

Journey of Endurance: The Motivation behind Criminology Students Who Persist Despite Academic Failures

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative case study examines the academic challenges, resilience, and motivations of ten criminology students in Misamis Occidental who experienced failure but persisted in their studies. Using in-depth interviews and thematic analysis, eight themes emerged, including difficulty with complex subjects, the impact of failing grades, career goals, support systems, and coping strategies. Findings highlight that strong career motivation, social support, adaptability, and institutional resources are vital for sustaining persistence and growth. The study underscores the need for holistic interventions addressing both academic and psycho-social needs, recommending improved ethical grounding, time management, adaptive learning, and enhanced institutional support to promote resilience and success.

Keywords: Criminology Education; Academic Challenges; Academic Resilience; Student Motivation; Academic Failure; Social Support Systems; Science-Related Subjects; Coping Strategies; Mentorship; Institutional Support Programs; Academic Integrity.

1. Introduction

Criminology students encounter distinctive academic and emotional challenges, including financial stress, disrupted sleep patterns, and exposure to crime-related trauma, which adversely affect their well-being and academic performance (Rendon & Relacion, 2023; Natividad & Angeles, 2023; Calma & Santos, 2022). Despite these hardships, their motivations—rooted in personal experiences with injustice, a desire for self-discovery, and career aspirations—drive their perseverance (Eriksson et al., 2024; Trebilcock & Griffiths, 2021). While general studies on academic stress exist, there remains a significant gap in research specifically addressing criminology students' resilience and coping mechanisms, particularly in Southeast Asia (Brown, 2021; Garcia, 2020). This study seeks to fill this gap by qualitatively exploring criminology students' lived experiences, motivations, and resilience strategies, aiming to inform tailored support programs that enhance their academic success, psychological wellness, and preparation as future justice professionals (Ridener et al., 2020; Santiago & Perez, 2024).

1.1. Study Objectives

This study explored the academic struggles and resilience of criminology students, with a focus on understanding their motivation for pursuing criminology. Specifically, it seeks to address the following questions:

1. What are the common academic struggles experienced by criminology students in their studies?
2. What are the primary motivational factors that drive criminology students to pursue their degree?
3. What resilience strategies do criminology students use to overcome academic difficulties?
4. What support systems or resources do criminology students perceive as helpful in sustaining their motivation and academic resilience?

2. Methods

This study employed a qualitative case study design to deeply explore the motivations of criminology students who persist despite academic failure. It was conducted in a city in the Philippines, focusing on criminology students engaged in conflict management training aligned with their curriculum. Participants included 10 purposively selected criminology students with experiences of academic failure, along with teachers and peers who supported or observed them. Data were collected via in-depth interviews using a self-developed guide focused on conflict management perceptions and strategies. Ethical protocols ensured voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality, and compliance with data privacy laws. Thematic data analysis followed Robert Yin's six-step method to rigorously identify, refine, and articulate key themes reflecting participants' lived experiences.

3. Results and Discussions

3.1. Difficulty Understanding Complex and Science-Related Subjects

Criminology students frequently struggle with understanding complex scientific concepts embedded in their coursework, especially in subjects like forensic science, which require grasping interdisciplinary scientific principles and applying them to criminal behavior and justice processes (Sharma, 2025). These difficulties are compounded by limited foundational science knowledge, challenging terminology, and insufficient instructional support, all of which contribute to significant academic barriers and reduced motivation for many students in the program (Jones & Burrell, 2022).

The participants' responses illustrate that academic challenges in criminology primarily stem from the demanding nature of major subjects, which require effective time management and disciplined study habits. Participants 1, 2, 3, and 4 emphasize the difficulty of keeping up with heavy course loads and mastering complex content, especially in forensic science and criminal law, highlighting the need for better time allocation and focused study. Participant 10's mention of struggling to find research participants further underscores how academic tasks extend beyond theory into practical challenges. Overall, these views suggest that criminology students must adopt proactive learning strategies, such as prioritizing tasks, creating structured schedules, and seeking active support, to overcome the heavy demands of their coursework and improve performance. Encouraging the development of these time management and study skills is essential to help students surmount academic hurdles and stay motivated.

These are the evident in the responses of the participants during the conduct of interview.

"My most significant academic challenges I face is when my subject or I don't have any time to cope up with my studies and I don't have time to study the entire subject because my subject is loaded." "My current academic experience in the criminology is very hard because you need to study and familiarize the laws and especially the subject CLJ."(P1)

"There are many challenges like in the forensic science especially in fingerprinting because I thought it is easy but it turn out to be hard to understand, also solving in fingerprinting is difficult too."(P2)

"I'm having trouble with fingerprinting specifically in solving, It's really hard because there is solving and I think that is one of my weakness and we doesn't have any formula, all you need to do is to memorize it."(P3)

"I expected it to be easy but I found out it is difficult especially in a subject like CLJ because I couldn't catch up with it right away."

"Forensic science it is not also easy to understand."(P4)

"The significant academic challenges that I faced is the major subjects especially the criminal law and jurisprudence subject. It really has a big impact and stressful."(P8)

"Challenging because you will know a lot of different terminology that you will encounter in every discussion and how to apply it to yourself."(P9)

"Currently it is difficult like majors, you need to study it because that's what you can do." "The most common things that I faced in criminology specifically the research, very difficult to find participants to interview."(P10)

The teacher and peer's observations that students struggle with analyzing, applying critical thinking, reading, spelling, and memorization directly support the participants' reported academic difficulties in criminology major subjects. These cognitive skills are foundational for understanding complex theories, laws, and scientific concepts integral to criminology education. The challenges in critical thinking development may result from instructional methods, students' language proficiency, and learning habits, which affect their ability to engage actively with the material. Such struggles impede students' capability to interpret and apply criminological knowledge, reinforcing the need for targeted interventions that foster critical thinking skills alongside content mastery. Overall, these insights highlight a critical barrier that students must overcome to succeed academically and professionally in criminology.

