

Effectiveness of Counselling Intervention on Delinquency Prone Students' Academic Achievement

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Abstract

One of the causes of school dropout is poor academic performance. The reason why students leave school early is frequently due to academic underachievement and school failure. Research has consistently highlighted the need for interventions to prevent school failure and dropout. This study assessed the effect of a counselling intervention on the academic achievement of delinquency prone students susceptible to underachievement and school failure, employing an experimental method and using the pretest-posttest equivalent-groups design. A total of 100 delinquency prone students formed the sample of the study, who were randomly allocated to experimental and control groups ($N = 50$ for each group). Scores of academic achievement for the pretest were collected, and the experimental group participants were exposed to 15 weekly counselling sessions. The control group received no intervention. A posttest of academic achievement was administered to both groups, and the outcomes were compared to evaluate the effect of the counselling intervention. The results suggested a significant improvement in the posttest scores of the experimental group, revealing a large effect size ($\eta^2 = .39$). The results are discussed in the light of past research.

Keywords: *counselling, delinquency proneness, school achievement, underachievement, school dropout*

Introduction

Delinquency is a serious social problem which escalates public concern when its incidence proliferates and when the severity of a delinquent act by a youth poses a threat to social norms (Loeber et al., 2003). The problem of delinquency remains relatively present across the length and breadth of modern society. Delinquents lack the ability to conform to societal standards (Siegel & Welsh, 2011). Delinquency proneness is an individual's tendency or potential to commit delinquent acts. The prevalence of delinquency proneness among modern youth during their teens and the incidence of delinquency in schools is a common phenomenon. During adolescence, students are likely to commit delinquent acts, initially for

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adventure, but persistence in those acts may be catastrophic for their future and threaten social norms (Clinard & Meier, 2011). Developing adolescents cannot anticipate future outcomes of their actions (Siegel & Welsh, 2011) and thus should not be left unguided during this critical stage of life. Schools have the full potential to employ mechanisms that would help adolescents navigate their academic challenges, enabling them to observe propriety (Ward & Williams, 2015).

Students with conduct problems do not perform better in academics; as a result, they are very likely to quit school prematurely (McLeod & Kaiser, 2004; Saraiva et al., 2011; Ward & Williams, 2015). Student's academic achievement is a strong predictor of a better future. It is positively related to enhanced social and occupational status in adulthood (Serbin et al., 2013). On the other hand, academic underachievement renders the youth unemployable, resulting in reduced social and economic gains in adulthood (Sweeten et al., 2009). A student who fails school during earlier years is thrown into a cycle of poverty. Further, the academic underachievement of students is likely to find expression in deviant behaviour. Research points to a negative association between delinquency proneness and academic achievement. Arslan (2022) reported that students with externalising behaviours were involved in a greater incidence of school bullying, negatively predicting their school achievement. Chen et al. (2022) revealed a bidirectional relationship between high externalising problem behaviours as well as high internalising problem behaviours and low academic achievement of school children; the variables reciprocally affected each other; an increase in high externalising or internalising behaviours would be followed by a decrease in academic achievement and the vice versa. Hoffmann (2020) reported a moderate positive association between delinquency and academic underachievement. Carroll et al. (2009) examined how delinquency and academic achievement were related, using a sample of 935 Australian adolescents (454 males, 481 females) who were 11 to 18 years old; the study reported a negative association between delinquency and academic achievement. Saraiva et al. (2011) also point to a negative association of problem behaviour with academic achievement. Enhancement in academic achievement, in contrast, is suggested to reduce the likelihood of delinquency. Arslan (2022) reported school belonging and achievement as negative predictors of externalising youth behaviours. Children who performed better academically while incarcerated tended to return to school after their release, according to Blomberg et al. (2012). They also showed that juveniles with above-average school attendance were less prone to delinquency than those with below-average attendance.

Delors Commission Report (Delors et al., 1996) holds academic failure responsible for social exclusion and individual maladjustment, and combating this failure is identified as a social necessity. The newly approved National Education Policy 2020 (Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, 2020) sets 2030 as the target year for achieving a 100% Gross Enrolment Ratio from lower grades to the secondary level by preventing student dropout. Early identification of delinquency prone children is quite significant for preventing student dropout by deploying effective measures to help them identify education as a priority and improve their academic grades, thereby observing societal standards. Many studies support counselling as an effective measure of helping students enhance their academic achievement (e.g., Blanco et al., 2019; Dabone et al., 2015; Ihendinihu, 2020). Given its efficacy in combating the problem of academic underachievement, counselling is likely to help delinquency prone students to improve their school achievement, which is amenable to improvement. However, no studies have been conducted in the Kashmir valley to test counselling on delinquency prone students. The researchers attempted to fill this void.

Objective

The objective of the present research was to study the effect of counselling on the academic achievement of delinquency prone students.

Hypothesis

Counselling intervention would cause a significant increase in the experimental group's posttest scores of academic achievement.

Method

Sample and Design

The sample of the present study was 100 male students from the Anantnag district of Kashmir Valley who were identified using the Delinquency Proneness Scale (Chopra & Kaur, 2012). The sample was drawn from 445 students, who formed the initial sample of the study. The pretest-posttest equivalent-groups design was used to achieve the objective. Participants were randomly divided into experimental and control groups (N = 50 for each group). After taking pretest academic achievement scores, experimental group participants were exposed to the counselling intervention. The control group was given no intervention.

