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Mixed-Methods Exploratory Study Investigating the Experiences, Outcomes, Motivations, and Stressors of College-Educated Children of Incarcerated Parents

Ysatis Ne'Cole Williams

Mixed-Methods Exploratory Study Investigating the Experiences, Outcomes,

Motivations, and Stressors of College-Educated Children of Incarcerated Parents

by

Ysatis Ne'Cole Williams

A Dissertation submitted to the Education Faculty of Lindenwood University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Degree of

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Mixed-Methods Exploratory Study Investigating the Experiences, Outcomes,

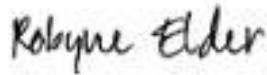Motivations, and Stressors of College-Educated Children of Incarcerated Parents

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This dissertation has been approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

degree of

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at Lindenwood University by the School of Education

_____ _Robyne Elder_____   _05/06/2022_____
Dr. Robyne Elder, Dissertation Chair   Date

_____   _05/06/2022_____
Dr. Kevin Winslow, Committee Member   Date

_ _Francesco Giuseffi_ _____   _05/06/2022_____
Dr. Frank Giuseffi, Committee Member   Date

Declaration of Originality

I do hereby declare and attest to the fact that this is an original study based solely upon my own scholarly work here at Lindenwood University and that I have not submitted it for any other college or university course or degree here or elsewhere.

Full Legal Name: Ysatis Ne'Cole Williams

Signature: Ysatis Ne'Cole Williams   Date: _05/06/2022__

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I first must give honor to God who is the head of my life. I am beyond grateful for the many blessings I have received. Most importantly, at this moment I am grateful to God for his grace and mercy, for it was only God that kept me going. Thank you, Lord for seeing me through to the end of my journey to finish my research successfully.

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To my Great Grandmothers, Ruth Magnolia and Lou Taylor, my father Eugene III, my very best friend Rosey, my nephew Kayden, and my niece Kaylee, may you all celebrate this accomplishment in heaven as we will on earth. Thank you for the love and support you gave me during your time here on earth.

Abstract

The purpose of this mixed-methods study was to explore the possible relationship between parental incarceration and the outcomes, frequency of participation, motivations, challenges, and supports of college students with incarcerated parents. The study was conducted at an unnamed academic institution with individuals enrolled in a four-year degree program. The present study utilized a questionnaire, grit survey, academic motivation assessment, focus group, and interview to gather the needed data. The six steps for thematic analysis were utilized for data analysis. In examining these potential relationships, the present study utilized collected quantitative data to examine whether statistically significant relationships were present. As the factors of motivations, challenges, and supports were collected from the perspectives of study participants, a qualitative approach was appropriate for exploring the needs of collegiate students, based on their responses to the open-ended questions. The information provided by participants allowed me to identify the difference between graduates and non-graduates with incarcerated parents and what is needed to assist collegiate students experiencing incarceration to complete a bachelor's degree. The results indicated that a key barrier for academic achievement among students with incarcerated parents is a lack of financial, physical, and emotional support. The participants continued to reiterate the need for increased support through various effective and helpful programs and highlighted the value of support systems, as they received strength and encouragement from family members, friends, and mentors to keep them in school amid financial and emotional struggles. They also expressed how joining sporting teams, school, and other organizations contributed to their positive performance at school. The present study will

use the findings to create programs to assist students of incarcerated parents in

completing at minimum a four-year degree.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Introduction

This study developed from my experience of the harsh reality and effects of mass and parental incarceration, as both my mother and father spent some portion of time in prison during formative times of my life. My mother and father were both incarcerated shortly after my birth. My mother returned from prison when I was still quite young and attained a graduate level degree after incarceration. This differed from my father, who remained incarcerated intermittently throughout my life and the entire time I pursued my undergraduate degree. I observed that many of my classmates, friends, and associates experienced parental incarceration during their time enrolled in college. During my time as an undergraduate student, the topic of parental incarceration, the constraints, stressors, and pressure associated were not discussed or addressed at any level during university attendance and made for a completely different experience from other students. For some people I encountered, financial, mental, or emotional stress related to parental incarceration prevented some of those individuals from completing a four-year degree. Research has shown that maternal incarceration reduces college graduation rate to 2%, while paternal incarceration reduces college graduation rate to 15% (Foster & Hagan, 2015).

Rationale

There was a dramatic increase in the rate of incarceration following the mid-1970s. This phenomenon was widely referred to as either "mass incarceration" or "the prison boom" (Wildeman & Wakefield, 2014). The increase in incarceration occurred at an alarmingly high and disproportionate rate in African American and Latino (minority)

communities. Research showed Blacks and Latinos combined made up 30% of the general population, yet made up an overwhelming 51% of the jail population (Subramanian et al., 2015). Cole (2011) reported the per capita incarceration rate among Black males was 3,161 per 100,000 in 2008, which was six and-a-half times the rate for White males. There was also an increase in the rate of incarceration among women. According to Carbone-Lopez and Kruttschnitt (2010), "Between 1980 and 2008, the U.S. women's imprisonment rate increased more than six-fold moving from 11 to 69 per 100,00 residences…African American women imprisonments rate increased by fifty percent topping out at 175 per 100,000" (p. 32). The high incarceration rates of African American men and women have exposed African American children to higher rates of parental incarceration. In 2012, more than 1,700,000 children had a parent in prison (Arditti, 2012). Murphey and Cooper (2015) reported that as of 2011-2012, nearly 7% of children from birth to 17 years of age in the United States have lived with a parent who was incarcerated at some time after the child's birth. Wildeman (2009) estimated 1 in 25 White children born in 1990 had a parent imprisoned, whereas one in four Black children born in 1990 had a parent imprisoned. Further, by age 14, 50.5% of Black children born in 1990 to high school dropouts had a father imprisoned. Previous researchers have stated that the lifetime risks of imprisonment was steeply stratified by education; however, of Black men with a college degree born between 1975 and 1979, at least 8% served prison time compared to 1% of White men who served with the same background (Western & Wildeman, 2009). Past research on parental incarceration resulted in the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's recognition of parental incarceration as an adverse childhood experience (ACE; Bramlett & Radel, 2014). Current researchers have

addressed adolescent children's social, behavioral, and psychological issues that have

hindered adolescent learning. Many of those children have shown issues in school and

have demonstrated deviant behavior believed to be a result of parental incarceration. Few

studies have been directed towards how adult learners (college students) are hindered in

their efforts by parental incarceration. Current parental incarceration threatens

intergenerational mobility, which is the ability for a child to move beyond their social

origins and obtain a status not dictated by that of their parents (Fox et al., 2017), and

further intensifies the indicators of social exclusion in areas of personal income,

household income, perceived socioeconomic status and feelings of powerlessness (Foster

& Hagan, 2015). Researchers have shown that successful completion of college is a

mediator of the exclusionary effects of maternal and paternal incarceration, which can

reduce parental imprisonment effects 14% to 50% (Foster & Hagan, 2015). I hope the

results of this study will help in the identification of tools for college students with

incarcerated parents to help in their completion of a four-year college degree program

and decrease the effects of mass incarceration and parental incarceration as they pertain

to intergenerational mobility and social exclusion.

The study is necessary to identify what students who complete their degrees have

access to in terms of experiences, resources, and supports in the absence of their parents

compared to those who have enrolled in but did not complete a college degree. The

researcher will use the findings to create programs to assist students of incarcerated

parents in completing at minimum a four-year degree.

Purpose

The purpose of this mixed-methods study was to explore the possible relationship between parental incarceration and the outcomes, frequency of participation, motivations, challenges, and supports of college students with incarcerated parents. The researcher sought to discover the family background of the student with either one or both incarcerated parents, such as parent household or guardian, number of siblings, familial income during college/parental incarceration, educational background, collegiate life experiences, and the motivation behind attaining a collegiate degree.

Questions and Hypothesis

Research Questions

RQ1:   What motivates children of incarcerated parents to pursue a four-year degree?

RQ2:   What prevents children of incarcerated parents who enroll in four-year degree programs from completing the degree?

RQ3:   What do students of incarcerated parents identify as necessary to have access to in order to complete a four-year degree or higher?

RQ4:   How do support systems contribute to students with incarcerated parents' attainment of a four-year degree or higher?

RQ5:   How does college participation contribute to the attainment of a four-year degree or higher among students with incarcerated parents?

RQ6:   How does grit level contribute to students' attainment of a four-year degree or higher?

RQ7:   What are identified as challenges of students with incarcerated parents?

Hypotheses

H₁ₐ: There is a difference in frequency of participation in extracurricular activities (e.g., team sports, clubs, campus activities, intermural sports, organizations) between college graduates and non-graduates who are students with incarcerated parents.

H₁ᵦ: There is a difference in academic achievement between college graduates and non-graduates who are students with incarcerated parents.

H₁ᵧ: There is a difference in motivations between college graduates and non-graduates who are students with incarcerated parents.

H₁ᵩ: There is a difference in support systems between college graduates and non-graduates who are students with incarcerated parents.

H₁ₑ: There is a difference in grit levels between college graduates and non-graduates who are students with incarcerated parents.

H₁ᵩ: There is a difference in the percentage of first-generation college graduates and non-graduates who are students with incarcerated parents.

Definition of Terms

Bachelor's degree refers to a degree that is given to a student by a college or university usually after four years of study (Bachelor's degree, 2022).

Challenges are "factors that may inhibit their likelihood of earning a college degree" (Knutson et al., 2010, p. 3).

College participation represents the students' participation in an extracurricular activity (e.g., team sports, clubs, campus activities, intermural sports, organizations; King et al., 2021).

First generation college students are undergraduate college students who are the first in their families to seek a four-year college degree (Knutson et al., 2010).

Frequency of participation represents the number of times per week a student participated in an extracurricular activity (e.g., team sports, clubs, campus activities, intermural sports, organizations; King et al., 2021)

Graduate refers to "a holder of an academic degree or diploma" (Graduate, 2022).

Grit level "is the tendency to sustain interest in and effort toward very long-term goals" (Duckworth et al., 2007).

Intergenerational mobility is the ability for a child to move beyond their social origins and obtain a status not dictated by that of their parents (Fox et al., 2017).

Motivations are the content of the goals students value. These goals can be either intrinsic goals, such as growth, relationships, and community; or extrinsic goals, such as wealth, fame, and image (Lens & Vansteenkiste, 2006).

Non-graduate refers to "students who enroll in college and never earn a degree (Chinoy & Leonhardt, 2019).

Parental incarceration "refers to any kind of custodial confinement of a parent by the criminal justice system, except being held overnight in police cells. Incarceration can refer to confinement in jails or prisons" (Murray et al., 2012, p. 176).

Secondary deviance is "when a person begins to employ his deviant behavior…as a means of defense, attack, or adjustment to the overt and covert problems created by the consequent societal reaction to him" (Rosenberg, 2010, p. 5).

Social exclusion "precludes full participation in the normatively prescribed activities of a given society and denies access to information, resources, sociability,

recognition, and identity, eroding self-respect and reducing capabilities to achieve

personal goals." (Foster & Hagan, 2015).

Support system includes anyone we trust and can go to for help, advice, or any

other type of emotional support (Social Support Systems and Maintaining Mental Health)

"friends and family, the people who make up the social support system" (Wilkinson &

Singh, 2010).

Conclusion

In this first chapter, I introduced the topic under study, including my own

personal experience with parental incarceration. I provided the rationale for the study, the

research questions that guided the current study, and the definitions of important terms

that I use throughout the rest of this dissertation. In Chapter Two, I present an in-depth

review of the relevant literature.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

The great economic recession in 2008 led to a drop in college graduation rates due to the financial strains that rendered some parents unable to pay school fees (Fain, 2014; Marcus, 2014). The recession led to a financial crisis that affected the entire world. The crisis could only be compared to the Great Depression in the 1930s. According to Gibbons and Woodside (2014), after the recession, student retention became an important topic in education. Covert (2008) added that college student retention was amongst the most frequently researched topics in higher education. Many public and private institutions of higher learning had not established actionable plans to help improve student retention rates (O'Keeffe).

It is crucial to note, however, that there were multiple methods that colleges and universities have implemented to increase student retention rates (Bettinger et al., 2013). These methods included teaching students habits for success, offering ample opportunities for successful students, investing in resources for academic advising, and developing learning communities that create a sense of academic and social community, thus increasing interaction between students and faculty. Not all institutions have found solutions to control the issue, however. In a survey conducted by the College Board in 2009, "many of higher learning are concerned by their retention rates, yet only a few allocated the necessary resources to bring about long-term changes in the institutions" (Hanover Research, 2014, p. 3). Although there were many factors to consider, parental imprisonment may add to the difficulties involved with student retention.

Globally, the United States has not only the largest prison population but also the highest rate of imprisonment. In 2007 alone, 92% of incarcerated parents were fathers

while 8% were mothers, a clear indication of the debilitating statistics of parental incarceration globally (Nellis, 2009, p. 4). As opined by Zoukis (2018), a recently published study by the research firm called Child Trends demonstrated spectacular consequences of the nation's practice and policy of mass incarceration. The research showed that 1 out of every 14 children in the U.S. has a parent who has either been incarcerated previously or is currently undergoing incarceration. The situation is even worse for African Americans who, despite being a minority group, remain the majority in U.S correctional facilities. Zoukis (2018) posited that, for Black children, the numbers are bleaker than anyone would ever imagine. It is estimated that one out of every nine Black children under the age of 18 has a parent who is currently under incarceration or has previously been incarcerated. The Pew Charitable Trust report published in May 2016 showed that 1 out of every 28 Children of Latino origin and 1 out of 57 White children have incarcerated parents.

Parental incarceration leads to the separation of the child from the parents and short-term effects of the arrest, which can be detrimental to the child's education. The process is common among African American parents and children (Kjellstrand et al., 2020). The negative effects of parental incarcerations last well into and beyond the college attainment amongst the African American children. The increase in parental incarceration in the United States has prompted various research aimed at understanding the negative effects of the attainment of students in college (McLeod, 2017). An area of consideration has been how parental incarceration affects the performance of African American students in school (Wildeman & Wakefield, 2014). Despite the converging evidence that incarceration of parents threatens the growth and the development of a

child, the area of inquiry has overcome the significant conceptual and methodological challenges linked to the bias in selection.