"The most common difficulty they encounter that I have observed is they don't know how to analyze and applied there critical thinking some don't know how to read and spell and also their memorization are not very fluent."(Teacher)

"Usually the academic problems they have faced is the majors subjects."(Peer)

Criminology students face significant academic challenges, particularly in science-related subjects such as forensic science, biology, and chemistry, which have been increasingly integrated into the curriculum to enhance critical thinking and professional expertise (Manuel & Paglinawan, 2025). These students encounter difficulties due to a lack of foundational science knowledge, complex scientific terminology, and inadequate instructional support, making it hard for them to understand and apply scientific concepts to criminology (Manuel & Paglinawan, 2025). The heavy academic workload and demanding course materials further compound these challenges, often leading to stress, anxiety, and reduced academic motivation. Addressing these issues necessitates targeted curriculum improvements, supportive learning environments, and effective teaching strategies to help students better engage with course content and succeed academically. Such measures are vital not only for academic achievement but also for preparing students for professional roles in law enforcement, forensic science, and the broader criminal justice system where scientific literacy is crucial (Nilendu, 2024).

Related studies on the difficulties faced by criminology students in complex and science-related subjects emphasize that the integration of forensic science, biology, and chemistry into criminology curricula introduces significant academic hurdles (Manuel & Paglinawan, 2025). Research conducted at Valencia Colleges Bukidnon Incorporated in the Philippines revealed that students struggle primarily due to a lack of foundational scientific knowledge, comprehension difficulties with complex terminology, and inadequate instructional support. These challenges are exacerbated by time constraints and an overwhelming workload, leading to reduced academic performance and motivation. The studies also highlight the importance of critical thinking and analytical skills, which are essential but often underdeveloped among criminology students (Kakar, 2025). To mitigate these issues, researchers recommend curriculum redesign, enhanced teaching strategies, supportive learning environments, and the use of digital and peer resources to improve engagement, understanding, and career readiness in multidisciplinary criminology education. These findings underline the necessity for ongoing pedagogical reforms to better equip criminology students for the intellectual and practical demands of their field.

The implication of the theme "Difficulty Understanding Complex and Science-Related Subjects" is that criminology students face significant academic obstacles that hinder their learning and professional preparedness. These challenges contribute to increased stress, lower motivation, and poor academic performance, which may delay graduation or lead to attrition (Ntelo, 2024). Students' struggles with complex scientific terminology, foundational knowledge deficits, and inadequate instructional support highlight the critical need for curriculum redesign and enhanced teaching strategies. If unaddressed, these difficulties could compromise students' ability to apply essential scientific principles in practical law enforcement and forensic contexts, impacting their future career effectiveness (Nilendu, 2024). Consequently, academic institutions must provide robust support systems, foster critical thinking skills, and integrate innovative learning resources to ensure students successfully master challenging content and meet the evolving demands of criminology professions.

3.2. Impact of Failing Grades

Failing grades have a profound impact on criminology students' academic performances, often resulting in changes to their academic status such as becoming irregular students (Abonales, 2024). Research indicates a strong correlation between attendance, study habits, and academic outcomes, where poor performance, especially in major subjects, tends to lower students' motivation and increase their risk of academic failure and withdrawal. Students who experience failing grades frequently report higher stress levels and diminished confidence, which can lead to disruptions in their learning trajectory. This impact not only affects their immediate academic progression but also their preparedness for licensure examinations essential for professional practice. Consequently, addressing the causes and effects of failing grades is crucial, with recommendations highlighting the need for improved instructional design, targeted student support, and intervention programs to help students meet academic demands and maintain satisfactory performance (Chemagosi, 2024).

The thoughts from Participants 1, 2, 6, 7, and 9 collectively reveal how failing grades deeply affect criminology students emotionally and academically (Eyler, 2024). They express that failing induces fear, loss of motivation, and changes in academic status such as irregular enrollment, which disrupts study routines and progress (Garcia, &

Uy Jr, 2025). Despite these setbacks, some participants also demonstrate resilience by using their failures as lessons and motivation to strive harder. This reflects the critical role of a positive mindset and perseverance in overcoming academic difficulties. These insights underscore the importance of institutional support mechanisms, such as counseling and academic advising, to help students maintain motivation and manage the consequences of failure during their criminology studies, ultimately improving retention and success rates.

These are the evident in the responses of the participants during the conduct of interview.

"These academic challenges affect my performance and motivation because I'm scared to fail my subjects."(P1)

"When I failed, my schedules changed because of my failing grade I became irregular students."(P2)

"There are times that I lost my motivation because I had to think because I had failed, if you fail, you can't always get back up, you're always at the bottom." and "When I failed my CLJ3, I tried hard no matter how difficult it was, I made my failure in CLJ3 a lesson because not all of us can fail, but don't lose hope, keep going."(P6)

"For me its really hard especially when you have a failing grade." and "For me I don't think it seriously when I failed in the subject instead I used that to strive more in studying."(P7)

"It affect my motivation because I feel down when I failed the subjects." and "Example of that challenges is when I failed in the subjects but still continue striving."(P9)

The peer's highlights the emotional toll that academic failure can have on students, which often leads to diminished drive to continue their studies (Rabbi, & Islam, 2024). This perspective aligns with common student experiences where the psychological impact of failing weighs heavily, affecting self-confidence and enthusiasm for learning. Such feelings of sadness and loss of motivation can create a barrier to academic recovery and progress (Dee, 2024) It underscores the importance of emotional support, encouragement from peers, family, and educators, and creating a positive environment that helps students regain motivation and resilience to overcome setbacks. By addressing these emotional challenges alongside academic difficulties, students are more likely to persist and succeed.

"When they have failing grade they feel sad and loses his their motivation."(Peer)

Failing grades have significant negative impacts on students' academic trajectories, motivation, and future opportunities (Eyler, 2024). Research indicates that academic failure lowers students' self-concept and increases stress and anxiety, which can lead to decreased engagement and persistence in their studies. Failure in critical courses can delay graduation, force changes in academic scheduling, and reduce the likelihood of pursuing advanced or specialized fields. Additionally, students who fail may face compounded disadvantages in their educational and labor market outcomes, including lower earnings and longer times to completion. These adverse effects underscore the importance of early interventions, supportive academic environments, and resilience-building strategies to help students recover from failures and continue progressing toward their educational and career goals. The implications of failing grades are broad, affecting not only immediate academic performance but also long-term personal and professional development (Eyler, 2024).

