section A elicited responses on demographic information of respondents while sections B elicited responses based on the various research questions. The first cluster of the instrument measured students' indulgence in drug abuse, the second cluster measured indulgence in internet fraud, the third measured cultism. However, the second instrument measured students' academic performance for easy correlation. Items were measured using a 4-point rating scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" (1) to "Strongly Agree" (4). The research instruments were validated by two experts in Measurement and Evaluation, Rivers State University. These experts evaluated the questionnaire items for relevance, clarity, comprehensiveness, and appropriateness to the research objectives.

The reliability of the instrument was determined through internal consistency analysis using Cronbach's alpha method, conducted with data from the pilot study involving 30 respondents from Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rumuolumeni, Port Harcourt. The overall reliability coefficient for the entire questionnaire was 0.87, indicating very high internal consistency. The researchers personally administered the questionnaire to the respondents in their various schools. The researchers sought the services of two research assistants to help them administer the questionnaire. These were final year students in the school. The completed copies of the questionnaires were retrieved immediately from the students. Out of the 415 copies of the questionnaire administered, 400 copies were successfully retrieved and used for analysis. Data collected were analysed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC). The relationship value of 0.1 – 0.4 were counted as low correlation, 0.5 denote moderate correlation while 0.6 – 1.0 denote high correlation.

RESULTS

Research Question 1. What is the relationship between drug abuse and academic performance of undergraduate students in Rivers State University?

Table 1: PPMC Analysis on Relationship between Drug Abuse and Academic Performance of Undergraduate Students in Rivers State University

Variable	N	$\sum X \sum Y$	$\sum X^2 \sum Y^2$	$\sum X \sum Y$	Recall	Remarks
Drug Abuse(X)	400	882.14	537.40			
				1213.01	-0.89	High negative
Academic performance of students(Y)	400	987.10	618.32			

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

 The analyses from Table 1 revealed that the correlation value of r is -0.89. This value is high and negative which implies that there is high and negative relationship between drug abuse and academic performance of undergraduate students in Rivers State University. In other words, this means the drug abuse leads to low academic performance of undergraduate students in Rivers State University.

Research Question 2: What is the relationship between internet fraud and academic performance of undergraduates' students in Rivers State University?

Table 2: PPMC Analysis on Relationship between Internet Fraud and Academic Performance of Undergraduate Students in Rivers State University

Variable	N	∑X ∑Y	∑X²∑Y²	∑X∑Y	r-cal	Remarks
Internet Fraud (X)	400	912.02	1822.03			
				786.05	-0.83	High Negative
Academic Performance of Undergraduate Students (Y)	400	1001.03	1123.02			

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

The analyses from Table 2 revealed that the correlation value of r is -0.83. This value is high and negative which implies that there is high and negative relationship between internet fraud and academic performance of undergraduate students in Rivers State University. In other words, this means drug abuse leads to low academic performance of undergraduate students in Rivers State University.

Research Question 3: What is the relationship between cultism and academic performance of undergraduates' students in Rivers State University?

Table 3: PPMC Analysis on Relationship between Cultism and Academic Performance of Undergraduate Students in Rivers State University

Variable	N	∑X ∑Y	∑X²∑Y²	∑X∑Y	rcal	Remarks
Cultism (X)	400	850.05	2542.10			
				1466.10	-0.85	High Negative
Academic Performance (Y)	400	1058.11	1318.04			

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

The analyses from Table 2 revealed that the correlation value of r is -0.83. This value is high and negative which implies that there is high and negative relationship between cultism and academic performance of undergraduate students in Rivers State University. In other words, this means cultism leads to low academic performance of undergraduate students in Rivers State University.

Research Question 4: What is the relationship between counseling interventions to address delinquency patterns and academic performance of undergraduate students in Rivers State University?