Sometimes, it is difficult to determine whether the problems observed in African American children results from parental incarceration or other adversities. Large gaps in educational attainment and academic achievement between Caucasian and African American children have continued to present the most persistent problems facing United States' society (Shaw, 2015). Alongside these differences in races is the gap in gender in terms of gender attainment. For instance, African American children are likely to report lower college retention and completion rates than their White counterparts. Additionally, African American parents are more likely to be incarcerated, leaving their children unable to meet their educational needs. Parental incarceration has proven to have adverse and long-term effects on students' college retention and completion rates (Sadler et al., 2017).

Parental incarceration has received great scrutiny considering its negative effects on college retention and completion rates (Foster & Hagan, 2015). Adolescents whose parents have been incarcerated are more likely to be suspended from school, reducing their chances of completing their education. In a study by Trice and Brewster (2004), adolescents with incarcerated mothers were reported to drop out of school at a higher rate compared to their counterparts whose mothers have not been incarcerated. According to Brick (2017), over 2.7 million children in the United States have an incarcerated parent, implying that one in every 28 children are presently living with either one or both parents in prison. Similarly, Sentencing Project reports have shown that an estimated 10 million

children have experienced parental incarceration at certain points in their life, significantly reducing their chances of remaining in college or completing their degrees.

The impact of parental incarceration on college retention and degree attainment remains a subject of intense debate. Indeed, parental incarceration can lead the child down several pathways. For example, a parent's extended absence can traumatize the child (Turney & Goodsell, 2018). An alteration in the family's structure, including the absence of a parent for a longer period, can greatly affect the child's psychological and emotional wellbeing. A parent's incarceration can bring about alterations in family dynamics and finances, something that can be harmful and traumatizing to the child, eventually leading to college dropout and even failing to attain the required degree (Wildeman et al., 2018). As noted, parental incarceration is extremely traumatizing and can limit their children's financial means, placing them at a much greater risk for having single-parent households and exposing them to shame and embarrassment, all of which impact their general well-being in the long-run and may force them out of school (Shlafer et al., 2017).

A plethora of research studies have been conducted in an attempt to ascertain how parental incarceration affects college retention and degree attainment. Prior researchers have explored the correlation between parental incarceration and various school-based indicators, including test scores, grades, academic performance, and qualification for educational services. Sieving et al. (2017) and Davis and Shlafer (2017) contended that parental incarceration was a prime risk factor for school-based outcomes and children's academic performance. It has also been noted that elementary school children with incarcerated fathers were more likely to experience grade retention compared to their

peers without incarcerated parents. Many potential reasons exist to justify the correlation between parental incarceration and educational outcomes among school-going children. Financial problems experienced by families due to incarceration can negatively affect college retention and completion rates (Foster & Hagan, 2015).

The consequences of parental incarceration are well documented in the available literature (Zoukis, 2018). Zoukis found that over half of the children affected had at one point lived with someone suffering from substance abuse problems compared to children hailing from families that had not experienced incarceration. Over a third of the children affected had witnessed violence between their guardians and parents or in their neighborhood. Zoukis reported that 1 in every 4 affected children had lived with a mentally ill person, which is a factor that negatively affects college retention and degree completion. The Pew report has further shown that only 15% of children with a father who is incarcerated and 2% with a mother who is incarcerated graduated from college, highlighting the devastating impacts of parental incarceration on college retention and degree completion (Turney & Goodsell, 2018).

Incarceration across Gender, Ethnicity, and Race

Incarceration does not randomly occur, and most of the factors that lead to parental incarceration similarly lead to the students' school readiness. Benner et al. (2016) found that most of the incarcerated were from disproportionally poor Black communities with poor education. As such, the children of the incarcerated families were likely to suffer from different forms of distraction from school as a result of their parents' incarcerations. This was prevalent because the fathers who were incarcerated seemed to be violent, antisocial, and have deviant behaviors that impacted the students' learning

abilities as well as their concentration on schoolwork (Poehlmann-Tynan & Turney, 2021). These differences, as commonly studied by researchers, are most likely to influence the educational outcome of students.

The rapid changes that occurred in the lives of the American adults in the 20th century also influenced the lives of the children in this era. Many African American children, for example, experienced growing up with a single parent. Changing the family structure influenced the lives of these children and, therefore, their educational attainment and outcome (Pezzella et al., 2016). The American experiment on mass incarceration also changed the social experience of children whose parents were incriminated (Wildeman, 2009). These children had nobody to teach them the social aspects of life, which is imperative in the educational system. As such, these children could not interact with other students during class discussions, which led them to fail courses in college (Wildeman, 2009).

There were several consequences to parental incarceration in the 20th century. Exposing children to the arrest of their parents, incarceration, and release was traumatizing for the children (Turney & Goodsell, 2018). The consequences of this trauma extended beyond childhood, which could be observed in their educational results (Mouzon et al., 2020). Parental imprisonment was not only significant in the efforts of inequality; changes in the rate of female incarceration by 30%, for example, also led to the increasing care caseloads which led to high parental imprisonment levels (Mouzon et al., 2020). The social service providers experienced the effects first as well as the criminal justice system that profoundly bore the burden (Mouzon et al., 2020). Parental

incarceration increased the subsequent criminality of the children, which then influenced their academic and social work (Cochran et al, 2018).

Despite parental incarceration having broad and social implications, it is significant that these cases were most prevalent among African Americans but not Caucasian families. Massoglia and Pridemore (2015) utilized table methods to derive the statistics on the effects of parents' imprisonment on the college outcomes of African American college students. The National Vital Statistics Registry and the National Corrections Reporting Program approximated the risk of parental incarceration on the African American as well as White college students. The results of this essay indicated that parental imprisonment had become a significant childhood risk, particularly for African American college students (Massoglia & Pridemore, 2015).

The parental incarceration risk on college outcomes was more than 30% for Black children while this risk was only 4% for White children (Miller & Barnes, 2015). The results also indicated the risk of class inequality due to parental imprisonment and a fluctuation between the White and Black children whose parents had been incarcerated. White children who were born in the 1990s were most likely to experience the effects of parental imprisonment in their educational system. The main disadvantage of the African American children was that their parents did not have a college education and had a greater risk of being imprisoned (Zeman & Dallaire, 2017). The results revealed that various strategies of estimation of the development of parental imprisonment is significant to childhood risks, which is also shown in the longitudinal data of these agencies.

Educational Attainment

Researchers have explored the association between low educational attainment of African American college students and parental incarceration. Findings today, however, are inconclusive and show that more research should be conducted to provide a clearer picture of this allegation. For instance, Foster and Hagan (2015) discovered that parental incarceration was strongly linked to the behavioral patterns of the African American college students, which affected their academic performance. The researchers, however, failed to determine the corresponding reduction in the educational outcomes of these students. Interestingly, Foster and Hagan (2015) acknowledged that some children could develop resilience and handle the externalizing issues before experiencing the adverse educational outcomes that came from parental incarceration. A different research study conducted by Doom et al. (2017), however, found that the children of incarcerated parents could be expelled or suspended from college.

Parental imprisonment has also been confirmed to be detrimental to the noncognitive outcomes of students. According to research conducted by Dallaire and Thompson (2016), children of incarcerated parents are more likely to have learning disabilities. Furthermore, Coleman (2015) added that these children are more likely to develop attention deficit disorder than children whose parents have never been incriminated. Twenty-three percent of students were more likely to suffer from the noncognitive influence of their parents' imprisonment (Stergas, 2020). Further, it was found that sons of incarcerated parents were more likely to suffer from behavior issues such as drug addiction, violence, and other destructive behaviors (Dallaire & Thompson, 2016). These disparities were evident in children from different races including the

Hispanic children who displayed cases of behavior change resulting from the conviction of their parents.

Table 1

Children with Incarcerated Fathers

Condition	Percent increase in the likelihood of condition relative to other children
PTSD	72%
Anxiety	51%
High cholesterol	31%
Asthma	30%
Migraines	26%

Table 1 shows the likelihood of children from incarcerated parents developing the above conditions. The results indicated that children with incarcerated parents suffer from mental and physical health problems. As such, the researchers concluded that children with imprisoned parents are more likely to develop mental and physical health problems that may impede their education. As evident in the table above, children with incarcerated parents are likely to develop anxiety, PTSD, High cholesterol, asthma, and migraines. For instance, 72% are likely to develop PTSD, 51% Anxiety, 31% high cholesterol, 30% asthma 30%, and 26% migraines (Morsy & Rothstein, 2016).

Health Implication Findings

Researchers have explored the correlation between parental incarceration and health implications among children. In a study by Heard-Garris et al. (2018), the authors explored the relationship between parental incarceration and the health implications of their children. The findings indicate that parental incarceration is linked to lower health care use coupled with unhealthy behaviors in young adulthood. The study shows that efforts should be directed towards addressing barriers to healthcare in this population in order to reduce health disparities. Another closely related study by Lee et al. (2013) explored the relationship between parental incarceration and the physical and mental health outcomes of young adults. Based on the study findings, it is evident that childhood exposure to parental incarceration is linked to health problems in young children, including PTSD, depression, cholesterol, anxiety, migraines, asthma, poor health, and HIV/AIDs. A lack of stable (Dallaire & Thompson, 2016), safe, and nurturing relationships as well as exposure to violence are among the mechanisms linking parental incarceration to poor health outcomes among children. Against this backdrop, it is evident that the mechanisms that characterize parental incarceration, such as lack of safe and stable relationships and exposure to violence, have adverse health outcomes, such as developing migraines and asthma among other serious mental health disorders.

Grit Level

According to Bashant (2014), researchers at Pennsylvania University have defined GRIT as both perseverance and passion for attaining long-term goals. Primarily, grit entails working tirelessly towards challenges and maintaining interest and effort over years despite adversity, failure, and obstacles (Jachimowicz et al., 2018). A gritty

individual is known to approach achievement as a marathon with stamina. Gritty people

always stay the course even as people who are disappointed alter their trajectory.

Resilience is related to grit, as part of the meaning of grit is being resilient whenever

challenges present themselves (Sulla et al., 2018). Other traits that are central to

describing grit include self-discipline, conscientiousness, and perseverance (Bashant,

2014). Being gritty implies choosing to invest energy and time in a given endeavor while

giving up other things to pursue a passion. Gritty people are deeply committed to their

endeavors.

A study conducted by Duckworth and Seligman (2005) demonstrated that

perseverance, self-discipline, and grit are better predictors of success in college in

comparison to IQ or SAT tests. In college, grit can help to predict students who are likely

to pursue their degree programs to completion. Hogan and Wong (2013) demonstrated

that grittier individuals were more likely to work longer and harder (p. 6). Further, they

are also likely to participate in deliberate practice to improve success or performance.

Hogan and Wong asserted that performance is limited by cognitive skills and hence

require considerable effort on the part of the person to either alter or improve certain

performance characteristics. In the context of college education, grittier individuals are

more diligent and persistent, not discouraged by failure or setbacks, more focused on

goals or projects, and are highly likely to complete tasks. Contrastingly, less gritty

individuals are not as diligent or persistent and are distracted easily by new projects or

ideas, are unable to set long-term goals, and lack focus or motivation for long-term

projects (Bashant, 2014; Cheung et al., 2021; Hogan & Wong, 2013).

Extensive studies have been conducted to ascertain the correlation between grit and academic achievement at the different cadres of education, including college. Duckworth et al. (2007) collected the self-reporting grit-scale data together with age and the level of education from a total of (n=1,545) subjects aged 25 and older using the noncommercial public website. The study employed the so-called two-way analysis to predict the variance in grit based on age and education while, at the same time, treating education and age as categorical variables. Based on the findings of their study, more educated individuals reported higher grit when compared to those who are less educated and of the same age. Additionally, post-hoc analysis demonstrated whenever age was controlled, the post-college graduates reported higher grit compared to other groups. Their findings further showed whenever the variable of education was controlled, grit escalated with age. Their argument was that older individuals had more perseverance, experience, and passion for long-term goals, which required grit. Duckworth et al. contended that grittier students are likely to achieve better results compared to less gritty students. In other words, grit has been associated with a higher GPA.

Duckworth et al. (2007) further revealed that a multi-dimensional group of cognitive personality traits makes some students more successful. These traits include conscientiousness, courage, endurance, resilience, and excellence. Factually, conscientiousness is one of the elements of grit that plays a central role in college success. As a personality construct, conscientiousness can be observed through the individual's differences in responsibility, self-control, organization, diligence, and compliance (Roberts et al., 2014, p. 7). The trait is mirrored in a person's feelings, thinking, and behavioral patterns. It has emerged as one of the personality traits that are

strongly and consistently related to success in academics (Poropat, 2009, p. 325). Indeed,

conscientiousness is a key grit element known to foster achievement-oriented and goal-

related behavior. Unfortunately, parental incarceration negatively affects the student's

level of conscientiousness, hence escalating the chances of failure or negative

performance.

In addition to conscientiousness, courage is another trait related to grit. College

students require courage to develop, learn, adjust to the changing world, and take risks

(Wallace, 2015a). Courage refers to an abstract concept auctioned whenever people are

faced with fear, apprehension, uncertainty, and anxiety. Psychological and physical

courage have been differentiated with a person's capacity to confront habits that are

physically destructive while at the same time applying mental strength for perseverance.

Perlis (2013) asserted that the ability of a person to adapt and take risks was relative to

their courage, hence directly predicting success (p. 47). Endurance, another element of

grit, is displayed through maintaining determination, focus, and persistence towards

realizing long-term goals (Nagaoka et al., 2013). Endurance is known to significantly

influence a person's level of commitment towards attaining success, as students

relinquish distractions to remain focused and set their priorities higher. Persistent people

are passionate, making endurance the foundation of grit. As opined by Jones (2018),

endurance is supported by a person's identified goals, determination, and motivation

towards realizing success. Endurance and perseverance are correlated positively with the

student's success.

In the context of this research, resilience refers to the ability of the college student

to succeed despite obstacles. A resilient person is characterized by motivation, self-

confidence, well-being, connectedness, and being goal-oriented (Buskirk-Cohen &

Plants, 2019; Perlis, 2013). Students who are resilient always display self-assurance,

optimism, and creative learning strategies whenever they are faced with adversity.

According to Zolli and Healy (2012), resilience refers to the person's capacity to uphold

their goals, core purpose, and integrity whenever presented with unforeseen interferences.

Resilience also encompasses the capacity to employ multidimensional constructs for the

purpose of overcoming complex situations. In addition to the above, another crucial

element of grit is excellence, a virtue that is known to inspire a person's subconscious

drive to pursue the achievement of quality (Duckworth et al., 2007). The term excellence

may be defined as an attitude, specifically seeking fulfillment of purpose, flexibility to

embrace failure, and the ongoing quest for improvement along the journey (Perlis, 2013).