Related studies on the impact of failing grades among criminology students consistently identify multiple contributing factors such as inadequate study habits, time management issues, insufficient review, and weak learning strategies (Colanggo, et al 2024). Research conducted at Cavite State University highlights poor time management, lack of clear study goals, and inadequate engagement in group study as prominent causes of academic failure in qualifying examinations. Other studies underscore the psychological effects of failing grades, including anxiety and stress, compounded by personal issues like family problems and financial difficulties, which further hinder academic performance (Rabbi & Islam, 2024). These studies emphasize the importance of motivation, effective study strategies, and faculty support in improving students' academic outcomes. Group study and targeted interventions are found effective in enhancing comprehension and exam readiness, while the development of resilient learning attitudes mitigates the negative consequences of academic setbacks. Collectively, these findings advocate for comprehensive support systems and instructional reforms to address the root causes of failing grades and foster student success in criminology programs.

The implications of failing grades among criminology students are profound, affecting not only their academic performance but also their psychological well-being and future career prospects (Abonales, 2024). Research indicates that academic failure increases stress, anxiety, and feelings of self-doubt, which can create a cycle of poor academic engagement and further failures. Low grades can delay graduation, disrupt academic trajectories, and diminish confidence, thereby reducing students' motivation to persist and succeed. Additionally, failure in major subjects can negatively influence licensure examination outcomes, essential for professional certification in criminology fields. These consequences highlight the urgent need for specialized academic support programs, mental health interventions, and instructional innovations aimed at fostering resilience, improving study habits, and creating supportive learning environments (Lunov & Rozhkova, 2024). By addressing these issues, educational institutions can help mitigate the adverse effects of failing grades and promote students' sustained academic and professional success.

3.3. Career Aspirations and Professional Goals

Criminology students are primarily motivated by their clear career goals of becoming police officers, registered criminologists, or law enforcement professionals, which provide a sense of purpose and direction (Robinos & Camilon, 2024). This career-driven motivation is bolstered by the desire for financial stability, professional fulfillment, and the opportunity to serve and protect their communities, helping them persist despite academic obstacles (Phiri, 2024).

The participants' statements consistently reflect a deep-seated aspiration to pursue careers in law enforcement and criminology professions, often rooted in childhood dreams and family influences (P1, P2, P3, P5, P7, P10) (Zaportiza & Cuevas Jr, 2025). This collective motivation aligns with findings from studies at Veritas College of Irosin and other institutions, which highlight how criminology students are driven by their desire to serve and protect, achieve financial stability, and fulfill personal or familial expectations. The emphasis on career preparedness, such as passing licensure exams and gaining practical experience through internships, underscores the importance these students place on professional readiness as a critical step toward achieving their goals.

(Shethiya, et al 2025). Their aspirations not only guide their educational choices but also provide resilience and determination to overcome academic and personal challenges. This narrative confirms that career ambitions are a powerful force shaping criminology students' engagement and commitment throughout their academic journey.

These are the evident in the responses of the participants during the conduct of interview.

"I choose to study criminology because of my ancestors and I want to make a path of myself to be a registered criminologist and to be PNP personnel."(P1)

"I choose criminology because since I was a child, that is what I wanted to be a police officer and it only align to criminology course so it can give me a guide to become a good public officer."(P2)

"I choose criminology because when I was a child I like to become a police officer and my dad also wanted me too, I can find a better job for my future."(P3)

"My motivation that I have is my dream of becoming a police officer someday or any of the try bureau but it depend where I mean to be."(P5)

"I choose this program because since I was a child I want to become a first law enforcement in the family."(P7)

"I choose criminology because I want to be the first to become a law enforcement officer in my family."(P10)

The statements from both the peer and teacher emphasize the vital role that personal and familial motivations play in sustaining students' commitment to their educational and career goals despite challenges (Lin & Zainudin, 2024). The peer's observation that students stay motivated when they find a comfort zone and pursue their career highlights how a clear sense of purpose and a supportive environment foster resilience. Similarly, the teacher's example of a student who continues schooling due to family influence and responsibilities underscores how external factors like family support and life circumstances can strongly impact a student's determination to succeed. Together, these insights illustrate that career aspirations intertwined with personal and social support systems are crucial for maintaining students' perseverance in their professional journeys (McCullough Hedelin, 2024).

"I noticed that they are motivated when they find their comfort zone and pursue their carer and they keep studying despite setbacks."(Peer)

"I have one student that until now still went to school because of the influence of his sister and aside from that he already have a family."(Teacher)

Criminology students are primarily motivated by clear career aspirations and professional goals centered on entering law enforcement, becoming registered criminologists, or other criminal justice roles (Moriarty, & Parsons-Pollard, 2024) Studies indicate that personal ambitions to serve and protect society, family influence, and job prospects strongly shape these career choices. Students often view their criminology education as a crucial step toward gaining the knowledge, skills, and confidence needed to succeed in their desired professions (Kakar, 2025). Practical experiences such as internships further enhance their readiness for real-world challenges. Although financial constraints and limited access to educational resources pose barriers for some, the majority remain driven

by passion and the promise of stable, meaningful careers in criminal justice. These findings emphasize the importance of aligning academic programs with career preparation and providing support to overcome obstacles, ensuring students are well equipped for their professional trajectories in criminology.

Related studies consistently emphasize that criminology students pursue their degrees driven by strong career aspirations and professional goals linked to criminal justice roles (Robinos & Camilon, 2024). Research at Veritas College of Irosin highlights that students view their criminology education as imperative for developing the skills, knowledge, and confidence required to enter law enforcement, corrections, and other criminal justice sectors. Practical experiences such as internships and mentorships play a crucial role in enhancing career readiness by providing real-world exposure and shaping professional trajectories (Ansari, 2025). These studies collectively indicate that motivation for pursuing criminology is closely tied to personal ambitions to serve society and achieve stable, respected careers, often influenced by family and community expectations.