Table 4.: PPMC Analysis on Relationship between Counseling Interventions to Address Delinquency Patterns and Academic Performance of Undergraduate Students in Rivers State University

Variable	N	∑X ∑Y	∑X²∑Y²	∑X∑Y	Rcal	Remarks
Counseling Interventions (X)	400	813.13	1765.15			
				1336.03	0.76	Moderate Positive
Academic Performance (Y)	400	1006.12	1236.01			

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

The analyses from Table 4 revealed that the correlation value of r is 0.76. This value is moderate and positive which implies that there is a moderate and positive relationship between counseling interventions to address

delinquency patterns and academic performance of undergraduate students in Rivers State University. In other words, this means the between counseling interventions to address delinquency patterns leads to a moderately corresponding increase in academic performance of undergraduate students in Rivers State University.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis for the first research question revealed a high negative correlation (r = -0.89) between drug abuse and academic performance among undergraduate students at Rivers State University. This correlation is statistically significant at the 0.05 level and represents one of the strongest relationships observed in the study. The magnitude of this correlation indicates that approximately 79% of the variance in academic performance can be explained by drug abuse patterns, suggesting that students engaged in substance abuse are experiencing severe academic deterioration. This finding has profound implications for university stakeholders, as it likely manifests in significantly lower GPAs, higher course failure rates, increased absenteeism and tardiness, reduced cognitive function affecting learning capacity, and impaired memory consolidation and recall during examinations. From an institutional perspective, universities face substantial challenges including increased dropout rates and extended graduation timelines, higher remedial programme costs, reduced institutional academic rankings, and greater demand for counseling and support services. The societal implications are equally concerning, as the strong negative relationship suggests that drug abuse among university students may contribute to a reduced skilled workforce pipeline, increased healthcare costs, higher crime rates in university communities, and the intergenerational transmission of substance abuse patterns. The demanding nature of university studies, coupled with the cognitive and behavioral impairments associated with drug abuse, likely contributes to this observed decline in academic performance.

This finding aligns with existing literature emphasizing the detrimental effects of substance use on educational outcomes. For instance, Thompson, Rindfleisch, and Weiss (2017) conducted a longitudinal study that found an association between substance use and delinquent behavior among adolescents. Furthermore, the general understanding is that delinquent patterns, including drug use, can negatively affect academic performance because students might miss academic activities. The demanding nature of university studies, coupled with the cognitive and behavioral impairments associated with drug abuse, likely contributes to this observed decline in academic performance.

The second research question examining internet fraud and academic performance showed a high negative correlation (r = -0.83), indicating statistical significance at the 0.05 level. This relationship carries significant contemporary relevance given the increasing digital connectivity and economic pressures facing students. The correlation suggests that students involved in internet fraud demonstrate substantial academic decline, likely due to time allocation conflicts between fraudulent activities and study time, psychological stress from illegal activities affecting concentration, fear of detection leading to irregular class attendance, and potential legal consequences disrupting academic continuity.

This finding is particularly relevant in the digital age, considering the increasing internet penetration in Nigeria, growing sophistication of cybercrime among youth, economic pressures driving students toward illegal online activities, and limited digital literacy regarding ethical internet use. The economic and social impact of this correlation extends beyond individual students, suggesting a loss of human capital investment in higher education, perpetuation of cybercrime culture among educated youth, reduced trust in digital transactions and online commerce, and potential international reputation damage for Nigerian graduates. The time, mental focus, and potential legal consequences associated with internet fraud likely detract significantly from students' ability to concentrate on and excel in their studies.

This finding resonates with the broader understanding that anti-social acts or behaviors, such as internet fraud, are considered unacceptable and can lead to lawful interpretation as delinquency, often affecting individuals negatively. Such activities can result in students losing their freedom due to trials, causing them to miss academic activities and thus negatively affecting their academic performance. The time, mental focus, and potential legal consequences associated with internet fraud likely detract significantly from students' ability to concentrate on and excel in their studies.

The third research question revealed a high negative correlation (r = -0.85) between cultism and academic performance, demonstrating statistical significance at the 0.05 level. This relationship has severe implications for campus safety and academic excellence, as the strong negative correlation indicates that cult activities create unsafe learning environments, fear and intimidation affect non-cult students' academic focus, violence and aggression disrupt normal academic processes, and resources are diverted from education to security measures.

Individual students involved in cultism experience dramatic academic decline affecting career prospects, increased risk of academic suspension or expulsion, physical and psychological trauma affecting learning capacity, and social isolation from mainstream academic activities. Universities face reputation damage affecting enrollment and funding, increased security and insurance costs, legal liabilities from campus violence, and difficulty attracting and retaining quality faculty. The involvement in cult activities often leads to violence, aggression, and a diversion from academic pursuits, creating an unsafe university environment and impacting students' academic focus and success. This result is consistent with previous research highlighting cultism as a significant factor affecting students' academic performance. Specifically, Abasiubong, Abiola, and Udofia (2011) identified cultism, aggressiveness, and violence as psychological, social, personal, and environmental factors affecting students' academic performance. The involvement in cult activities often leads to violence, aggression, and a diversion from academic pursuits, creating an unsafe university environment and impacting students' academic focus and success.