People who display excellence are highly motivated towards success and

accomplishment (Perlis, 2013). Scholars have maintained that applying the five grit

characteristics coupled with hard work and sustained zeal can predict achievement in the

learning environment (Wallace, 2015b). Grit characteristics also influence the ability of

students to take risks, display optimism in face of setbacks, be determined to achieve,

strive for success, and demonstrate endurance and perseverance (Bashant, 2014;

Jachimowicz et al., 2018).

As opined by Wolters and Hussain (2015), there is an association between success

and grit within various academic settings. Existing studies have shown that students

displaying higher levels of grit attained sustained motivation, productivity, and

achievement (Kannangara et al., 2018). Some researchers have demonstrated a strong

correlation between the advanced level of grit and higher grades (Fazel & Wolf, 2015).

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Research conducted by Kannangara et al. displayed a stronger correlation between gender and grit, showcasing the positive relationship between grade point average and grit. Thus, grit may be a better predictor of achievement and success in a college environment.

Despite the existence of many strategies and interventions that can easily be integrated to develop grit, what matters most is the quality of interventions and interactions and not the strategies themselves. Pappano (2013) posited that human change happens readily in the context of trusting and caring relationships (p. 5). It is imperative to understand the significance of offering social-emotional support to students.

How Extracurricular Participation Increases College Retention and Completion

Participation in extracurricular activities, including clubs, team sports, intermural sports, and organizations, is a function of many factors. Parental imprisonment or incarceration involves any kind of parent confinement by criminal justice (Lord & Scudder, 2020). This involves either the father or mother being removed from a child's daily routine or household. Parental incarceration effects a child's life in a variety of ways, which in turn affects their school activities, including participation in college extracurricular activities. The effects of parental incarceration include poor children's health (Cothern, 2019). Parental imprisonment leads families to experience various kinds of challenges such as economic insecurity, disengagement, household instability, lower parental involvement in children's schooling, changes in the children's behavior and relationship dynamics, and changes in parental health, which affect the children's participation in extracurricular activities. In the following paragraphs, I explore different factors and how they affect college participation (Sykes et al., 2017).

Academic Excellence. According to Kimbark et al. (2017), student extracurricular participation correlates positively with persistence and learning. This finding agrees with Alexander Astin's (1984) theory, which states that active college involvement and experience positively impact student learning, development, social involvement, and academic excellence. Student involvement, as measured by the quality and the amount of participation, is positively associated with personal development and learning (Kimbark et al., 2017). Students in college may enrich their collegiate experience by participating in a broad spectrum of extracurricular activities. Students may become members of clubs, societies, sororities, fraternities, and other out-of-classroom activities (Kimbark et al., 2017).

Prior research findings have suggested that students participating in non-academic activities on campus tend to compromise their academic pursuits, thus performing poorly. An increasing body of research, however, has revealed that these students demonstrate higher levels of excellence, have better standing rates and better GPAs, and are more motivated to study and excel (King et al., 2021). As much as active participants have competing demands and interests in their schedules, the resulting pressure enables them to prioritize their activities and manage their time well. The educational ambitions of engaged students are higher than those of the less involved students. Furthermore, remedial students gain better persistence capability by engaging in various extracurricular activities (Serum, 2019). Students actively participating in extracurricular activities have better recorded retention rates (Hinson, 2019). They also demonstrate higher completion rates, better post-graduate transition, and an enhanced desire to pursue further academic interests. It is important to recognize that extracurricular participation is not an alternative

to academic learning. On the contrary, out-of-classroom activities augment the

educational experience and complement the academic curriculum; hence, they are also

known as co-curricular activities (King et al., 2021).

Skills Development. Extracurricular activities in college enable students to

reinforce what they have learned within the confines of a classroom setting by allowing

them to apply their academic skills in a real-life context. The students have opportunities

to gain essential values and skills such as teamwork, physical strength, competition,

endurance, individual responsibility, and group responsibility (Turney & Goodsell,

2018). The aim of extracurricular participation is to allow students to become more well-

rounded within the context of a wholesome collegiate experience. By linking their

academic knowledge with hands-on experience, students develop their skills, talents, and

abilities, thus influencing their career goals and aspirations. Career development

enhances competitiveness in the job market, making such post-graduate students more

viable. Personal development is integral to students' experience in college (King et al.,

2021).

Engaging in student leadership in clubs, societies, and other organizations enables

students to develop their leadership skills and prepares them for managerial competence

in the corporate world. The persistence that these students develop on campus enables

them to have better job experiences later in life, thus enhancing job retention and

competent work experience. These students, and later corporate professionals, develop

the resilience and endurance to manage occupational pressure and demands (Kimbark et

al., 2017).

Enhancing Community. Institutions of higher learning invest in co-curricular activities by providing resources in terms of human resources and finances, thus fostering student engagement (Gallagher et al., 2017). By embracing diversity, community, and a sense of culture, these institutions offer a conducive environment for student participation (Bowman, 2014). Universities and colleges support and encourage student extracurricular participation, thus creating community and enhancing personal development. Extracurricular activities are an effective platform for meaningful interactions among students and between students and other individuals in school (King et al., 2021).

By focusing on institutional goals, extracurricular activities help to build a broader campus community and sustain these social structures. Students who participate in co-curricular activities tend to connect to other members of the campus community and the university itself, thus enhancing their sense of belonging. Better learning and student development positively impact student retention. When students come together through various platforms on campus to discuss pertinent issues and ideas and to accomplish their goals, they become better at problem-solving and conflict resolution. Generally, extracurricular participation helps students to persist in college and enables them to progress toward graduation. Peer groups influence cognitive and affective development (Kimbark et al., 2017).

Challenges of Parental Incarceration

Parental imprisonment has negative adverse effects on a child's health. Witnessing a parent being arrested is a stressful and traumatic occurrence in a child's life (Arditti, 2012). Stress and trauma affect a child's participation in extracurricular activities such as sports, clubs, campus activities, and intermural sports and organization, making

the child stigmatized. Stigmatization occurs when their friends discover that their parents were incarcerated. This then drives the child to become isolated and feel shameful, thus preventing the child's interaction with other students in clubs or sports. They develop poor concepts of themselves, and when faced with minor stress, they experience difficulty in participation in activities. Studies have also shown that stigmatization also causes asthma in children, which hinders the child from participating in extracurricular activities (Turney & Goodsell, 2018).

Economic instability is also an effect of parental incarceration. There are always additional costs or rather insufficient funds associated with parental imprisonment. This comes as a result of one of the parents not being able to earn any income while in prison as well as other extra costs, such as paying for lawyer fees, bail, and fines and fees. This, in turn, affects the child's schooling life because of the hardship due to drastic changes in family income. A decline in income leads to various effects such as depending on public assistance which affects the child's schooling (Turney & Goodsell, 2018). The child can no longer buy sorts gears, pay club fees, or join organizations due to the changes in their financial status, hence impeding the child's ability to participate in any extracurricular activities in school (Turney & Goodsell, 2018).

Parental imprisonment often changes the behavior of a child (Benner et al., 2016). Children adapt antisocial behaviors which are classified as internal and external problems. Internal problems include worthlessness and inferiority and external problems include fighting and bullying. Children who have imprisoned parents often feel inferior, which makes it easy for other kids in school to pick on them, which may lead to a fight. This causes the child to be absent in school when expelled, suspended, or when advised

to take special education programs for a while. If a child is absent from school, they cannot take part in extracurricular activities (Arditti, 2012).

Parental imprisonment leads to reduced parental involvement in a child's life, as the parent is not around (Benner et al., 2016). This suggests that the parent cannot encourage the child to do extracurricular activities at school. With this lack of encouragement, children tend to give up doing extracurricular activities in colleges. Parents who also were previously incarcerated experience stigma or adverse consequences and, hence, avoid participating in a child's school life. Such situations also hinder children's dreams to participate in various activities in school (Arditti, 2012).

Research has shown that parents who have been incarcerated often exhibit violent behavior when released. Such parents may hit their children more often, which may lead to the child becoming hurt and sustaining an injury rendering them incapable of participating in sports that involve physical contact. This household instability, therefore, has a negative effect on the child's ability to participate in the school's extracurricular activities (Davis & Shlafer, 2017).

Parental incarceration also leads the mother or father to be disengaged and inadequate. At the time of incarceration, parents are incapable of engaging with their children, most probably leading to a prolonged reduction in parental care for the children who suffer as a result of parental absence and other changes in family life (Aaron & Dallaire, 2010). Stress linked to parental incarceration may cause the parent who is free to behave differently towards the child (Turney & Goodsell, 2018). Children start to become responsible on their own from the ages of 15 to 18 and tend to become disengaged from their parents, which may lead to acts of criminal behavior. Eventually,

the child may end up dropping out of school and not participating in college activities and may also become incarcerated like their parents (Davis & Shlafer, 2017).

Drug use by children is also another effect that might arise as a result of parental imprisonment (Aaron & Dallaire, 2010). The children in this situation often start abusing drugs due to having stress or feeling lonely. This, in turn, affects their ability to participate in games and clubs because, in most cases, students participating in the sports are tested for use of drugs, and when one is found to be using drugs, they are not allowed to play or participate in the activity (Kjellstrand, 2017).

Considering the effects of parental incarceration, schools should provide support and aid to such children to help and provide unique opportunities to intervene in the lives of children whose parent are or were previously incarcerated. Some of the programs that may help children who have incarcerated parents include the following:

1. Self-expression: Students draw, write, perform, and take photographs to express what they are going through.

2. Self-healing: Students are encouraged to participate in extracurricular activities such as clubs for counseling.

3. Community engagement: Students engage and listen to speakers and become motivated by stories similar to their own. For example, individuals who have experienced the incarceration of a loved one may share their story (Kjellstrand, 2017).

The steady increase in the rate of incarcerated parents has left many families with challenges, such as economic insecurity, changes in parenting, and parental health. Because most incarcerated parents were working before their incarceration, incarceration

contributes significantly to the decline in family income and increased dependence on

public assistance. The high rate of inmates has led to an increase in the population of

children with incarcerated parents (Goodwin, 2017). The children of the incarcerated

parents experience the repercussions of their imprisonments, thus resulting in the rise of

delinquent behaviors because there are no measures to address this concern. Therefore,

social and behavioral engagements have impactful consequences on college and degree

retention. Thus, parental incarceration can interfere with students' adjustment both at

home and school and may ultimately compromise their academic performance and school

outcomes (Aaron & Dallaire, 2010).

Martin (2017) studied the impact of paternal incarceration on physical aggression

among young African American boys towards their education. Martin contended that

children of incarcerated parents face a host of challenges and problems, including

antisocial behavior, psychological strain, expulsion from school, engaging in criminal

activities, economic hardship, and suspension, all of which put them at a much greater

danger of dropping out of school. In another related study by Lee and Cunningham

(2019), the authors found that parental incarceration put the lives of female African

American college students at risk of withdrawing from social activities in school as well

as impeding their performance in academic work. Overall, there are numerous reasons

why children responded differently in school as a result of their parents being

incarcerated.

The effects of paternal incarceration are experienced differently depending on the

race of the college students. Jacobsen and Hardaway (2016) suggested that being

connected to marginalized races could lead to more adverse and stronger educational

outcomes for Black children with incarcerated parents in comparison to White children with incarcerated parents. On the other hand, Kosik et al. (2018) suggested and hypothesized that the different forms of disruption and environmental shocks were less demanding when the experience was not expected and substitute support systems were put in place. Paternal incarceration was more common among the cohorts of the Black children, and the effects of paternal incarceration were much more adverse on the educational outcomes of the African American children than on the White children whose fathers had been incarcerated.

College and degree retention depended on the learners' frequency of participation and motivation. Schools, however, are facing many challenges achieving retention because of incarcerated parents. Children face numerous challenges due to parental incarceration, which can lead to distress. In this regard, parental incarceration is considered to be a significant factor contributing to psychological, physical, social, educational, and economic challenges among children and adolescents. These risks undermine the bonding of the students of incarcerated parents with their peers and teachers. Therefore, parental incarceration has a significant impact on college retention and degree attainment (Braman, 2007). For the students pursuing a quality education, it is appropriate for them to have an effective relationship with their parents and school settings. The absence of a parent-child relationship undermines success in a child's careers as well as other forms of personal growth outside the classroom (Benner et al., 2016). It is possible to argue that students with incarcerated parents face additional challenges when pursuing their academics and personal growth. Moreover, students whose parents are imprisoned are likely to experience adverse educational outcomes

(Aaron & Dallaire, 2010). In this case, such students lack resilience in times of challenges as well as the ability to perform well in educationally challenging settings (Balua, 2021).

Parental incarceration significantly impacts students' social and academic engagement within learning institutions. Therefore, students experiencing parental incarceration are likely to be impacted psychosocially, leading to antisocial behavior. Parental incarceration significantly contributes to both antisocial behavior and social exclusion (Arditti, 2012). Indeed, the experience of parental incarceration is associated with challenges such as traumatic experience and psychosocial malfunction. Undoubtedly, parental incarceration is not the beginning of dysfunctional families, but instead, it interacts with other challenges such as emotional detachment, violence, and health problems. All of these factors affect retention and an increase in dropout rates (Aaron & Dallaire, 2010). Parental incarceration, however, has remained an influential factor in undermining healthy growth among children (Lee et al., 2013), so it is essential to address the risk to achieve desirable behavior. If left unaddressed, behavior and attainment challenges faced by children can result in maladaptive behaviors and negative life adjustments within learning institutions (Lord & Scudder, 2020). Arguably, educational attainment is one of the critical interceding factors in the socioeconomic outcomes of adults who have experienced imprisonment. Therefore, this may result in reduced personal income and powerlessness for children who find it challenging to complete their education (Murray et al., 2012). As such, parental imprisonment significantly contributes to socioeconomic inequality and social exclusion at a personal and school level.

Parental incarceration does not always, however, significantly contribute to poor educational performance. Despite the academic challenges attributed to parental incarceration, school and individual factors such as close family association and school connectedness promote academic achievement and retention. Although parental incarceration can undermine educational outcomes, it can also pave ways for academic resilience (King & Delgado, 2021). Based on these benefits, the learners tend to focus on their academics without the influence of the parents, thus leading to higher performance and degree attainment. Consequently, the lack of parental guidance can profoundly enhance heightened independence and diligence among students in educational settings (Murray et al., 2012).