The theme of career aspirations and professional goals among criminology students carries significant implications for criminology education and workforce development (Robinos & Camilon, 2024). Studies show that students who pursue criminology often do so with clear intentions of entering law enforcement, forensic science, or related criminal justice professions. This strong career focus necessitates that academic programs not only provide theoretical knowledge but also emphasize practical skills through internships and field experiences. By aligning curricula with real-world demands, institutions can better prepare students for successful transitions into their careers, thereby addressing the increasing demand for competent professionals in the criminal justice system (Hunter, et al 2022). Understanding these aspirations helps educators tailor support services and career development programs that enhance students' readiness and confidence to enter the workforce effectively.

Additionally, research indicates that while passion and career goals are strong motivators, criminology students also face challenges such as financial constraints, job market uncertainties, and the physically and emotionally demanding nature of law enforcement work. These factors can lead to career indecisiveness or attrition if not properly addressed through mentorship, counseling, and institutional support (Bian, 2023). The implications of these findings highlight the need for comprehensive education strategies that consider socio-economic realities and provide holistic support to students. Supporting criminology students in developing resilience, practical competencies, and a clear professional identity is essential for nurturing a skilled and dedicated workforce capable of meeting the complex challenges within the criminal justice field (Zaportiza, & Cuevas Jr, 2025). These insights inform policy and program improvements in criminology education to better equip students for their future roles.

3.4. Passion for Justice and Making a Positive Social Impact

The passion for justice drives criminology students to pursue their studies not only to fulfill personal dreams but also to actively contribute to social change by upholding laws and protecting communities (Zaportiza & Cuevas, 2025). This commitment motivates them to overcome academic and personal challenges, as they envision making a positive impact on society through their future roles in law enforcement and criminal justice (Tad-awan, et al 2024).

The responses from Participants 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, and 10 highlight a strong influence of family and childhood aspirations in choosing criminology, emphasizing how familial expectations and early dreams can motivate students toward justice-related careers (Allen, 2023). Participants 4, 6, and 9 present a more self-directed motivation focused on service, learning laws, and exploring broad career opportunities, reflecting personal passion and goal-setting (Strickland, 2021). The consistent theme is how intrinsic motivation, intertwined with external support—especially from family—plays a crucial role in sustaining students through academic challenges. This aligns with research showing that family involvement and personal aspirations foster resilience, academic persistence, and career focus among criminology students, despite difficulties in major subjects and other pressures (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10).

These are the evident in the responses of the participants during the conduct of interview.

"I choose to study criminology because of my ancestors and I want to make a path of myself to be a registered criminologist and to be a PNP personnel." "My main factors that motivate me to pursue and continue my studies in criminology is that I want to make my parents proud of me." (P1)

"I choose criminology because since I was a child, that is what I wanted to be a police officer and it only align to criminology course so it can give me a guide to become a good public officer."(P2)

"I choose criminology because when I was a child I like to become a police officer and my dad also wanted me too, I can find a better job for my future."(P3)

"I choose criminology because I want to serve my fellow men."(P4)

"I choose criminology because I feel this is my passion during my senior days senior highest days and criminology is the best process to my goals." "My motivation that I have is my dream of becoming a police officer someday or any of the try bureau."(P5)

"I choose criminology because it was what my uncle wanted it, I expected to be able to guide myself, because this is one of my option and I want to learn about laws."(P6)

"I choose this program because since I was a child I want to become a first law enforcement in the family." "My expectation in this program is to enhance my knowledge and learning proper ways how to maintain laws and orders."(P7)

"I choose criminology because when I was a kid I wanted to be a police officer and that's what my parents wanted..." "As a criminology student for me criminology program really shape me and mold me shaping my future goal."(P8)

"I choose criminology because there are many possible jobs and you can enter like different bureaus." "...my expectations are that to know about crimes and why they commit crimes and what are the reasons."(P9)

"I choose criminology because I want to be the first to become a law enforcement officer in my family..." "My expectation is that I can learn the laws and proper ways of maintaining laws and orders and I think this is the perfect course for me to achieve my dream."(P10)

The teacher's reminder that students are not alone in their struggles and the encouragement to "keep on fighting" supports the crucial role of emotional resilience and perseverance in overcoming academic challenges (Rogers-Shaw, 2022). This aligns with the peer's observation of the powerful influence of family and friends in sustaining motivation during difficult times, highlighting that social support and shared knowledge contribute significantly to students' academic persistence. Research shows that family involvement and peer support are vital for student engagement, reducing dropout rates, and fostering resilience, enabling criminology students to cope with pressures and maintain focus on their goals despite setbacks. This synergy between institutional encouragement and personal support systems strengthens students' ability to navigate their academic journey and reinforces the collective effort behind their success (Benabid & Alqatawneh, 2025).

"I always remind them that no matter what they went through they are not alone and also always inform them to be more cautious in having to perceive the topic for their life. Keep on fighting, if the students are fighting with their struggle, there is a saying that I can fail you but I can't stop you."(Teacher)

"I think their family and friends motivate them not to lose motivation and continue no matter how difficult he encounters. All I can do to my friends when there is a time that is difficult is to help them overcome, and I share my knowledge regarding my learning in our major subjects."(Peer)

Motivation among criminology students is strongly influenced by both intrinsic factors, such as personal desire to succeed and passion for justice, and extrinsic factors, including family support and aspirations for meaningful careers (Ricciardelli & Martin, 2023). Studies show a significant positive correlation between learning motivation—encompassing intrinsic and extrinsic dimensions—and academic performance in major criminology subjects. Effective engagement is also driven by self-efficacy, supportive teacher behavior, and school effectiveness, which foster persistence and cognitive involvement in learning. Emotional resilience, time management, and disciplined study habits are critical in overcoming academic challenges. Additionally, mentorship, peer support, and institutional programs on motivation and stress management enhance students' capacity to meet rigorous academic demands and remain committed to their professional goals (Omoseebi & Loveth, 2024). These motivational factors together shape criminology students' academic success and career readiness, underscoring the importance of a supportive environment for sustained growth and achievement in the field

Related studies on criminology student motivation emphasize the significant relationship between learning motivation and academic performance in major criminology subjects (Agabon & Allanic, 2025). with both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations positively correlating to better exam results and class participation. Research reveals that intrinsic factors such as personal passion and extrinsic factors like family support play crucial roles in driving students' academic success. Furthermore, student engagement, influenced by self-efficacy, teacher behavior, and school effectiveness, contributes to persistence and deeper cognitive involvement in learning (Sökmen, 2021). Emotional and social support from family and peers is also shown to enhance motivation and reduce dropout rates, highlighting the importance of a holistic support system. These combined factors shape

criminology students' academic journey and professional preparation, affirming that motivation is multifaceted and vital for sustained achievement in the field.