Finally, The fourth research question examining the relationship between counseling interventions to address delinquency patterns and academic performance revealed a moderate positive correlation (r = 0.76), which is statistically significant at the 0.05 level. This finding provides an optimistic counterpoint to the negative correlations observed with delinquency patterns and suggests that approximately 58% of the variance in academic performance can be attributed to effective counseling interventions. The moderate strength of this correlation indicates that while counseling interventions have a substantial positive impact, their effectiveness may be influenced by various factors including the timing of intervention, student receptiveness, counselor expertise, and the comprehensiveness of the programmes.

The real-world significance of this finding is considerable for university administrators and student support services. It demonstrates that targeted counseling interventions can serve as a protective factor against academic decline associated with delinquent behaviors. Students who participate in counseling programmes designed to address delinquency patterns show measurable improvements in their academic performance, suggesting that these interventions help students develop better study habits, time management skills, coping strategies for stress and peer pressure, and stronger motivation for academic achievement. The positive correlation also indicates that counseling interventions may help students re-engage with their academic goals, rebuild relationships with faculty and peers, and develop prosocial behaviors that support learning.

From an institutional investment perspective, this finding justifies the allocation of resources toward comprehensive counseling programs. Universities can expect a return on investment through improved retention rates, higher graduation rates, reduced disciplinary incidents, and enhanced institutional reputation. The moderate correlation suggests that counseling interventions are not a complete panacea but represent a significant tool in addressing the academic consequences of delinquent behavior. This finding supports the implementation of early intervention programs, peer counseling initiatives, group therapy sessions focused on academic success, and individualized counseling plans that address both behavioral and academic concerns.

However, the moderate rather than high correlation also suggests limitations in the effectiveness of counseling interventions. Some students may be more resistant to change, particularly those deeply entrenched in delinquent patterns. The effectiveness of counseling may also depend on external factors such as family support, socioeconomic conditions, and peer influences that extend beyond the university environment. Additionally, the timing of intervention appears crucial, as students who have been engaged in delinquent behaviors for extended periods may require more intensive or specialized interventions to achieve meaningful academic improvement. This finding underscores the importance of support systems in mitigating the negative impacts of delinquency. For instance, the study's recommendations include education and support programmes for families to build positive relationships with their children and guide them through academic challenges. Effective counseling can provide students with coping mechanisms, behavioral modification strategies, and academic support, thereby

helping them overcome challenges associated with delinquent behaviors and improve their academic outcomes. This implies that targeted and effective counseling is a valuable tool for promoting academic success and reducing delinquency among university students.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that there is a strong negative correlation between engagement in specific delinquent behaviors—namely drug abuse, internet fraud, and cultism—and students' academic outcomes. This suggests that as students' involvement in these delinquent activities increases, their academic performance tends to decline. Conversely, there is a moderate positive relationship between counseling interventions designed to address delinquency patterns and students' academic performance. This highlights the crucial role that targeted counseling can play in mitigating the adverse effects of delinquency on academic achievement. The prevalence of these issues, as noted in the introduction, underscores the pressing need for strategic interventions within the university environment to foster both academic success and student well-being.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. The university, in collaboration with student affairs and relevant departments, should launch comprehensive and continuous educational campaigns targeting common delinquency patterns like drug abuse. These campaigns should highlight the severe negative academic and personal consequences of such behaviors, leveraging peer education, workshops, seminars, and digital platforms to reach a wide student audience.

2. Recognizing that family dynamics can influence student behavior the university should initiate and sustain programmes that involve parents and guardians. To address the issue of cultism in the universities as this affects students performance.

3. To address the root causes and preventative measures for delinquency, the university should consider integrating mandatory life skills courses and ethical education modules into the general studies curriculum for all undergraduates. These modules should cover topics such as responsible digital citizenship (to counter internet fraud), coping mechanisms for stress (to reduce substance abuse), conflict resolution, critical thinking, and the importance of ethical conduct, thereby building students' resilience and decision-making abilities against negative influences.

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