Besides, social support systems that emphasize academic performance and success motivate students to focus on opportunities. Such learners usually demonstrate readiness to perform well academically, an initiative that goes beyond what the parents expect and work to achieve a better future. For instance, children of incarcerated parents demonstrate educational success and resilience as a result of other caring adults 9King & Delgado, 2021). Furthermore, completion of college and attainment of degrees are essential in reducing the negative impacts of parental incarceration (Foster & Hagan, 2015). Therefore, educational attainment is considered a significant mediator in that it supports upward mobility and social prosperity among students of incarcerated parents. In this case, educational attainment and academic resilience are beneficial because they reduce the chances of social exclusion and encourage future success and accomplishments (Goodwin, 2017).

Nevertheless, positive relational support within the learning setting can facilitate intrinsic motivation and growth among students. It is noteworthy that students of incarcerated parents are likely to progress well academically, provided they are motivated and receive the necessary support in the learning environment (Murray et al., 2012). As parental incarceration is associated with many challenges, such as preventing psychosocial development, learning institutions need to resort to guide such learners in realizing personal motivation and competence in different settings (King et al., 2021). Arguably, it is believed that both social and psychological support provided by competent individuals helps students achieve personal growth and development.

Increasingly, the incarceration of parents tended to interrupt the lives of their children (Cochran et al., 2018). Consequently, this impact contributes to changes in terms of socioeconomic status, education, and how society treats them. As such, the threatening environment makes the children and adolescents usually pursue positivity in people around them and services that meet their needs (Lee et al., 2013). These platforms offer guidance to students that contributes to their success and ability to face life's challenges. In this regard, social support leads to positive adaptation and resilience among learners through a vision that supports better experience and education. Also, intervention in social support systems that comprises teachers, students, and even incarcerated parents is vital in achieving motivation and academic performance despite the negative impacts of imprisonment (Wildeman et al., 2018).

Moreover, effective parenting plays a significant role in mediating the negative impacts of parental incarceration, thus leading to family and social advantage. This kind of parenting is also meant to prevent antisocial behaviors. The learners are likely to live

healthy in school settings. Therefore, continuous social support helps students grow in

social prowess and demonstrate high participation in their academics due to positive

influences (Wildeman et al., 2018). Certainly, the learners of incarcerated parents need

social support that can propel them toward internal motivation (Lens & Vansteenkiste,

2006; Wildeman et al., 2018). Thus, such support leads to higher participation and

attainment degrees in higher learning institutions (Goodwin, 2017). Therefore, these

conditions provide learners profound opportunities to discover and understand the

importance of learning and attaining a degree in general (Martin, 2017). By creating an

environment that facilitates student engagement, the students are likely to demonstrate

competence and motivation, thus demonstrating a higher rate of college retention.

Additionally, the children of imprisoned parents tend to develop both personal

coping skills and resilience within the family. Social support is the primary resilience

mechanism for children exposed to life challenges as a result of parental incarceration

(Rodriguez, 2016). Thus, resilience-based interventions focus on providing these children

with financial assistance for school supplies and health care services (Buskirk-Cohen &

Plants, 2019). The subsequent caregivers for children experiencing parental incarceration

face challenges in regard to providing necessary support and guidance to promote

resilience. Based on this challenge, the students are likely not to participate and be

motivated academically. Students exhibiting social and behavioral engagement have both

academic and intellectual pursuits (Aaron & Dallaire, 2010). The intervention programs

are established to address the emotional and behavioral problems of students with

incarcerated parents. Therefore, providing familial support, supporting the caregivers,

and addressing academic outcomes significantly influence students' psychological

outcomes. All these efforts contribute to well-being, social engagement, and transformative learning among children of the incarcerated parents.

Indeed, the experience of parental incarceration results in detrimental growth among learners and undermines the psychological, physical, and social well-being of the children. As parental incarceration rates continue to rise, there is a parallel increase in the number of children who lack parental support. Despite the disadvantages associated with imprisonment, children are provided with opportunities to pursue academic success without the influence of their parents. Also, these children demonstrate academic resilience, thus exhibiting higher participation and motivation (Buskirk-Cohen & Plants, 2019). Therefore, both the learning institution and health sectors must solve these challenges through effective intervention programs. Through this strategy, the mediating factors can be incorporated to support positive academic performance for the students who experience parental incarceration.

Factors Influencing College Retention

Scholars have determined several factors that aid in a student's decision to leave college. Most students leave school as a result of the high cost of college education, isolation, social challenges, and unclear expectations. The cost of college and university education has continuously risen for decades, and the college students who lack financial support or parental assistance usually find the financial burden too heavy for them to carry (Oliff et al., 2013; Voigt & Hundrieser, 2008). Isolation also takes place because some students do not reach out to faculty members to receive help with their coursework. As a result, such students are left feeling isolated. On the other hand, first-generation students are less likely to discuss or disclose feelings of stress than their colleagues

(Gibbons & Woodside, 2014, p. 22). These issues increase their stress levels, which contribute significantly to college dropout rates.

Social difficulties have sometimes compelled students to leave college. Unfortunately, as a higher education institution is a new environment, students lack people who they can turn to for support. The students who find that they have problems making friends or integrating into a social group in higher education consider leaving school as the only option (Credé & Niehorster, 2012). Unclear expectations also threaten student retention in colleges (Miller & Barnes, 2015). Students believe that personal and academic expectations in college or university are not clear; thus, they fail to complete and obtain their degrees due to the lack of clear expectations. In many cases, there has been no link between degree achievement and anticipated success (Gibbons & Woodside, 2014, p. 29). The fear of lack of employment opportunities after graduation also scares some students away from colleges. For instance, while some scholars have considered that employment success entails securing employment within about 2 months of graduation (Blau & Snell, 2013, p. 691), the time it takes to become employed is much longer for some students. Consequently, many students leave school for any jobs available. Thus, the above are some of the common reasons that compel students to walk out of colleges.

Challenges

There exist different factors inhibiting the likelihood of students earning college degree with emphasis being placed on the similarities and differences between students with and those without incarcerated parents. In this section, I expound on the various

factors that result following parental incarceration. I also focus on those factors that negatively affect college retention and degree attainment.

Financial Challenges

The negative effect of financial problems on the high dropout rate and reduced degree completion rate cannot be underestimated. For the past 50 years, the world has witnessed an unprecedented rise in the cost of college tuition. In addition to the escalation tuition fee, there are other fees that also need to be paid on a yearly basis, such as for books, board, and room. The College Board estimates the average yearly cost for in-state public universities to be $9,410 while that of a private university is $32,410 (BigFuture, 2018). The figures are astronomical, rendering education unattainable, especially to a family with either one or both parents incarcerated.

Without sufficient income, a parent who is incarcerated is unable to afford to pay their child's college fees, which significantly increases their likelihood of dropping out. This is further compounded with extreme cost of restitution, legal fees, and wages withheld, depending on the case specifics. Where children are forced to rely on income from a single parent, children are likely to feel responsible for the financial burden that eventually leads to predatory loans, rendering it almost impossible to pay for the subsequent semesters within the remaining academic period (Uggen & McElrath, 2014).

Similarly, such students are more likely to experience added pressure while completing the FAFSA, also known as the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, as parental information is required. With great stigma resulting from an incarcerated parent, a student is likely to feel extremely uncomfortable to disclose the information, hence thwarting their capacity to receive sufficient financial assistance to be able to proceed

with their college education (Taviringana, 2017). Even though FAFSA is known to offer certain resources regarding how to integrate the information for a student whose parents have been incarcerated, embarrassment and shame can make them forgo the application process altogether. In some cases, college students are even forced to walk out of schools during their final year due to lack of payment. In many cases, college management does not listen to the plight of children, leaving them without any option apart from dropping out of school. Similarly, in some cases, children are forced to assume the parental responsibilities by dropping out to look for income needed for survival (Uggen & McElrath, 2014). Lack of financial support also affects children psychologically and emotionally, leaving them without option but to instead drop out of school. Against this backdrop, financial problems represent one of the challenges inhibiting the likelihood of a student earning a college degree.

Social and Identity Development

In addition to financial problems, another challenge that children with incarcerated parents face is social and identity challenge. During their parents' incarceration, two unique challenges faced by the students include ascertaining who they are as well as who they would like to become (Cochran et al., 2018). Because college brings about independence, such students begin developing both their social network and identity, building their framework for future lives within the escalating interconnected society. The first few months of college are often characterized by meeting other incoming students. The main conversation during such meetings includes stories of upbringing and childhood, which may include stories regarding students' parents (Mattanah et al., 2004). Therefore, for students whose parents have been incarcerated, it

becomes extremely challenging to participate in such conversations, considering the ever-present stigma of parental incarceration. Therefore, deciding when to unearth such personal information is sometimes stressful and can thwart the necessary bonding more so between new friends and roommates.

Nesmith and Ruhland (2008) also examined how parental incarceration affects children's social identity. They noted that the impact of parental incarceration on children remains not only a complex but also a delicate issue. In this study, participants revealed various social and identity development challenges they encounter as a result of their parents being incarcerated, including social isolation and developmental challenges, such as engaging in maladaptive behaviors that thwart their development. In another study, Cochran et al. (2018) explored how parental incarceration impacts social isolation. The findings of this study clearly show that parental incarceration adversely affects social exclusion. Finkeldey (2017) also examined the relationship between parental incarceration and social identity issues. Social exclusion that results from such incarceration negatively affects a person's social and identity development.

In this digital age shaped by social media and immediate information, the public nature of the prison system is likely to negatively affect both identity and social development (Cochran et al., 2018). College is a level of learning where children commence taking responsibilities not only for their own behavior, but for that of their family as well (Cochran et al., 2018). On this note, assuming that the parent is incarcerated or imprisoned for a heavily publicized crime, or one which is linked to family, students' peers may not only acknowledge but also familiarize with their name. Losing the capacity to choose whenever such information is disclosed can harmfully

affect social development, and may affect trust and self-worth in the process, compelling them to drop out of college before completing their degrees to run away from shame (Finkeldey, 2017). As students are not always willing to feel tokenized because of their parent's imprisonment, offering support and resources for disclosure of such information can sometimes be complicated, troublesome, and delicate as far as college retention and degree attainment is concerned (Smyke et al., 2017). Children whose parents have been incarcerated for highly publicized crimes are more likely to drop out of college than those whose parents committed crimes that were not publicized (Mattanah, et al., 2004).

The lasting effect of parental incarceration on college children concerns complete lack of parental involvement in the college process. In this case, a child is forced to assume the role of the parent at an early age. Though helicopter parents are known to receive media attention, families and parents play a central role in providing support for their children through college (Benner et al., 2016). Therefore, whether it is family or a non-biological member, students are known to heavily rely on their intimate network. At a prime time when students commence individuating their families, social adjustment becomes extremely critical to the successful completion of college education. According to Mattanah et al. (2004), the quality of student-parent relation is mirrored in parental support, healthy parental attachment, and the parent's expressed interest, which facilitate social adjustment to college. In addition to providing new experience for exploration, it also exposes students to new ways of thinking, being, and comprehending the world.

Co-curricular and classroom experiences exposing students to diverse issues and perspectives significantly influence their cultural and social perspective awareness. Parents play an incredible role in the child's college process (Cage, 2019). Without

proper support, college students whose parents have been incarcerated will continue to struggle with the conflict of family responsibility and independence, college finances, and social and identity development in a school setting. Despite the existence of several resources for younger individuals, it is unfortunate that such organizations do not address the exceptional/unique needs of the college students (Delima, 2020). Without intervention, college students are more likely to find it difficult to stay and, instead, may choose to leave college.

Independence

In addition to financial, social, and identity development challenges, another potential challenge is independence. As opined by Brick (2017) and Mattanah et al. (2004), college marks the first time young individuals are capable of making informed decisions for themselves. Brick contended that attending college away from the family is extremely challenging and can possibly result in a student dropping out of college. Such independence may sometimes not only cause rifts amid family dynamics, but may also be intensified even further whenever a parent in incarcerated. The correlation between a parent who is incarcerated and the remaining one sometimes appears difficult and tenuous for the child. In many circumstances, the remaining parent dictates and mediates the relationship between the imprisoned parent and the child (Mattanah et al., 2004)

In the event that the remaining parent does not want any form of contact to exist between their child and the imprisoned parent, no relationship shall exist. Further, such dynamic has great potential to alter as the child turns 18 years old. There is a greater likelihood that a student who is college aged could want to employ their newfound independence to either commence or repair a relationship with the parent who is

incarcerated. During incarceration, family dynamics are highly complicated and likely to result in tension for students. Therefore, approaching the remaining parent purposefully to discuss relationship rebuilding can sometimes cause emotional harm, especially where there is no sufficient support from school counselors or a family therapist. Moreover, reconnecting with a parent who rarely sees their son can bring about immense amount of emotional energy from both parties (Lee et al., 2013). Therefore, it must be prompted in a way that is extremely healthy. Further, logistics of visiting an imprisoned parent can both be complicated and confusing for the college student, especially without access to necessary transportation (Lord & Scutter, 2020). Therefore, when a parent is incarcerated, college students may misuse their independence, leading to their decision to drop out of school.

Support System

The significance of a functioning support system, especially when the student is in college, cannot be under-estimated. Parental incarceration negatively disrupts family relationships leading to negative outcomes for children, including poor academic performance, poverty, depression, aggression, substance abuse, and delinquency, all of which can negatively affect college retention and degree attainment (Martin, 2017). Imprisoned fathers and mothers may not be in a position to work on the parenting skills necessary to keep their child in school, further influencing their academic outcomes and justifying the need to integrate the right support system to help their children overcome obstacles (Turney, 2019)

Parental incarceration is one of the lowest points that a person may experience in life. College students whose parents have been incarcerated need to be able to depend

upon individuals who understand their circumstances. Such students need people who can listen to them and also provide them with hope that everything will be okay despite the problems they are experiencing. According to Martin (2017), having a support system has a plethora of benefits, including better-coping skills, higher levels of well-being, and a longer and healthier life. Extant studies have further shown that social support can significantly reduce anxiety and depression. While some do best with larger support groups, others require a small support system to function optimally. Thus, giving and receiving support from others is considered a basic human need.

The primary goal of having a support system is to reduce stress. Such support may come from friends, family, pets, clergy, and neighbors. In addition to the aforementioned, college students can also draw support from their fellow students, instructors, and school counselors. According to Martin (2017), children, especially college students whose parents have been imprisoned or incarcerated, are known to face a series of difficulties and challenges, including antisocial behavior, psychological strain, expulsion from school due to lack of school fees, engaging in criminal activities, and economic hardship, all of which negatively affect their emotional and psychological well-being. Martin opined that it is not easy to predict or foretell how a child will fare whenever a parent is continually or intermittently incarcerated.