The theme of motivation among criminology students implies several practical considerations for educators and institutions (Al-Billeh., et al 2024). Research highlights the importance of creating a positive and supportive learning environment, where teacher behavior fosters student engagement and intrinsic motivation, thereby enhancing academic performance. Promoting diversity, inclusivity, and mitigating negative experiences such as discrimination are critical for sustaining both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Ofili, 2024). Furthermore, supporting students' persistence in their chosen major through clear academic pathways strengthens their commitment and enhances career readiness. Institutions should also integrate programs focused on time management, study skills, emotional resilience, and stress management to equip students with the tools needed to navigate academic challenges. Strengthening mentorship and peer support systems can significantly aid in emotional and motivational stability, ultimately fostering a resilient and self-motivated student body capable of achieving both academic and professional goals in criminology.

3.5. Prioritization and Setting Boundaries

Prioritization and setting boundaries are essential strategies for criminology students to effectively manage their heavy academic workload and diverse responsibilities (Lumingkit, et al 2024). By prioritizing tasks, setting clear goals, and creating structured study schedules, students can focus on high-priority activities, reduce procrastination, and enhance productivity. Additionally, setting boundaries by minimizing distractions, learning to say "no" to nonessential demands, and allocating specific times for study and rest help maintain balance and prevent burnout (Riley, 2023). These strategies support not only academic success but also better stress management and overall well-being, enabling students to meet the demanding requirements of criminology programs.

The thoughts of the participants reveal a shared understanding of the critical role that effective time management and disciplined study habits play in overcoming academic difficulties in criminology (Colanggo, et al 2024). Participants 1, 2, 5, and 6 emphasize the importance of making deliberate use of study time, focusing on goals, and prioritizing tasks to avoid failure. This aligns with research that identifies prioritizing tasks, setting clear goals, creating structured schedules, and utilizing self-discipline as essential strategies that help criminology students balance heavy academic demands while maintaining productivity (Sandua, 2024). Additionally, seeking support from classmates and staying organized are crucial components that minimize procrastination and distractions, fostering a more focused and efficient study environment. Overall, their responses collectively underscore that prioritization and boundary-setting through time management techniques contribute significantly to academic success in criminology.

These are the evident in the responses of the participants during the conduct of interview.

"My strategies or approaches typically used to overcome these difficulties is to strive harder and study and make use of the time to study just discipline yourself."(P1)

"You'll have to study so you don't fail ask other classmates and study the subject."(P2)

"It can affect your academic if you don't have anything that you do; you need to have time management focus on your goal."(P5)

"Give yourself time to study because criminology is the most difficult course."(P6)

Prioritization and setting boundaries are essential strategies that significantly contribute to academic engagement and success among criminology students (Colanggo, 2024). Research indicates that self-efficacy, which includes the ability to regulate one's own learning and effectively manage time and resources, strongly correlates with higher academic performance and greater student engagement. Teachers' supportive behaviors further enhance student motivation by fostering a positive learning environment that encourages persistence and sustained effort (Mirzaei, et al 2025). Moreover, criminology students exhibit higher engagement when they set clear academic goals, plan their study schedules meticulously, and maintain a disciplined study routine, which helps them to focus on crucial tasks and avoid distractions. These strategies not only improve cognitive and behavioral engagement in academic tasks but also promote emotional resilience, enabling students to navigate the rigorous demands of their courses. Institutional support also plays a role in reinforcing these personal strategies through programs that encourage participation, social bonding, and intellectual development, thus creating a robust framework for students to thrive academically.

Related studies on prioritization and setting boundaries among criminology students reveal that academic engagement is strongly influenced by students' self-efficacy, teacher behavior, and the effectiveness of the school environment (Sökmen, 2021). High self-efficacy enables students to manage their learning process through goal-setting, time management, and self-regulated learning, which are crucial elements of prioritization and boundary-setting in academic life. Supportive teacher behaviors further encourage student persistence and active participation, creating a motivating environment that helps students focus on key academic tasks. Additionally, institutions that foster a culture of improvement and provide extracurricular opportunities enhance students' behavioral and cognitive engagement, reinforcing disciplined study habits and effective time management. These findings emphasize the need for a holistic approach involving personal strategies and institutional support to optimize academic performance and resilience among criminology students (Colanggo, et al 2024).

Prioritization and setting boundaries have significant implications for academic performance, as they enable students to allocate their limited time and energy to the most critical tasks (Calonia, 2023) thereby enhancing understanding and retention of subject matter. Effective prioritization involves setting clear goals, breaking down larger tasks into manageable steps, and minimizing distractions, all of which foster a focused mindset and reduce procrastination. This skill helps maintain a balance between academic responsibilities and personal well-being, preventing burnout and promoting holistic development (Nayak & Kachhi, 2025). Studies show that students who excel in prioritization tend to be proactive, efficient, and goal-oriented, leading to better academic achievement and reduced anxiety. Furthermore, prioritization supports timely completion of assignments and preparation for exams, optimizing learning outcomes and overall success in their educational journey.

3.6. Building Resilience through Adaptability, Coping, and Confidence

Building resilience through adaptability, coping, and confidence is a crucial strategy for criminology students to succeed in their academically and emotionally demanding field (Colanggo, et al. 2024). Research indicates that criminology internship programs play a vital role in fostering these qualities by exposing students to real-world professional environments where they learn to manage stress, adapt to challenges, and apply theoretical knowledge to practice. Students develop coping strategies such as setting clear goals, planning their time effectively, maintaining a positive attitude, and seeking support from family, friends, and mentors. These experiences not only improve their problem-solving and time management skills but also build emotional strength and self-confidence, enabling them to persist despite setbacks. The combination of hands-on learning and strong support systems equips students to handle the pressures of both academic work and future professional roles, reinforcing their resilience and adaptability (Schell, 2023).