The administration of a posttest for both groups followed the intervention. Each group's posttest results were compared with its pretest results to test the hypothesis.

Academic Achievement

Scores of School Based Assessment, held before the intervention, which were converted into percentages, constituted the pretest of academic achievement, and the same type of assessment held after the intervention served as the posttest of academic achievement. Aggregate marks of all the subjects were taken viz. English, Mathematics, General Science, Social Science, Urdu and Kashmiri. The procedure remained the same for both the pretest and posttest.

Counselling Intervention

The experimental group participants received 15 weekly counselling sessions, lasting from 25 to 45 minutes. Individual counselling, with an eclectic approach, was used. The aim of the intervention, among other things, was to target the participants' academic achievement. Building on Gehart (2016) and Hornby (2003), a working relationship was established with each participant, their problems were assessed, and goals were set (improvement in academic achievement for the present concern). They were promised confidentiality to enable them to reveal their concerns and were helped to change their study habits and increase their study time to retain what they have been taught at school. Their learning was assessed every week during the intervention. With each successive counselling session, an improvement was demonstrated by the participants. Further, their involvement in wanton acts reduced substantially, and they were now ready to focus on future educational pursuits. The intervention was terminated when the participants were ready to continue their new outlook toward schooling and studying at home.

Results and Discussion

The independent samples *t* test was performed to evaluate the differences in the pretest scores of the groups. The paired samples *t* test was performed to analyse the differences between each group's pretest and posttest scores. Eta squared (η^2) was calculated to measure effect size.

Table 1

Comparison of Pretest Scores of Academic Achievement of the Groups

Group	Test	N	Mean	SD	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Experimental	Pretest	50	63.43	11.00	1.38	.170
Control	Pretest	50	60.50	10.21		

$p > .05$

The comparison of pretest scores of the groups (Table 1) yielded no significant difference ($t = 1.38$, $p > .05$). Based on Levene's Test for Equality of Variances, the groups were homogenous ($p > .05$). Thus, the groups were equal on the dependent variable for the pretest. There was no ceiling effect either. The mean performance of each group (experimental group = 63.43 and control group = 60.50) was low and amenable to improvement.

Table 2

Comparison of Pretest and Posttest of Academic Achievement of the Experimental Group

Test	N	Mean	SD	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	η^2
Pretest	50	63.43	11.00	5.57	<.001	.39
Posttest	50	70.90	10.64			

$p < .01$

Table 3

Comparison of Pretest and Posttest of Academic Achievement of the Control Group

Test	N	Mean	SD	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Pretest	50	60.50	10.21	.43	.666
Posttest	50	60.83	10.54		

$p > .05$

Table 2 and Table 3 show a comparison of the pretest and posttest scores of the groups. From Table 2, it becomes clear that a significant difference occurred in the academic achievement scores of the experimental group ($t = 5.57$, $p < .01$). Eta squared (η^2) was calculated to measure the effect size. A large effect size was observed ($\eta^2 = .39$). No such increase was found in the control group ($t = .43$, $p > .05$). Thus, counselling was successful in improving

academic achievement of the students of the experimental group. In the light of the results, our hypothesis stands accepted.

In order to enable students to lead better adult lives, school success in terms of academic achievement is critical to pay attention. In this investigation, an attempt was made to test counselling for its effect on the academic achievement of students prone to delinquency. A substantial improvement was found in the academic achievement of the participants exposed to the intervention. The results concur with past studies, showing complementary results (Blanco et al., 2019; Dabone et al., 2015; Ihendinihu, 2020). After receiving a child-centred play therapy intervention, at-risk elementary school students' academic performance significantly improved, according to Blanco et al. (2019); a large effect size was discovered. Dabone et al. (2015) evaluated the effect of guidance and counselling services on adolescents' academic performance using the experimental method; post-intervention, the academic performance of the experimental group's participants significantly improved. Ihendinihu (2020) showed positive results of counselling intervention on mathematics achievement of delinquency prone students. The results of our study show that eclectic counselling helped delinquency-prone students improve their academic performance. The experimental group's posttest results improved to a substantial degree. The effect size was substantial.

Conclusion

The results of the present investigation show that counselling substantially impacted the academic achievement of delinquency prone students. The results are encouraging and will likely pave the way for policy improvement. Based on the findings, we suggest hiring school counsellors to combat the problem of academic underachievement and school dropout of children. Delinquency proneness is becoming a proliferating phenomenon because of increasing societal complications and the advent of new avenues like the Internet to demonstrate delinquent acts. Guidance and counselling services can help prevent this vulnerability of the youth by removing the causal factors and channelising their energies and aspirations toward constructive and positive activities. Improvement in educational outcomes will likely reduce adolescent delinquency (Ward & Williams, 2015). Schools can play a significant role in preventing at-risk pupils from dropping out of school by creating a supportive environment for them and making available the services of counsellors (Knesting, 2008). Thus, school-based interventions, like guidance and counselling, should be in place in

our schools to help adolescents refrain from deviant acts and focus on their academic goals to lead better adult lives.

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