What is factual, however, is that such children require a stronger support system to promote their general well-being. Based on the existing research, the weaknesses and strengths of the parent-child bond coupled with the quality of the family and child social support system play a central role in the child's capacity to not only overcome challenges but to also succeed in life (Martin, 2017). Similarly, correctional practitioners must

develop and nurture stronger partnerships with public schools, law enforcement agencies, and child welfare agencies to comprehend the exceptional dynamics of families and to provide robust support systems for college students. Turney and Goodsell (2018) and the CDC described parental incarceration as an adverse childhood experience considered to be potentially traumatic or stressful with lasting consequences for children's wellbeing and health. It occurs in conjunction with other stressors, including family economic stability, parental divorce, and household substance abuse. Parental incarceration entails the removal or elimination of father or mother from the child's daily routine. Because such removal is a traumatic incident for many children, it calls for support to successfully pass through the process (Turney & Goodsell, 2018). In addition to being traumatizing, such removal can also produce shame and isolation that impedes interactions with teachers and peers, social support systems, and children's educational outcomes and opportunities (Dallaire & Thompson, 2016). As far as parental incarceration is concerned, families experience various challenges, including relationship dynamics and altered household routines (Aaron & Dallaire, 2010). Additional factors include changes in parental health and parenting as well as economic insecurity. Incarceration can result in an immediate reduction in family income, escalated reliance on public assistance, and an increase in material hardship.

Poehlmann-Tynan and Turney (2021) emphasized the role of teachers and schools in providing support to students with incarcerated parents. According to Poehlmann-Tynan and Turney (2021), children with incarcerated parents experience problems in terms of progressing through school. Therefore, parental incarceration escalates the chances of college students not only dropping out of school but also failing to complete

their degrees. Negative consequences traverse different forms of academic outcomes, including inapposite special education placement, a huge number of school absences, suspension, grade retention, measures of educational attainment, low test scores, and college attendance. The consequences extend further to children's behavioral problems. For instance, children hailing from incarcerated fathers always report greater internalizing problems, including a feeling of inferiority and worthlessness, and may engage in bullying and fighting as a coping mechanism (Martin, 2017). Most research in this area has focused primarily on consequences associated with paternal incarceration as well as general parental incarceration, as more children are affected. Hence, both maternal and paternal incarceration may have deleterious consequences for the educational outcomes of children, justifying the need for a robust support system.

Because of the exceptional link between parental incarceration and the well-being of children coupled with the fact that children spend a significant amount of time in school, one cannot refute the fact that such institutions can provide an invaluable support system for not only intervening, but also aiding children who have formerly or currently incarcerated parents (Turney & Goodsell, 2018). There are different ways through which institutions of higher learning can serve or help children of parents who are incarcerated. Educational institutions can provide support by training their teachers on how to address the needs of incarcerated children. Also, they should be aware that many children experiencing parental incarceration also suffer from childhood adversity, including parental substance abuse, family instability, and violence. Support from learning institutions can help children with incarcerated parents alleviate the stigma and negative well-being they are known to experience (Martin, 2017). Educators may also escalate

awareness regarding specific challenges and needs of children with parents who are incarcerated (). Such children are known to experience unconscious and conscious social stigma from their classmates and teachers. Thus, support from educational institutions can help reduce stigma.

Educators may avoid drawing attention or singling out children whose parents have been incarcerated and refrain from blaming, judging, or even labeling children. In line with Turney and Goodsell's (2018) contention, such an approach can help to benefit children directly through reinforcing the notion that parental incarceration is never their fault. Institutions of learning may also put in place policies that prohibit children from blaming, judging, and labeling children of incarcerated parents. Educators can also support children whose parents are incarcerated by avoiding articulating negative comments about the incarcerated, as such a statement may reinforce stigma and stereotypes about parental incarceration. In addition, children hailing from incarcerated parents may also have additional needs that can be provided by the school as one of the support systems (Rossen, 2011). For instance, in the case of college students, such schools may consider providing resources to children with incarcerated parents, such as developmentally apposite books. Moreover, librarians and teachers can encourage these students to read such books, which can aid in fostering awareness of the experiences among classmates without necessarily singling out individual children.

Further, other potential resources may include websites about Sesame Street or community programs. Such websites offer activities, videos, and articles that are designed specifically for children of incarcerated parents, all of which provide teachers guidance regarding how to address children with incarcerated parents. Additionally,

teachers may also help children to be able to maintain contact with parents who are incarcerated through relationship development (Turney & Goodsell, 2018). The emotional counseling and support are also vital for such children as it may enable them to overcome their psychological and emotional troubles (Lee et al., 2013). Besides collaborating with mental health professionals, including guidance counselors and psychologists, classroom teachers can also help children work through their feelings regarding parental incarceration or connect them to other support systems (Turney & Goodsell, 2018).

Rossen (2011) asserted that many incarcerated parents have little contact with their children due to lack of permission, feeling ashamed, not wanting to, and separation by large geographical distances. Rossen contended that such students often experience chronic stressors and significant changes, including moving from their schools, homes, states, or districts. Though approximately 84% remain with a non-incarcerated parent, one cannot refute the fact that their home environment changes significantly due to factors such as escalated responsibility, financial distress or burden, social stigma, and social isolation. Others end up in foster homes. In most cases, students whose parents have been incarcerated attain positive outcomes through adaptability, resilience, and self-sufficiency.

Nonetheless, incarceration can escalate adolescents' risk for various negative outcomes, including behavioral and emotional problems, future incarceration, and academic difficulties (Lopez & Bhat, 2007). Moreover, anyone who witnessed their parents being arrested is likely to experience flashbacks, nightmares, and escalated levels of traumatic stress (Phillips & Zhao, 2010). Undoubtedly, having a parent who is

incarcerated can result in social isolation and stigma. This is especially true for adolescents and can be very problematic, as secondary students are known to attach great value to peer relationships and spend a considerable amount of their time with peers, including classmates (Cochran et al., 2018). Whenever a parent is incarcerated, the quality of relations may significantly influence identity and psychological development. Similarly, a positive relationship during this time can help to diminish anxiety and depressive symptoms.

In line with the above analysis, it is evident that parental incarceration can have adverse effects in regard to college retention and degree completion. In this respect, there is a need to provide various support systems, including extended family members, teachers, professionals, and counselors, to help the child overcome the negative circumstances while improving their psychological and emotional well-being. For instance, escalating student connectedness is extremely central. As opined by Johnson (2006), feeling connected to a caring adult in a school setting can significantly enhance behavioral, academic, and social-emotional outcomes. College students should be reassured about the availability of people to help them succeed in life despite their parents being incarcerated. Without having a connected relationship, it becomes difficult for the student to complete college. Further, increasing students' connectedness to school can significantly encourage their participation in both after and before school activities, something that could be extremely critical to their physical and psychological well-being.

The analysis also shows that supporting students whenever they visit incarcerated parents is also a step in the right direction as far as the support system is concerned.

While many students, especially college ones, may come from visiting the incarcerated parent reassured, others may feel angry, stressed, neglected, and guilty. In certain cases, students may not be allowed to experience physical contact with their parents (Oliff et al., 2013). Sometimes, the duration of their visits is greatly reduced, which is extremely stressful for them. This must be addressed in order to provide the required support system to ensure that the psychological and emotional wellbeing of these children are greatly developed. In some prisons, some rules must be followed, such as dress codes (Kjellstrand, 2017). Some jails and prisons have age visitation requirements. Therefore, a violation of such codes can disallow the student from seeing the parent, which may leave them emotionally disturbed.

Therefore, supporting students whenever they visit their families is extremely critical in order to build their self-esteem psychological well-being. Providing support systems for children of incarcerated parents should help place the focus on family strengthening activities, parenting programs, nurturing family relationships, and community support to ensure to improve the general well-being of these children (Kjellstrand, 2017). Therefore, social support is extremely critical to college students whose parents have been incarcerated. The support systems cited in this section have many benefits, including promoting better-coping skills, higher levels of well-being, and ensuring healthier and longer lives. Extant studies have also shown that social support for college students whose parents have been incarcerated can significantly reduce anxiety and depression (Lord & Scudder, 2020).

Further Strategies for Addressing Student's Retention

Promoting Students Habits for Success

Teaching students habits for success is one of the strategies that has been used to boost student retention rates. Instructors who strongly believe in good student work habits plan with great responsiveness to learner performance, thus leading to increased student achievement (Fuchs et al., 1994). Many students do not attend classes after enrolling in college because they do not understand what is expected of them. Therefore, it is imperative to subject college students to orientation programs to increase this understanding (Miller & Barnes, 2015, p. 111). For instance, the University of Wisconsin–Green Bay recorded improved student persistence after implementing first-year seminars for their freshman students. The seminars provided an opportunity for students to interact and build relations with faculty. They were informed of available resources as well as appropriate offices from where they may seek support. It registered about a "10% increase in retention rate from the first year to the second year among the students who participated in the seminar" (Hanover Research, 2014, p. 4).

Voigt and Hundrieser (2008) found that the learning institutions should ensure their learners understand the GPAs that would keep them in good academic standing, as well as the activities and opportunities that students can participate in to increase their involvement within the college. Taylor et al. (2017) proved that involvement was an important way of attracting someone's interest in an organization. As proposed by Gallagher et al. (2017), deep learning and academic achievement are closely tied to student engagement. Based on the findings from the above-mentioned studies, instructors should encourage student engagement, considering its positive relationship to academic success.

Small and Achievable Student Retention Goals

Developing small goals may help with student retainment. For instance, by using the syllabus, students can be motivated to set achievable goals (Slattery & Carlson, 2005, p. 159). Universities should have a guideline for how to achieve its student retention goals. While some public learning institutions have defined goals for student retention, many public colleges do not have such goals. Despite having evidence of low retention rates, the institutions prefer to ignore the intervention programs, citing inadequate resources for funding and the time-consuming nature of these programs. It can be challenging for the universities without set goals to measure success and put in place good and effective student retention programs. As such, it is critical for colleges to set out goals for learner retention and degree attainment (Friedman & Mandel, 2009).

The goals of student retention programs include cutting the costs of higher education. The steady rise in financial requirements associated with being in college contributes significantly to college dropout rates. Students who are unable to handle the financial burden are forced to leave school and venture into economic activities. The second goal of student retention programs is to reduce isolation among students (Slattery & Carlson, 2005). Researchers have indicated that learners who do not seek assistance with coursework from faculty members mostly remain isolated in their studies (Bettinger et al., 2013). Another goal of retention programs is managing social difficulties. Failure to integrate into social groups or make friends in colleges leads to loneliness and often pushes students to leave school. Moreover, universities and colleges organize the programs to explain to students the academic and personal achievements that are expected of them and how students stand to benefit when they acquire a good GPA. By breaking the goals down within courses, programs, and departments, the universities can

establish effective programs that can be expanded and adopted for the entire institution (Friedman & Mandel, 2009).

Collecting Data and Putting it into Good Use

Collecting data and putting the data into good use can help colleges address the problem of low student retention rates. Universities have collected information on resource allocation, program effectiveness, and student achievement to help in addressing the issue of low college student retention rates (Greenwald et al., 1996). One of the most appropriate ways of collecting data is by using a student management system (Bharamagoudar et al., 2013). The collected data can be used intelligently to support student retention efforts every year. For instance, when the school administration obtains data indicating unclear expectations as a contributing factor to the low student retention rates, they customize programs within departments to help clarify the expectations of students by the particular faculty. Data help to develop strategies that align to specific problems (Bharamagoudar et al., 2013).

While collecting data has been a fundamental aspect of boosting student retention rates in colleges, researchers have shown that the most important part is the use or application of the collected data. The emphasis is laid on using data, not just collecting it (Wyatt, 2011). The application of good data has been critical in assessing program effectiveness, monitoring students' progress, and guiding a student retention strategy. The data are used to develop specific approaches that can facilitate students' retention in learning institutions. The use of such data has also helped in decision making and resource allocations (Marsh et al., 2010). Good data has been used to support a successful approach to student success, and most academics have dismissed measures that are not

backed with statistics to support claims or goals (Ellucian, 2018). Therefore, it is imperative to ascertain the best evidence and strategies regarding the best ways to promote students' retention in college.

Developing Intervention Programs

Developing intervention programs has been a critical component of boosting college student retention rates. Intervention programs have helped in reaching the at-risk learners before they quit education. The at-risk students may have faced challenges other than lack of basic knowledge, such as "lack of motivation to complete their degree course" (Laskey & Hetzel, 2011, p. 32). For instance, an institution like Beaufort County Community College achieved the objective by implementing an early alert student referral program. In the program, the students who had personal, social, academic, or financial problems received a letter informing them of the available workshops and resources that could assist them in addressing the problem at hand. Intervention programs can also help in improving faculty members' retention rates. For instance, Taylor et al. (2017) identified that the National Science Foundation's ADVANCE program contributed significantly to a reduction in turnover rates by female faculty members. In 2001, the program had distributed grants worth approximately $130 million to programs that aimed to enhance professional success, improve work climate, and promote recruitment and retention of females in STEM fields (Taylor et al., 2017).

Defining "Student Success"

Colleges can define student success as a way of helping student remain in college. This involves establishing the constructs associated with student success and can promote development of common understanding about college success and work towards the

success. According to Kim et al. (2010), learners are ready to face challenges in higher

education in their pursuit for success if they understand what makes success. When a

learning institution establishes a shared vision of student success, the students find it

easier to identify with the common goal (Voigt & Hundrieser, 2008). At the same time,

the vision also allows the university or college to organize and allocate resources that

focus on supporting the goal of student success. Colleges and universities accept students

from different cultural and social backgrounds (Laskey & Hetzel, 2011). With a shared

vision, students have a common goal to work towards regardless of their individual

differences. The measure is a way of expressing sensitivity to diversity, which is critical

for student retention (Bowman, 2014). The institutions are in a position to allocate

resources depending on the requirements of the various groups of students and ensure

success for all learners. For instance, the University of Colorado—Boulder investigated

the dropout trends among underrepresented students. They found that embracing

diversity and promotion of a shared vision in colleges facilitated retention rates

(Bowman, 2014).