The participants' answers reveal a profound understanding of resilience as a multifaceted process involving adaptability, coping, and confidence-building (Melton, 2025). They emphasize the importance of motivation rooted in personal and familial pride (P1), recognizing challenges as opportunities for growth and learning from past mistakes (P3). Acknowledgement of modern aids such as technology, combined with ethical commitment, reflects an adaptive attitude towards overcoming obstacles (P5). The narratives also highlight the role of perseverance through setbacks, using failure as a learning experience rather than a defeat (P6), and the value of persistence in the face of academic challenges (P7). These reflections align with studies showing that effective coping strategies, strong support networks, and a positive outlook foster resilience by helping students manage academic pressures and maintain focus on long-term goals. Emotional and social supports, alongside personal discipline and adaptation, are crucial in building the confidence necessary for success in demanding criminology programs (Colanggo, et al 2024).

These are the evident in the responses of the participants during the conduct of interview.

"The main factors that motivate me to pursue and continue my studies in criminology is that I want to make my parents proud of me." "I keep myself motivated during stressful or difficult or in an academic through praying, surrender to God." "The resilience strategy habits used to build or maintain is stay away from people who drag you down and just study and focus on study."(P1)

"To overcome these difficulties all I need to do is to study hard, I'll try and see how I can pass this subject and pray." "I overcome it through not doing the same things that I've done before, and I improve myself to study more."(P3)

"For me resilience is we are in a new generation now there is AI that can help you and of course study hard." "One of the strategies on that is to study hard and do not enter or engage in any illegal activities."(P5)

"If you fail, don't be down if you fail, keep going because it's not too late, pray hard." "When I failed my CLJ3, I tried hard no matter how difficult it was, I made my failure in CLJ3 a lesson because not all of us can fail, but don't lose hope, keep going."(P6)

"For me resilience is the ability to persist despite academic setbacks and overcome challenges."(P7)

The peer's commitment to helping friends overcomes difficulties by sharing knowledge and emphasizing the importance of a supportive circle illustrates how social connections boost resilience and coping ability during challenging times (Khan & Sultan, 2023). This aligns with the teacher's encouragement to "keep on fighting" despite struggles, reinforcing the idea that persistence and external support are crucial to overcoming obstacles. Together, these perspectives highlight that resilience is built not only through individual effort but also through mutual support, trust, and shared determination, which empower students to navigate academic and personal challenges with confidence and adaptability (Özen & Yavuz, 2024).

"All I can do to my friends when there is a time that is difficult is to help them overcome, and I share my knowledge regarding my learning in our major subjects." "It is important to have circle of friends because they make you happy and help you in times of difficulties."(Peer)

"Keep on fighting, if the students are fighting with their struggle, there is a saying that I can fail you but I can't stop you."(Teacher)

Building resilience through adaptability, coping, and confidence is vital for criminology students to navigate the demanding academic and emotional challenges in their field (Colanggo, et al 2024). Research shows that strategies such as setting clear goals, planning time effectively, maintaining a positive mindset, and seeking support from family, friends, and mentors are crucial in fostering resilience. Internships provide real-world experiences that enhance students' ability to adapt, cope with stress, and build confidence by exposing them to professional environments where they apply theoretical knowledge to practice (Ansari, 2025). Emotional resilience and a growth mindset enable students to view setbacks as opportunities for learning and improvement, strengthening their determination. Institutions can support this process by integrating motivation and mindset workshops, time management training, emotional resilience programs, and formal mentorship to help students develop a sustainable and adaptive approach to academic and professional success.

Related studies on resilience among criminology students indicate that resilience is a critical factor supporting academic success and retention in the field (Caporale-Berkowitz., et al 2022). Research highlights the importance of emotional support, mentorship, and effective study techniques in building resilience, allowing students to overcome academic challenges and stress associated with rigorous board exam preparations. Studies also demonstrate that resilience is linked to self-discipline, intrinsic motivation, and strategic time management, which enable students to maintain focus and persist despite setbacks. Additionally, criminology students face unique stressors due to the demanding nature of their courses and the high-stress professions they prepare for, making resilience an essential attribute for coping with academic and personal pressures (Zaportiza & Cuevas, 2025). Educational institutions play a vital role in fostering resilience by providing tailored interventions, structured support systems, and experiential learning opportunities that enhance students' capacity to adapt, cope, and succeed in their academic and future professional careers.

The implications of building resilience through adaptability, coping, and confidence in criminology students are significant for both academic success and future professional readiness (Colanggo, et al 2024). Research indicates

that developing resilience enables students to effectively manage the emotional and psychological demands of their studies, including exposure to crime, trauma, and the criminal justice system. Resilient students exhibit better time management, problem-solving skills, and emotional stability, which contribute to higher academic achievement and well-being. Moreover, real-world experiences, such as internships, play a vital role in fostering adaptability and confidence by exposing students to professional challenges and stressors, allowing them to apply theoretical knowledge and develop coping mechanisms in practical settings. Institutions can enhance these outcomes by integrating resilience-building activities, supportive mentoring, stress management resources, and a growth mindset within the curriculum. This comprehensive approach not only assists students in overcoming academic difficulties but also prepares them to thrive in demanding careers in law enforcement, corrections, and social work (Zaportiza & Cuevas, 2025) ultimately contributing to more effective and emotionally competent criminal justice professionals.

3.7. Family, Peer and Mentorship Support

Family, peer, and mentorship support play a crucial role in criminology students' academic success by providing emotional encouragement, motivation, and practical assistance that help them persevere through challenges and setbacks (Agabon & Allanic, 2025). Such support systems act as vital anchors, fostering resilience and confidence, enabling students to stay focused on their goals despite academic pressures and personal difficulties.

The various participant responses reveal a common thread highlighting the indispensable role of family as an emotional and financial backbone (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P10) (Fries, 2024). This support not only alleviates the stressors associated with academic demands but also fosters a sense of duty and motivation to succeed in their criminology studies. Peer and mentorship support also emerge as critical, with instructors and peers providing encouragement and motivation that help students persist despite academic setbacks (P7, P8, P9, P10). Together, these relationships create a network of resilience and perseverance, confirming research findings that family and social support systems are essential pillars for student success in demanding academic fields like criminology. The combination of emotional, moral, and practical support from these sources constructs a positive learning environment vital for overcoming challenges and achieving educational goals (Anisah, 2023).

