What is the Effect of Academic Achievement On Delinquency Among Adolescents?

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ABSTRACT

In society, adolescents are integrated into educational institutions where they spend most of their time. The focus on academic achievement is relevant to their current and future success while juvenile delinquency is a source of major concern because it can become a barrier and risk factor for various detrimental circumstances. The purpose of this study was to determine whether or not a relationship existed between academic achievement and delinquency among adolescents. Based on the secondary data analysis derived from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health (Add Health), the current study aligned with the proposed hypothesis that if adolescents have higher academic achievement, they are less likely to participate in delinquent behaviors and actions.

Introduction

Purpose of Study:
To increase knowledge related to academic achievement among adolescents.
To assess whether or not academic achievement is related to delinquent behaviors among adolescents.

Research Question:
The research question for the current study is: What is the effect of academic achievement on delinquency among adolescents?

Hypothesis:
The hypothesis of the study is that if adolescents have higher academic achievement, they are less likely to participate in delinquent behaviors and actions.

Literature Review

Social Development Model:
- Adolescent’s bonding to their school plays a prominent role because it can impede antisocial behavior and promote positive development in adolescence (Catalano et al., 2004).

Academic Engagement and Adolescent Delinquency:
- Behavioral engagement is believed to reduce time and energy to take part in deviant activities, and academic behaviors like homework and studying dissuade deviance by cultivating individual skills, confidence, and rewards while student disengagement from school is largely regarded as the main developmental process underlying school failure and dropout (Hirschi & Ganger, 2011).

Risk Factors Associated to Low Academic Achievement and Delinquency:
- Low academic achievement was linked to delinquency and reduced the likelihood of graduating high school, attending college, and reaching occupational goals (Hoffmann, Erickson, and Spence, 2013).
- Adolescents who were involved with antisocial behavior and exposure to delinquent peers had lower academic achievement (Newcomb et al., 2002).

Methods

Research Design:
- This study is a secondary data analysis of the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health (Add Health) (Harris & Udry, 2009).
- The study design utilized was a clustered sample where clusters were sampled with unequal probability.
- The data collection for Wave I included an in-school questionnaire and in-home interview, which took place between September 1994 and December 1995 and involved more than 90,000 students in grades 7 through 12.

Sampling Method:
- The sample design utilized was a stratified and random sample of all high schools in the United States.
- The current study utilized data collection from Wave I, Stage 1 with adolescent participants who answered questions from the survey about academic achievement and delinquency.
- Data was derived from a total of 4,817 adolescent students from the 7th to 12th grade.

Measures:
- The independent variable for this study was academic achievement, which was based on the student’s attendance, academic standing, and grades in school.
- The dependent variable for this study was delinquency, which was measured using a 15-item delinquency scale.

Results

The mean delinquency of adolescents who ever repeated a grade (M = 4.55, SD = 5.12) was significantly different from the mean delinquency of adolescents who never repeated a grade (M = 3.49, SD = 4.37).
- The mean delinquency of adolescents who ever got suspended (M = 6.14, SD = 6.05) was significantly different from the mean delinquency of adolescents who never got suspended (M = 2.84, SD = 3.49).
- The mean delinquency of adolescents who ever got suspended (M = 7.97, SD = 7.56) was significantly different from the mean delinquency of adolescents who never got suspended (M = 3.52, SD = 4.28).
- Male adolescents who have lower GPAs scored higher on delinquency than other study participants while age and minority status were not significant predictors of delinquency.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Achievement and Delinquency</th>
<th>Mean Delinquency (SD)</th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Repeated a grade (ever)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>4.55(5.12)</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>3.49(4.37)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspended from school (ever)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>6.14(8.05)</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>2.84(3.49)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expelled from school (ever)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>7.97(7.56)</td>
<td>4.45</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>3.52(4.28)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparisons made using independent t-tests</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Conclusions

• The findings of the study aligned with the hypothesis as the Pearson correlation coefficient determined that higher levels of delinquency were associated with lower current GPA.
• There was a significant difference in delinquency scores between adolescent students who were held back a grade, suspended, or expelled in comparison to their counterparts.

Implications for Future Research and Practice:
• Future research can focus on the biopsychosocial factors related to the effect of academic achievement on delinquency among adolescents.
• School social workers that work with adolescents who are at risk of or take part in delinquent behaviors can advocate for policy changes if there is a lack of resources in their schools.

References