Combining the Strength of all Resources

Another method of increasing retention rates is by combining the strength of all

the resources. Clearly, student retention in colleges is a large issue that universities will

continue to struggle to address unless all the available resources are put into appropriate

use (O'Keeffe, 2013). This entails bringing together the power of the instructors or

professors who first identify student absences and the power of financial aid personnel

who can implement creative and effective financial solutions. It also involves combining

the powers of such personnel with the power of the student affairs specialists who can

ensure that the at-risk students are in touch with these available resources (Farrell, 2009).

When universities craft a comprehensive approach to student retention, they can be more

effective and the learners can get maximum benefit of increased support. For instance,

research extensively supports various systems on campus as well as how they benefit

retention rates, such as writing centers and college counseling to help children overcome

their emotional and psychological problems and to understand the importance of staying

in college. Such initiatives may help to promote college retention rates (Farrell, 2009).

Increasing Resources for Academic Advising

Furthermore, colleges and universities increase resources for academic advising to

boost college student retention rates. According to Woods-Warrior (2014), academic

advising is important for student success. Students' easy access to campus resources and

programs improves their retention rates when there are accessible, helpful, and

knowledgeable college advisors (Laskey & Hetzel, 2011, p.40). Researchers found that

institutions of higher learning experienced increased retention rates by taking advantage

of the benefits of advisory service for students and by providing faculty advisors and

liaisons as a critical component that supports the structures established for student

activities and other non-academic opportunities for engagement (Swecker et al., 2013;

Woods-Warrior, 2014, p. 96).

Offering Ample Opportunities for Success

Offering ample opportunities for student success encourages learners to remain in

college. The opportunities make students hopeful in their studies and encourage them to

continue with their learning. Gallagher et al. (2017) explored the role of hope in

predicting both achievement and retention of college students while controlling for

educational history and other psychological constructs, such as engagement and self-efficacy. In this study, the author correlated engagement, hope, and self-efficacy with cumulative GPA and the number of semesters enrolled during the first years of college. Based on the findings, hope was a great predictor of academic achievement in college, more so after controlling for the educational history. Further studies conducted by Fain (2014) and Farrell (2009) have shown that providing immediate feedback, supporting students, and conducting regular assessments can make students more efficient, leading to increased academic achievement.

Clear definitions of expectations in class motivate students to develop realistic goals and help them plan their time while focusing on activities that promote their class performance (Bettinger et al., 2013). Faculty members may facilitate the process by providing clear information about the course requirements, examinations, projects, and assignments. Faculty are advised to remind students on a regular basis of their expectations. Academic support is crucial among students targeting high expectations. Experts believe that academic support defines the first-year experience (Aronson, 2008). As a result, faculty should increase academic support offered to students at all levels. Moreover, the support should not be too general, but should align with the specific courses.

Offering assessments and feedback helps to keep students updated. Assessment and feedback opportunities provide an environment that is conducive for self-reflection on progress (Gallagher et al., 2017). Further, it encourages students to focus on what they are learning both in and outside of class. O'Keeffe (2013) and Farrell (2009) found midterm assessments and feedback help students to know their progress and alert them to

what requires improvement. Students who felt that college or university was difficult

were likely to abandon their college education (Stinebrickner & Stinebrickner, 2008).

This made it important for the learning institutions to offer students ample opportunities

for success. It implied setting high, but achievable targets and assisting the student in

setting goals that promoted achievement.

Polling Students

Covert (2008) and Ellucian (2018) stated colleges and universities should also

poll students to help them take action at the earliest opportunity. Through polling, it is

possible to ascertain what could motivate college students to remain in school. According

to Slattery and Carlson (2005) and Stinebrickner and Stinebrickner (2008), the polls can

be conducted in the form of surveys using questionnaires and interviews in which

students are required to state factors that might motivate them to drop out of college.

Focus on Building Communities

Community refers to a group of people sharing not only personal improvement

but also continued learning. Building such communities can help students to understand

the value of their college education and to refrain from negative thoughts that threaten

their college life. Placing the focus on building the community brings the students

together and encourages them to continue with their learning. Creating a community in

and out of the classroom is an effective method of building a network for the student,

which reduces the feelings of isolation (Aronson, 2008). A sense of community is also

necessary for supporting healthy study habits and admirable academic excellence.

Researchers have shown that students who perform well are more likely to remain in

college compared to those with low academic performance. Woods-Warrior (2014) found

university students who participate in mentorship relationships in the context of learning communities were likely to take part in co-curricular and extracurricular activities, which helped in improving chances of success

Miller and Barnes (2015) and Laskey and Hetzel (2011) also suggested that integrating communities of learning, consisting of faculty members and students, was necessary for bridging the social-academic success and enhancing student retention (Unrau et al., 2012). More focus should be given to freshman students, as they are at a higher risk of dropping out. To build a community, it is imperative to bring together people sharing common ideas and ideals that can help support students' retention rates. Factually, communities that are impactful are known to add value when they provide a sense of camaraderie, support members, make strategic connections, and act as a source of advice that college students can apply to their own lives to bring about positive change (Bettinger et al., 2013). For college students with incarcerated parents, such a community could help to reduce the feelings of loneliness and isolation, hence aiding in increased college retention (Aronson, 2008)

Despite the widespread concern about student retention, there are hopes in higher education. The colleges and universities that have focused on implementing well thought-out plans for student retention have reported success (Bettinger et al., 2013). For example, Trent University increased its first-year retention rate by 3.5% from 2007 to 2011 after the implementation of multiple student retention improvement strategies across the university (Hanover Research, 2014, p. 4). The plan included emphasizing learner-centered education (Miller & Barnes, 2015), enhancing student organizations and activities, redesigning bursary and scholarship programs, and promoting student support

programs (Swecker et al., 2013). Therefore, the institutions that seek to follow the same path can improve the rates of degree attainment and help in preparing students for satisfying and successful lives after their academic process.

Summary

In Chapter Two, I presented the relevant literature related to the topic of academic success among children with incarcerated parents. It was found that parental absence due to incarceration negatively affects children in various ways, one of which is the choice to drop out of school due to a lack of financial aid and support as well as increased feelings of stress and isolation. Universities, however, may implement various retention strategies in order to prevent dropout rates among students with parents who had been or are currently incarcerated. These strategies are designed to strengthen students' sense of community and well-being. In Chapter Three, I present the methodology that was chosen for the current study, including the research design and rationale, participant selection, and instrumentation.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Purpose

The purpose of this mixed-methods study was to explore the possible relationship between parental incarceration and the outcomes, frequency of participation, motivations, challenges, and supports of college students with incarcerated parents. I sought to discover the family background of the students with incarcerated parent/parents, such as one or two parent households, number of siblings, familial income during college/parental incarceration, educational background, collegiate life experiences, and the motivation behind attaining a collegiate degree. I utilized a questionnaire, grit survey, academic motivation assessment, focus group, and interview to gather the needed data. This information allowed me to identify the difference between graduates and non-graduates with incarcerated parents and what is needed to assist collegiate students experiencing incarceration to complete a bachelor's degree. The quantitative data were analyzed using binary logistic regression analyses. The qualitative data collected using open-ended questions and semi-structured interviews were coded and analyzed using thematic analysis. This information allowed me to identify the needs of collegiate students experiencing parental incarceration during their degree-seeking period. In this chapter, I present the methodology used to conduct the current study. In Chapter Four, I present the results obtained by utilizing the methodology described in this chapter.

Setting

The study was conducted at an unnamed academic institution with individuals pursuing a four-year degree program. The researcher utilized this setting to ensure that the participants would be likely to meet the criterion of having attended college. Potential

participants were also screened to ensure they met the criterion of having an incarcerated parent. To increase the likelihood of identifying this specific participant population, potential participants were informed of the purpose of this study and the selection criteria.

Research Design and Rationale

A mixed methods approach was selected for this study. The reason for the use of mixed methodology was that it allowed me to collect in-depth data using a qualitative approach (Berg, 2001; Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Denzin & Lincoln., 2018), while also examining numeric relationships through the use of quantitative approaches (Bryman, 2006). Mixed methods approaches are appropriate when one method alone would not be sufficient in answering the research question of interest (Bryman, 2006; Greene, 2007). In this study, both numeric relationships and in-depth understandings, from the participants' perspectives, were needed to answer the research questions, leading to the decision to utilize a mixed method approach.

In this study, a mixed methods approach was most appropriate as I aimed to explore the potential relationships between parental incarceration and the outcomes of frequency of participation, motivations, challenges, and supports of college students with incarcerated parents. In examining these potential relationships, I collected quantitative data to examine whether statistically significant relationships were present. As the factors of motivations, challenges, and supports were collected from the perspectives of study participants, a qualitative approach was appropriate for exploring the needs of collegiate students based on their responses to the open-ended questions.

Role of the Researcher

I was responsible for all aspects of the research, including participant recruitment and selection, data collection, and data analysis. Within the participant recruitment and selection process, I ensured that participants were appropriate for addressing the phenomenon of interest. Regarding data collection, I was also responsible for developing the survey, which was based on (a) demographic questions developed by me, (b) the Academic Motivation Scale (AMS-C 28), and (c) the 12-Item Grit Scale. I was also responsible for collecting the participant data from completed surveys and conducting semi-structured interviews using open-ended questions that I developed. The completed survey data were then downloaded for use in quantitative data analysis. I audio-recorded and transcribed the semi-structured interview data for use in qualitative analysis. I completed both the quantitative and qualitative data analyses.

Participant Selection

In selecting the sample of participants for this study, I utilized purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling is used by researchers to specifically select certain participants for the study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Patton, 2002). In this study, study participants were selected to explore the frequency of participation, motivations, challenges, and supports of college students with incarcerated parents. As this participant population was specific to a particular group of individuals, I selected individuals who were college students and had parents who were incarcerated for participation in this study. Based on the specific participant group for this study, the following criteria were established for selecting potential participants: (a) each participant was enrolled in

college and (b) all participants must have experienced the incarceration of at least one of their biological or adopted parents.

Instrumentation

Quantitative Component - Surveys

After receiving approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB), participants were asked to complete a survey, which consisted of closed-ended questions pertaining to the quantitative position of this study. As described above, the survey was conducted online and included (a) demographic questions developed by the researcher, (b) the Academic Motivation Scale (AMS-C 28), and (c) the 12-Item Grit Scale (Duckworth et al., 2007). The Academic Motivation Scale (AMS-C 28) and the 12-Item Grit Scale (Duckworth et al., 2007) were selected for use in this study because both scales were validated and utilized by other researchers. As validation and rigor of the scale were key in scale development (DeVellis, 2017), due to considerations of feasibility, I chose to utilize existing scales. Additionally, both scales were appropriate for administration to participants in the academic setting.

Qualitative Component - Interviews

For the qualitative portion of this study, open-ended questions were presented to study participants in addition to conducting semi-structured interviews. I developed both the survey questions and semi-structured interview protocol for this study. To ensure that each of the interviews conducted was consistent, all of the same questions were asked during each semi-structured interview. Each interview was audio-recorded for use in transcription. During the interview, I took notes to refer back to during data analysis. As

will be described further in the data analysis plan, NVivo was used to analyze the

transcribed interview data.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

To recruit potential study participants, I provided information about the study and

asked students whether they were interested in participating. Prior to participating in the

study, I ensured that the participants met the study population criteria. I collected both the

qualitative and quantitative data for this study. Prior to collecting data from a study

participant, informed consent was obtained, and the participant was reminded of the

purpose of the study and that their participation in the study was voluntary.

Quantitative Component

Participants who completed the online survey remained anonymous to protect

their privacy and confidentiality. Participants completed the survey online and I

downloaded the data to an Excel file for data cleaning and preparation for analysis. Data

analysis was conducted using SPSS and is described further in the data analysis plan.

Qualitative Component

An interview protocol was used for each semi-structured interview, which

included the use of an established questionnaire for each interview. Each interview lasted

approximately 60 to 90 minutes. Each interview was audio-recorded, and I took notes

throughout the interview session, using the questionnaire developed for the interview.

Following each interview, the audio recordings were transcribed, cleaned, and prepared

for data analysis. The plan for data analysis is described in the following section.

Methodology

The responses from participants who completed the online surveys were downloaded for data cleaning and analysis once all responses were received. Prior to data analysis, the data were reviewed to remove any personally identifiable information of the participants. As described above and as will be described further in the data analysis section, the data were then prepared for quantitative data analysis. For the qualitative portion of this study, the data from semi-structured interviews were utilized by audio-recording the sessions and transcribing the recordings for use in thematic data analysis. SPSS and NVivo were used to support the data analysis process for the quantitative and qualitative portions of this study, respectively.

The following research questions guided the study overall, and the qualitative analysis described above was conducted in alignment with these research questions.

RQ1: What motivates children of incarcerated parents to pursue four-year degrees?

RQ2: What prevents children of incarcerated parents who enroll in four-year degree programs from completing the degree?

RQ3: What do students of incarcerated parents identify as needs to have access to in order to complete a four-year degree or higher?

RQ4: How do support systems contribute to students', with incarcerated parents, attainment of a four-year degree or higher?

RQ5: How does college participation contribute to students', with incarcerated parents, attainment of a four-year degree or higher?

RQ6: How does grit level contribute to the students' attainment of a four-year degree or higher?

RQ7: What are identified as challenges of students with incarcerated parents?

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide the statistical analysis of the quantitative data. The results of the quantitative analysis allowed me to accept or reject these hypotheses, and these outcomes were used as evidence for addressing the above research questions.

Null Hypotheses

NH$_{1a}$: There is no difference in frequency of participation in extracurricular activities (e.g., sports, clubs, campus activities, intermural sports, organizations) between college graduates and non-graduates who are students with incarcerated parents.

NH$_{1b}$: There is no difference in academic achievement between college graduates and non-graduates who are students with incarcerated parents.

NH$_{1c}$: There is no difference in motivations between college graduates and non-graduates who are students with incarcerated parents.

NH$_{1d}$: There is no difference in support systems between college graduates and non-graduates who are students with incarcerated parents.

NH$_{1e}$: There is no difference in grit levels between college graduates and non-graduates who are students with incarcerated parents.

NH$_{1f}$: There is no difference in the percentage of first-generation college graduates and non-graduates who are students with incarcerated parents.

Limitations

The transferability or generalizability of the results obtained in the current study were limited as study participants were purposefully selected and thus a limited sample size was obtained for this study. The smaller sample size of 71 survey participants was particularly notable as a limitation for the quantitative portion of this study. Another limitation of this study is that the participants were selected from a specific geographic area, which means that generalizability or transferability to other populations may be limited. Additional research with a larger sample size would be needed in future studies to confirm the findings of this study.