These are the evident in the responses of the participants during the conduct of interview.

"My family, especially my mother who is paying my tuition for taking care of me and working harder to be able to pay my expenses."(P1)

"My family and their support me to pursue my dreams."(P2)

"My family, especially my dad, loves going on stage, that's what motivates me."(P3)

"My family because whatever choices I made they are still in my side supporting me."(P4)

"My family they are the one who provide my needs."(P5)

"Family and peers because they are the ones I have if I need to talk to me if I can get a job or go to school if I have an action to take."(P6)

"Our instructor because they motivate me despite of having failing grade in his subject."(P7)

"The family, peers and mentors that help me to motivate myself and guide me in my academic journey."(P8)

"The family and mentors that help me to be motivated to study and just focus on my goal."(P9)

"My family and friends, if I ever get really down, they're always there and it's very effective to have them by my side because without them, I can't handle my stress and my problems."(P10)

The peer's observation that friends provide crucial motivation to continue despite academic difficulties aligns well with research indicating that peer support significantly reduces academic stress and enhances self-efficacy (Zhang & Qian, 2024) boosting students' ability to adapt and persist in challenging educational environments. Similarly, the teacher's role in reminding students they are not alone when facing sensitive topics exemplifies the importance of mentorship in fostering emotional security and guiding students toward resilience during their academic journey. Together, peer and mentor support create a nurturing environment that strengthens students' motivation and engagement, helping them overcome setbacks and build the confidence necessary for academic success in criminology (Agabon & Allanic, 2025).

"I have a friend or classmate who failed in some subject in major and I can see from their feelings that they have a problem with that subject... I think friends motivate them not to lose his or her motivation and continue no matter how difficult he or she encounters."(Peer)

"Whenever I tackled a sensitive topic I always reminds them that no matter what they went through they are not alone and also always inform them to be more cautious in having to perceive the topic for their life."(Teacher)

Family, peer, and mentorship support are fundamental components in fostering academic success and resilience among criminology students (Colanggo, et al 2024). Research indicates that family provides not only essential financial resources but also emotional encouragement and motivation, which help students navigate the demanding nature of criminology courses. Peer support serves as a critical influence by offering mutual encouragement, sharing knowledge, and helping maintain motivation through shared experiences and study collaboration. Mentorship programs, especially those involving sustained and authentic relationships with instructors or senior mentors, enhance students' critical thinking, self-efficacy, and positive identity development. These supports collectively help counteract the pressures of rigorous coursework, reduce feelings of isolation, and promote persistence, ultimately shaping students' academic engagement and growth in the criminology field. Such social supports are linked with positive behavioral changes and greater academic achievement, underscoring the importance of integrated support systems within educational institutions for at-risk or challenged students pursuing criminology (Rea, 2023).

Related studies emphasize the critical role of family, peer, and institutional support systems in enhancing the academic engagement and resilience of criminology students (Masten, et al 2022). Research has shown that students with strong self-efficacy—developed through effective use of social resources, academic accomplishments, and self-regulated learning—exhibit significantly higher levels of motivation, persistence, and participation in their studies. Organizational support, particularly through qualified and proficient teachers,

directly influences student engagement by fostering positive academic emotions and encouraging critical thinking skills essential for criminology education. Moreover, studies suggest that comprehensive support programs addressing both emotional and academic needs, such as mentorship and peer collaboration, empower students to manage the pressures of rigorous coursework (Orgel, et al 2025) balance responsibilities, and ultimately sustain their focus on academic and career goals. These findings highlight that multi-faceted support systems are foundational to improving educational outcomes and retention in criminology programs.

The family, peer, and mentorship support carries significant implications for criminology education, emphasizing the need for comprehensive institutional frameworks that foster these support systems to enhance student success. Studies highlight that strong organizational support (Tietjen, et al 2021) including resource availability and leadership, substantially improves teacher proficiency, which in turn enhances student academic engagement by boosting self-efficacy and critical thinking skills. This creates an environment conducive to active learning and resilience, crucial for the demanding criminology curriculum (Kakar, 2025). Moreover, family and peer support provide emotional and motivational foundations that help students manage academic pressures and personal challenges, thereby improving retention and performance. Therefore, educational institutions must prioritize strengthening support networks and professional development opportunities for educators, alongside promoting student-centered policies and collaborative learning to prepare criminology students effectively for their future careers and personal growth.

3.8. Institutional Programs

Institutional programs play a critical role in enhancing criminology students' academic engagement and success by providing organizational support, increasing teacher proficiency, and fostering an environment conducive to active learning (Tad-awan., et al 2024). Research highlights that strong institutional frameworks equipped with adequate resources, supportive leadership, and continuous professional development for educators significantly improve instructional quality and student motivation. These programs enable teachers to better engage students, enhance critical thinking, and boost academic self-efficacy, which are essential for mastering the complexities of criminology education. Institutions that prioritize such support systems contribute to higher student retention, improved academic outcomes, and better preparation for future careers in law enforcement and allied fields (Hoyt, 2023). Therefore, effective institutional programs are indispensable for addressing the unique challenges faced by criminology students and promoting their holistic educational development.

Participants 1, 5, and 7 emphasize the need for institutional programs that provide targeted academic support to students facing challenges, suggesting structured review sessions, scholarships, and assistance for struggling students (Wang, 2024). These thoughts align with research findings that academic support programs, including retention policies and supplemental instruction, effectively enhance student self-efficacy and engagement, leading to improved academic performance and persistence. Educational institutions that implement such programs foster higher motivation and resilience among criminology students (Colanggo, et al 2024) by offering resources and opportunities tailored to their unique academic needs, highlighting the critical role of organized institutional support in student success.

These are the evident in the responses of the participants during the conduct of interview.