Data Analysis Plan

Quantitative Component

After downloading the survey data obtained from a total of 71 participants, I began data cleaning within Excel. Data cleaning involved only including responses in which participants completed more than 50% of the items in the questionnaire. After data cleaning, the data were then analyzed using descriptive statistics and binary logistic regression analyses. Chi-Squared tests were also conducted to determine the significance of the model when testing the hypotheses. The descriptive statistics were used to present the frequencies and percentages corresponding with the categorical variables in the study. Binary regression analysis was selected for the statistical analyses, as the dependent variable of interest was binary. Prior to conducting the binary regression analyses, tests of assumptions were conducted to ensure that the basic assumptions for logistic regression analyses were met. The assumptions for logistic regression are independence of errors,

linearity in logit for continuous variables, no multicollinearity, and lack of influential

outliers (Stoltzfus, 2011).

Qualitative Component

For the qualitative component of this study, I analyzed data from the open-ended

questions presented in surveys and interviews. I then analyzed the responses of study

participants by coding and identifying themes in the data. NVivo software was used to

conduct a thematic content analysis of the data collected from the semi-structured

interviews. Thematic analysis was selected for analysis of the data collected in this study,

because it allowed for patterns or themes to be identified from the data (Braun & Clarke,

2006; Terry et al., 2017). Moreover, qualitative thematic analysis was determined to be

appropriate for organizing and developing meaning from the themes within the data.

Thematic analysis through the use of NVivo software was selected for this study to

increase the objectivity of the analysis of the results, rather than relying on my own

identification of themes in the data, which could lead to bias in data analysis. The use of

software and objective analysis of themes also helped to increase the trustworthiness of

the data and increase the credibility of the analysis process.

The six steps for thematic analysis presented by Braun and Clarke (2006) were

utilized for data analysis. The first step is to become familiar with the data (Braun &

Clarke, 2006; Maguire & Delahunt, 2017; Terry et al., 2017). In this study, I became

familiar with the transcribed data obtained from the semi-structured interviews and open-

ended questions. To become familiar with this data, I read and re-read the material. In the

second step, after reading the transcribed data, I generated initial codes from the data

through the use of initial coding. Developing the initial codes requires me to organize the

data in a meaningful and systematic way (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). NVivo was used to support the coding and identification of themes systematically and objectively. In step three, I searched for themes in the data based on these initial codes. Themes are developed based on codes that fit together within a theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). The thematic coding in this study was based on the research questions presented. Based on the research questions, after conducting initial coding, I conducted axial coding for theme development.

The fourth step was to review themes to determine whether they were appropriate and reflective of the data. In step five of thematic analysis, the themes were clarified and defined. In other words, I defined the themes and how the themes relate to one another (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Maguire & Delahunt, 2017; Terry et al., 2017). Finally, in step six, I wrote up the results of the analysis and presented the identified themes and codes used in the analysis. The write-up of the data analysis was used to develop Chapters Four and Five. After step six of this thematic analysis, the data analysis process was completed, and the results from identified themes were discussed and compared with the existing literature.

Ethical Procedures

Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was obtained prior to conducting this study. In addition to obtaining IRB approval, I obtained informed consent from each participant before they completed the online survey for both the qualitative and quantitative portions of this study. In the informed consent, participants were informed that they would be able to discontinue participation in the study for any reason at any time. To ensure participant privacy and confidentiality, identifiable participant

information, such as participant names, were not collected. As demographic information

was collected as part of this study, I ensured participant privacy through the use of

pseudonyms (e.g., Participant 1, Participant 2, Participant 3) corresponding with

participant responses. To my knowledge, other than obtaining informed consent from

each study participant and IRB approval, no additional permissions needed to be

obtained.

Informed consent was obtained from each study participant before they

participated in the study. Participants were informed and reminded during the study that

their participation was voluntary and that they may choose to exit the study at any time

for any reason. Participants were informed that all data pertaining to the current study

were kept in a locked filing cabinet accessible only to the researcher for paper

documents. All electronic data were kept in a password-protected file on my computer.

No personally identifiable information was used in the publication or description of the

study results or analysis. All of the data pertaining to this proposed study, except for the

published data and the analysis results, will be destroyed after seven years.

Summary

In this chapter, the methodology for this mixed methods study was presented. The

purpose of this mixed-methods study was to explore the possible relationship between

parental incarceration and the outcomes, frequency of participation, motivations,

challenges, and supports of college students with incarcerated parents. The data obtained

from survey responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics and binary logistic

regression analysis for the quantitative portion of this study. For the qualitative portion of

this study, the responses from interviews with study participants were analyzed using

thematic analysis, with the coding based on the research questions presented in this study. The use of thematic analysis allowed me to describe, in-depth, the participation, motivations, challenges, and supports of college students with incarcerated parents as expressed by the students. The results obtained from the data collection portion of this study are described in Chapter Four.

Chapter Four: Results

Overview

The purpose of this mixed-methods study was to explore the possible relationship between parental incarceration and the outcomes, frequency of participation, motivations, challenges, and supports of college students with incarcerated parents. I sought to discover the family background of the students with incarcerated parent/parents, such as one or two parent/guardian household, number of siblings, familial income during college/parental incarceration, educational background, collegiate life experiences, and the motivation behind attaining a collegiate degree. I used a questionnaire, grit survey, academic motivation assessment, focus group, and interview to gather the needed data. This information assisted me in identifying the difference between graduates and non-graduates with incarcerated parents and what is needed to assist collegiate students experiencing incarceration to complete a four-year degree. The quantitative data were analyzed using binary logistic regression analyses, and the qualitative data were coded for themes. This information allowed me to identify the needs of collegiate students experiencing parental incarceration during their degree-seeking period. Meanwhile, the open-ended questions and answers were thematically analyzed and are presented in the qualitative section of this chapter.

Quantitative Component

A total of 71 participants participated in the survey. After data cleaning, however, only 58 participants completed more than 50% of the items in the questionnaire. Thus, only 58 participants were included in the data analyses. The 58 participants provided responses on variables of the type of college exit (i.e., Withdrawn or Completed), parent

incarcerated (father, mother, or both), parents' four-year degree status (yes or no), importance of education as emphasized by the incarcerated parent, frequency of participation in extracurricular activities, academic achievement (i.e., GPA), level of motivation, and level of grit. Data were analyzed using binary logistic regression to address the following questions:

Table 2

Quantitative Research Questions

1. Does the parent incarcerated predict the likelihood of graduating?

2. Does the incarcerated parents' four-year degree status predict the likelihood of graduating?

3. Does the importance of education emphasized by the incarcerated parent predict the likelihood of graduating?

4. Does first generation status predict the likelihood of graduating?

5. Does the frequency of participation in extracurricular activities predict the likelihood of graduating?

6. Does academic achievement predict the likelihood of graduating?

7. Does level of motivation predict the likelihood of graduating?

8. Does the level of grit predict the likelihood of graduating?

9. Taken together, does the parent incarcerated, incarcerated parents' four-year degree status, educational importance emphasized by incarcerated parents, first generation status, frequency of participation in extracurricular activities, academic achievement, level of motivation, and level of grit predict the likelihood of graduating?

Descriptive Statistics

Frequencies and percentages were used to present the categorical variables in the study. The dependent variable in the study was the type of college exit. There were 28 participants who withdrew from college (48.3%), while 30 participants completed college (51.7%). The majority of the participants' fathers were incarcerated ($n = 38$, 65.5%) while there were eight participants, each with mothers and both their parents incarcerated (13.8%). There were also four participants who did not respond to this item (6.9%). For the parent's four-year degree status, a total of 29 participants completed a four-year degree (50.0%), while 25 had not completed a four-year degree (43.1%). The importance of education was analyzed using five scale responses from not at all important to extremely important. A total of 26 participants responded extremely important (44.8%), while 14 responded very important (24.1%). For the frequency in extracurricular activities, 20 participants spent 0 to 5 hours (34.5%), 17 participants spent 5 to 10 hours (29.3%), and 14 participants spent more than 10 hours per week in extracurricular activities (24.1%).

Table 3

Frequencies and Percentages of Variable Responses (N=58)

		Frequency	Percent
Type of College Exit	Withdrawn	28	48.3
	Completed	30	51.7
	Total	58	100.0
Parent Incarcerated	Father	38	65.5
	Mother	8	13.8

	Both	8	13.8
	Total	54	93.1
Missing	System	4	6.9
Total		58	100.0
Parent's four-year	No	25	43.1
Degree Status	Yes	29	50.0
	Total	54	93.1
Missing	System	4	6.9
Total		58	100.0
Importance of	Not at all important	9	15.5
Education	Slightly important	2	3.4
	Moderately important	4	6.9
	Very important	14	24.1
	Extremely important	26	44.8
	Total	55	94.8
Missing	System	3	5.2
Total		58	100.0
Frequency in	0-5 hours per week	20	34.5
extracurricular	5-10 hours per week	17	29.3
activities	10-20 hours per week	8	13.8
	20 or more hours per week	6	10.3
	Total	51	87.9

Missing	System	7	12.1
Total		58	100.0

Some participants did not provide responses to the GPA, motivation survey, and grit survey. The descriptive statistics of data gathered are presented in Table 4. Based on the data gathered, 40 participants provided their GPAs. The mean GPA of participants was at 2.8055 (SD = 1.004). Further, 50 participants responded to the motivation and the grit survey items. The responses of participants on the items were averaged to calculate the motivation and the grit scores. The mean motivation score was at 4.2142 (SD = 1.251) while the mean grit score was at 3.5619 (SD = .636).

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics of Continuous Variables (N = 58)

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
GPA	40	0.25	5.00	2.8055	1.00362
Motivation	50	1.68	6.18	4.2142	1.25064
Grit	50	2.36	5.00	3.5619	0.63647

Data Analyses

To test the hypotheses posed in the study, binary logistic regression analyses were conducted. Binary logistics regression analyses were conducted because the dependent variable was binary in nature. The dependent variable had values of 0 for withdrawn and 1 for completed.

H0₁: There is no relationship between college graduates and non-graduates, who

are students with incarcerated parents, and the parent incarcerated.

The results of the binary logistic regression to test null hypothesis 1 is presented

in Table 5. The parent incarcerated variable was inputted as a categorical variable. None

of the parent incarcerated categories were significant in predicting whether the participant

withdrew or completed their college degree (p-values > .05). The results of the Chi-

Square analysis of the model also indicated that the model was not significant in

predicting the type of college exit (Chi-Square = 5.989, p-value = .050). Therefore, there

was insufficient evidence to reject null hypothesis 1 which stated that there is no

relationship between college graduates and non-graduates, who are students with

incarcerated parents, and the parent incarcerated.

Table 5

Binary Logistic Regression of Parent Incarcerated

		B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Step 1[a]	Parent Incarcerated			4.095	2	0.129	
	Parent Incarcerated (1)	2.157	1.118	3.725	1	0.054	8.647
	Parent Incarcerated (2)	2.457	1.295	3.601	1	0.058	11.667
	Constant	-1.946	1.069	3.313	1	0.069	0.143

a. Variable(s) entered on step 1: Parent Incarcerated. Chi-Square = 5.989, p = .050

H0₂: There is no relationship between college graduates and non-graduates, who

are students with incarcerated parents, and the incarcerated parents' four-year

degree status.

The results of the binary logistic regression to test null hypothesis 2 is presented

in Table 6. The parents' four-year degree status variable was inputted as a categorical

variable. The 'yes' category for the parents' four-year degree status was determined as a

significant predictor of the type of college exit (B = -1.396, p = .016). The negative

coefficient of B indicated that participants whose parents did not complete a four-year

degree had completed their own college degrees. The results of the Chi-Square analysis

of the model also indicated that the model was significant in predicting the type of

college exit (Chi-Square = 6.154, p-value = .013). Therefore, there was sufficient

evidence to reject null hypothesis 2 which stated that there is no relationship between

college graduates and non-graduates, who are students with incarcerated parents, and the

incarcerated parents' four-year degree status.

Table 6

Binary Logistic Regression of Parents' Four-Year Degree Status

		B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Step 1[a]	Parent's four-year Degree Status (1)	-1.396	0.580	5.789	1	0.016	0.248
	Constant	0.642	0.391	2.699	1	0.100	1.900

a. Variable(s) entered on step 1: Parent's four-year Degree Status. Chi-Square = 6.154, p

= .013

H0₃: There is no relationship between college graduates and non-graduates, who

are students with incarcerated parents, and the incarcerated parents' emphasis on

the importance of education.

The results of the binary logistic regression for the parents' emphasis on the importance of education is presented in Table 7. The variable importance of education was measured using a scale of 0 to 4 and was also considered as a categorical variable in the binary logistic regression. The results of the analysis determined that the participants who responded 'slightly important' on the item were less likely to have completed a college degree (B = -2.064, p-value = .023). The results of the Chi-Square analysis of the model also indicated that the model was significant in predicting the type of college exit (Chi-Square = 10.977, p-value = .027). Therefore, there was sufficient evidence to reject null hypothesis 3 which stated that there is no relationship between college graduates and non-graduates, who are students with incarcerated parents, and the incarcerated parents' emphasis on the importance of education.

Table 7

Binary Logistic Regression of Parents' Emphasis on the Importance of Education

		B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Step	Importance of Education			7.225	4	0.124	
1[a]	Importance of Education (1)	-2.064	0.907	5.172	1	0.023	0.127
	Importance of Education (2)	-22.014	28420.722	0.000	1	0.999	0.000
	Importance of Education (3)	-1.910	1.230	2.409	1	0.121	0.148
	Importance of Education (4)	-1.099	0.687	2.556	1	0.110	0.333
	Constant	0.811	0.425	3.642	1	0.056	2.250

a. Variable(s) entered on step 1: Importance of Education. Chi-Square = 10.977, p = .027

H0₄: There is no relationship between college graduates and non-graduates, who are students with incarcerated parents, and first-generation status.

Null hypothesis 4 focused on the first-generation status of participants. The data collected for the study did not, however, include responses on whether the participants were first in their families to seek a four-year degree. Therefore, there was insufficient data to test null hypothesis 4.

H0₅: There is no relationship between college graduates and non-graduates, who are students with incarcerated parents, and the frequency of participation in extracurricular activities (e.g., team sports, clubs, campus activities, intermural sports, organizations).