"I would suggest changes on a program or institution to be better support certain for coming academic struggles is to have some what you call this every Saturday those students who have a failure grade need to review or group study within the faculty teachers."(P1)

"I can suggest that they will provide a scholarship."(P5)

"I can suggest that they should help the students who have academic struggle."(P7)

The teacher reflects the role of institutional programs in supporting student development (Martin & Nuss, 2022). Such programs, often including seminars, workshops, and activities focused on improving study habits and resilience, provide students with tools and strategies to better cope with academic challenges. While the institution offers these resources, student engagement and individual responsibility play a critical role in the effectiveness of these programs (Rashed, et al 2025). This highlights the importance of a collaborative effort between institutions providing support and students actively participating and applying what they learn to succeed academically and personally.

"The institution does a lot of things like seminars, study habits, maybe it is something to do with the students."(Teacher)

Institutional programs offering academic support services such as tutoring, mentoring, and counseling have been shown to significantly enhance student performance, retention, and degree completion rates in higher education (Afzal, et al 2024). Studies confirm that students who actively engage with these support services demonstrate improved GPA, higher retention rates, and greater persistence in their academic journeys. Effective programs employ a combination of quantitative metrics (e.g., GPA improvements, retention statistics) and qualitative feedback (e.g., surveys, interviews) to continuously evaluate and improve service delivery. Best practices include setting clear, measurable goals, establishing continuous feedback loops from students and staff, leveraging data analytics tools to monitor engagement, and maintaining flexibility to adapt services to diverse student needs. These comprehensive institutional efforts ensure that support programs remain relevant, effective, and aligned with students' academic and personal challenges, ultimately promoting higher success rates and holistic student development (Ayyaswamy, 2025).

Related studies on institutional academic support programs consistently show that such programs positively impact student confidence, reduce anxiety, and improve academic outcomes. Research highlights that students who engage with academic support services, including tutoring, mentoring, and skill development sessions, experience increased self-efficacy and persistence in their studies. These support environments promote not only academic success measured by grade improvements and retention rates but also emotional well-being by helping students manage stress and anxiety associated with challenging coursework. Moreover, integrated and holistic approaches that combine various support services—academic advising, counseling, and technological resources—enhance both social and academic integration, leading to a more positive overall student experience (Simbolon & Purba, 2022). However, studies also note gaps in understanding how different support components interact,

underscoring the need for continuous evaluation and adaptation of these programs to meet diverse student needs effectively. This body of research affirms the essential role of well-structured institutional support programs in fostering student success and engagement in higher education.

Institutional programs for academic support have important implications for student success and retention in higher education (Hoyt, 2023). Research shows that access to comprehensive on-campus support services—including tutoring, mentoring, financial aid, and counseling—significantly increases students' likelihood to persist and complete their degrees. Such services help students manage academic difficulties, alleviate stress, and develop self-regulated learning and problem-solving skills. Financial aid programs like scholarships are strong predictors of continued enrollment and timely graduation, directly addressing barriers related to affordability. Additionally, holistic academic advising that integrates personal and professional development aids students in navigating challenges and preparing for career demands. These findings suggest that institutions should prioritize learner-centered, easily accessible support systems that address diverse student needs, as these programs enhance academic engagement, emotional well-being, and overall educational success (Raju, 2024).

4. Conclusion

The study concludes that criminology students face notable academic difficulties, particularly with complex scientific content, which poses significant learning challenges. Emotional and psychological stress from academic demands exacerbates mental health issues and affects performance. While academic failures lower self-esteem and increase stress, they also prompt resilience and adaptive coping. Strong motivations tied to career goals and social justice drive students to persist despite obstacles. Ineffective study habits and poor time management hinder success, underscoring the need for improved skills. Support from family, peers, mentors, and institutional programs prove critical for fostering resilience and engagement. Students build resilience through adaptability and confidence, navigating environmental challenges such as transportation and online learning issues, which institutions can alleviate through targeted interventions. These conclusions align with recent research on criminology students' academic struggles and coping mechanisms in the Philippines, confirming the importance of holistic support systems for their educational and psychological well-being.

4.1. Future Suggestions

1. Future studies may include a larger number of participants from multiple higher education institutions to enhance the transferability and comparative value of findings across different criminology programs and regional contexts.
2. Conducting longitudinal studies is recommended to examine changes in students' resilience, motivation, and academic performance over time, particularly before, during, and after experiences of academic failure.
3. Future research may compare criminology students with learners from other academic disciplines to determine whether challenges related to resilience, and academic integrity are discipline-specific or more generalized.
4. Incorporating quantitative or mixed-methods designs could provide measurable insights into the relationships among academic challenges, resilience, support systems, and student outcomes.

5. Future studies may explore in greater depth how ethical education, academic integrity initiatives, and moral reasoning influence student behavior, persistence, and professional identity formation in criminology education.

6. Further research should assess the effectiveness of existing institutional support programs—such as mentoring, counselling, tutoring, and resilience-building workshops—to identify best practices and areas for improvement.

5. Recommendations

The recommendations underscore the importance of fostering a strong ethical foundation among criminology students, emphasizing academic integrity as crucial for both academic and professional success, with awareness of the long-term risks of dishonesty. Students are encouraged to take responsibility for their learning by identifying knowledge gaps and seeking support proactively, which is essential for their future roles in law enforcement and public service. Developing effective time management and study skills supported by institutional resources such as tutoring and counseling, is vital to reduce academic stress and prevent dishonest behaviors. Institutions should implement comprehensive support programs, including mentor-ship, stress management, and skill-building workshops, while promoting a culture of honesty through clear policies, honor codes, and continual awareness campaigns. Regular evaluation of these programs, incorporating student feedback, will ensure their effectiveness in reinforcing ethical standards and academic success. These recommendations align with best practices in Philippine criminology education aimed at producing competent, ethically grounded professionals ready to serve justice.

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Competing Interests Statement

The authors declare that they have no competing interests related to this work.

Consent for publication

The authors declare that they consented to the publication of this study.

Authors' contributions

All the authors took part in literature review, analysis, and manuscript writing equally.

Availability of data and materials

Supplementary information is available from the authors upon reasonable request.

Institutional Review Board Statement

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Informed Consent

Informed consent was obtained from all participants before the commencement of the study.

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