The results of the binary logistic regression for the frequency in extracurricular activities is presented in Table 8. The variable frequency in extracurricular activities was measured using a scale of 1 to 4 and was also considered as a categorical variable in the binary logistic regression. The results of the analysis determined that the variable frequency in extracurricular activities did not significantly predict the type of college exit of participants (p-value > .05). The results of the Chi-Square analysis of the model also indicated that the model was not significant in predicting the type of college exit (Chi-Square = 1.524, p-value = .677). Therefore, there was insufficient evidence to reject null hypothesis 5 which stated that there is no relationship between college graduates and non-graduates, who are students with incarcerated parents, and the frequency of participation in extracurricular activities (e.g., team sports, clubs, campus activities, intermural sports, organizations).

Table 8

Binary Logistic Regression of Frequency in Extracurricular Activities

		B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Step 1[a]	Frequency in extracurricular activities			1.466	3	0.690	
	Frequency in extracurricular activities (1)	-1.099	0.979	1.259	1	0.262	0.333
	Frequency in extracurricular activities (2)	-0.575	0.993	0.336	1	0.562	0.563
	Frequency in extracurricular activities (3)	-0.693	1.118	0.384	1	0.535	0.500
	Constant	0.693	0.866	0.641	1	0.423	2.000

a. Variable(s) entered on step 1: Frequency in extracurricular activities. Chi-Square = 1.524, p = .677

H0₆: There is no relationship between college graduates and non-graduates, who are students with incarcerated parents, and academic achievement.

A binary logistic regression was also conducted to determine whether academic achievement predicted the type of college exit among participants. The academic achievement of participants was measured using their GPAs. Based on the results of the binary logistic regression, GPA was a significant predictor of the type of college exit (B = 1.562, p-value = .006). The results determined that a higher GPA resulted in completion of college degrees. The Chi-Square analysis determined that the model was also

significant in predicting the type of college exit (Chi-Square = 12.752, $p < .01$).

Therefore, there was sufficient evidence to reject null hypothesis 6 which stated that there

is no relationship between college graduates and non-graduates, who are students with

incarcerated parents, and academic achievement.

Table 9

Binary Logistic Regression of Academic Achievement

		B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Step	GPA	1.562	0.563	7.707	1	0.006	4.768
1^a	Constant	-4.631	1.726	7.202	1	0.007	0.010

a. Variable(s) entered on step 1: GPA. Chi-Square = 12.752, $p < .01$

H07: There is no relationship between college graduates and non-graduates, who

are students with incarcerated parents, and level of motivation.

A binary logistic regression was also conducted to determine whether motivation

predicts the type of college exit among participants. The motivation of participants was

measured using the average of their responses in the motivation questionnaire. Based on

the results of the binary logistic regression, motivation was a significant predictor of the

type of college exit (B = 0.739, *p*-value = .008). The results determined that a higher

motivation resulted in degree completion. The Chi-Square analysis determined that the

model was also significant in predicting the type of college exit (Chi-Square = 8.497, $p <$

.01). Therefore, there was sufficient evidence to reject null hypothesis 7 which stated that

there is no relationship between college graduates and non-graduates, who are students

with incarcerated parents, and level of motivation.

Table 10

Binary Logistic Regression of Motivation

		B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Step	Motivation	0.739	0.280	6.947	1	0.008	2.093
1[a]	Constant	-3.026	1.217	6.180	1	0.013	0.048

a. Variable(s) entered on step 1: Motivation. Chi-Square = 8.497, *p* = .004

H0₈: There is no relationship between college graduates and non-graduates, who are students with incarcerated parents, and level of grit.

A binary logistic regression was also conducted to determine whether grit predicts the type of college exit among participants. The grit of participants was measured using the average of their responses in the grit questionnaire. Based on the results of the binary logistic regression, grit was a significant predictor of the type of college exit (B = 1.196, *p*-value = .020). The results determined that higher grit resulted in completed college degrees. The Chi-Square analysis determined that the model was also significant in predicting the type of college exit (Chi-Square = 6.185, *p* = .013). Therefore, there was sufficient evidence to reject null hypothesis 8 which stated that there is no relationship between college graduates and non-graduates, who are students with incarcerated parents, and level of grit.

Table 11

Binary Logistic Regression of Grit

		B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Step	Grit	1.196	0.513	5.431	1	0.020	3.308
1[a]	Constant	-4.162	1.834	5.148	1	0.023	0.016

a. Variable(s) entered on step 1: Grit. Chi-Square = 6.185, $p = .013$

H0$_9$: Taken together, there is no relationship between college graduates and non-graduates, who are students with incarcerated parents, and the parent incarcerated, incarcerated parents' four-year degree status, educational importance emphasized by incarcerated parents, first generation status, the frequency of participation in extracurricular activities, academic achievement, level of motivation, and level of grit.

Considering all the predictor variables in one model, the results of the analysis determined that none of the predictors were significant in predicting the type of college exit (p-values > .05). The model, however, was determined as significant (Chi-Square = 26.125, p-value = .016). The results showed that there was insufficient evidence to reject null hypothesis 9 which stated that, taken together, there is no relationship between college graduates and non-graduates, who are students with incarcerated parents, and the parent incarcerated, incarcerated parents' four-year degree status, educational importance emphasized by incarcerated parents, first generation status, the frequency of participation in extracurricular activities, academic achievement, level of motivation, and level of grit.

Table 12

Binary Logistic Regression of All Predictors

		B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Ste	Parent Incarcerated			3.115	2	0.211	
p 1[a]	Parent Incarcerated (1)	3.7 36	2.433	2.357	1	0.125	41.923
	Parent Incarcerated (2)	7.7 26	4.684	2.720	1	0.099	2265.85 2
	Parent's four-year Degree Status (1)	0.3 18	1.643	0.037	1	0.847	1.374
	Importance of Education			1.898	4	0.755	
	Importance of Education (1)	- 1.6 58	2.554	0.421	1	0.516	0.191
	Importance of Education (2)	- 24. 19 0	40192.970	0.000	1	1.000	0.000
	Importance of Education (3)	2.7 62	3.047	0.822	1	0.365	15.832
	Importance of Education (4)	- 1.3 32	1.760	0.573	1	0.449	0.264

Frequency in extracurricular activities			1.524	3	0.677	
Frequency in extracurricular activities (1)	-2.551	2.405	1.126	1	0.289	0.078
Frequency in extracurricular activities (2)	-3.738	3.158	1.401	1	0.237	0.024
Frequency in extracurricular activities (3)	-5.285	5.041	1.099	1	0.294	0.005
GPA	1.198	1.289	0.864	1	0.353	3.314
Motivation	1.693	1.063	2.535	1	0.111	5.435
Grit	1.024	1.317	0.605	1	0.437	2.784
Constant	-14.967	7.103	4.440	1	0.035	0.000

Chi-Square = 26.125, p = .016

Quantitative Summary

The data from 58 participants who completed the survey questionnaire were used to test the null hypotheses posed in the study. Among all the variables, the results of the binary logistic regression determined that parents' four-year degree, importance of education, GPA, motivation, and grit are significant predictors of the type of college exit. The results determined that participants with parents who did not complete a four-year degree and had a higher GPA, higher motivation, and higher grit scores had completed their college degrees.

Qualitative Component

A total of 46 participants provided answers to the open-ended questions of the survey. From the 46 participants, 21 completed their college and 25 withdrew from their studies. Participants were under various economic circumstances in college, as the majority needed to work in order to support themselves and their families. Thirty-two of the participants' fathers were incarcerated, seven of the participants' mothers were incarcerated, and seven had both parents incarcerated when they were in college. Finally, the educational attainment of their parents varied, and the majority believed that their parents found education to be important. Table 13 contains the breakdown of the participants' backgrounds to better understand their responses, perceptions, and experiences presented in the next sections.

Table 13

Breakdown of the Participants' Demographics

Participant Number	Type of College Exit	Economic Circumstances During Enrollment in College	Incarcerated Parent During College	Parents' Attainment of a four-year Degree	Importance of Education to Parents
Participant 1	Completed	Middle Class	Father	Mother	Extremely important
Participant 2	Withdrawn	Working Class	Father	Neither mother nor father	Very important
Participant 3	Completed	Supported by Grandmother	Father	Mother	Extremely important
Participant 4	Withdrawn	Poor	Father	Neither mother nor father	Very important
Participant 5	Withdrawn	Working Class	Father	Neither mother nor father	Extremely important
Participant 6	Completed	Working Class	Father	Father	Extremely important
Participant 7	Completed	Middle Class	Father	Mother	Extremely important
Participant 8	Completed	Working Class	Mother	Both mother and father	Extremely important
Participant 9	Completed	Working Class	Father	Neither mother nor father	Very important
Participant 10	Completed	Working Class	Mother	Neither mother nor father	Extremely important
Participant 11	Completed	Working Class	Father	Neither mother nor father	Very important
Participant 12	Completed	Working Class	Father	Neither mother nor father	Not at all important
Participant 13	Withdrawn	Single Working Father	Mother	Both mother and father	Extremely important
Participant 14	Withdrawn	Working Alone	Father	Neither mother nor father	Very important

Participant 15	Completed	Poor Conditions at Home	Father	Mother	Extremely important
Participant 16	Completed	Supported by Working Mother	Father	Neither mother nor father	Extremely important
Participant 17	Completed	Not Good	Father	Mother	Extremely important
Participant 18	Completed	NA	Father	Mother	Extremely important
Participant 19	Completed	Middle Class	Father	Both mother and father	Extremely important
Participant 20	Completed	NA	Father	Both mother and father	Very important
Participant 21	Withdrawn	Supported by Working Mother	Father	Neither mother nor father	Extremely important
Participant 22	Withdrawn	Working Class	Both		Not at all important
Participant 23	Completed	Supported by Working Mother	Father	Neither mother nor father	Moderately important
Participant 24	Completed	No Support/ Was in Poverty	Mother	Neither mother nor father	Not at all important
Participant 25	Withdrawn	Mom was on Disability and Welfare	Father	Neither mother nor father	Not at all important
Participant 26	Withdrawn	One Working Adult	Father	Both mother and father	Very important
Participant 27	Completed	Working Class Parents	Mother	Both mother and father	Extremely important
Participant 28	Completed	Working Class	Father	Mother	Very important
Participant 29	Withdrawn	Supported by Working Mother	Father	Neither mother nor father	Extremely important
Participant 30	Completed	Poor	Both	Both mother and father	Extremely important
Participant 31	Completed	Part-time Jobs	Father	Neither mother nor father	Extremely important
Participant 32	Withdrawn	Poor	Father	Father	Very important

Participant 33	Withdrawn	Working Class Parents	Both	Neither mother nor father	Not at all important
Participant 34	Withdrawn	Middle to Lower Class	Mother	Neither mother nor father	Slightly important
Participant 35	Withdrawn	Middle Class	Father	Father	Extremely important
Participant 36	Withdrawn	Poor	Father	Neither mother nor father	Moderately important
Participant 37	Withdrawn	Poor	Father	Neither mother nor father	Not at all important
Participant 38	Withdrawn	Upper Class	Mother	Both mother and father	Extremely important
Participant 39	Withdrawn	Working Class	Both	Neither mother nor father	Moderately important
Participant 40	Withdrawn	Upper Class	Father	Both mother and father	Extremely important
Participant 41	Withdrawn	Middle Class	Both	Neither mother nor father	Very important
Participant 42	Withdrawn	Working Class	Father	Neither mother nor father	Very important
Participant 43	Withdrawn	Upper Class	Father	Both mother and father	Extremely important
Participant 44	Withdrawn	Poor	Father	Mother	Very important
Participant 45	Withdrawn	Poor	Both	Neither mother nor father	Not at all important
Participant 46	Withdrawn	Poor	Both	Neither mother nor father	Not at all important

Qualitative Data Analysis

The open-ended questions of the survey were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis approach. The approach permitted me to search for and uncover the most common and meaningful themes across the participants' responses. Following

the six steps of the thematic analysis method, I addressed all seven research questions

through the 40 themes generated from the analysis. It must be noted that the themes with

the greatest number of references or the most significant findings per research question

were tagged as the major themes of the study. Meanwhile, following the major themes

were the minor themes, which were other important themes with fewer references than

the major themes. Lastly, subthemes were also added as deemed needed to provide

additional information and examples for the parent themes. In the next section, I discuss

and present the themes with 21% and above. Themes with below 20% of references are

found in the table of the overall themes and may need further research to solidify the

trustworthiness of the data given the limited number of references and participants coded

under them. Subsequently, Table 14 contains the breakdown of the number of study

themes per research question.

Table 14

Breakdown of the Number of Study Themes

Research Questions	Major Themes	Minor Themes	Subthemes	Total
RQ1. What motivates children of incarcerated parents to pursue four- year degrees?	1	4	2	7
RQ2. What prevents children of incarcerated parents that enroll in four- year degree programs from completing the degree?	1	4	6	11

RQ3. What do students of incarcerated parents identify as needs to have access to in order to complete a four-year degree or higher?	1	5	5	11
RQ4. How do support systems contribute to students with incarcerated parents' attainment of a four-year degree or higher?	1	1	0	2
RQ5. How does college participation contribute to students with incarcerated parents' attainment of a four-year degree or higher?	1	1	1	3
RQ6. How does grit level contribute to the student's attainment of a four-year degree or higher?	0	6	0	6
RQ7. What are identified as challenges of students with incarcerated parents?	(Same as RQ2)	(Same as RQ2)	(Same as RQ2)	-
Total	5	21	14	40

Qualitative Results

This section of the study contains the qualitative results of the research. Using the thematic analysis method, I successfully addressed the seven qualitative research questions of the study. A total of 40 themes were generated with the following number of

themes per research question: RQ1 had seven underlying themes, RQ2 and RQ7 had 11

underlying themes, RQ3 also had 11 underlying themes, RQ4 only had two underlying

themes, RQ5 had three underlying themes, and RQ6 had six underlying themes. Table 15

contains the breakdown of the actual study themes formed from the qualitative

component of the survey with the research respondents.

Table 15

Breakdown of the Number of Study Themes

Research Questions	Themes	Number of References	Percentage of References
RQ1. What motivates children of incarcerated parents to pursue four- year degrees?	Having the desire to have a better future *Seeing education as the pathway to a good life and career* *Having the capacity to take care of family in the future*	35	76%
	Being influenced by family members and relatives	11	24%
	Improving one's knowledge and abilities	4	9%
	Having the desire to pursue their passion	3	7%
	Believing that education could keep them away from trouble	2	4%
RQ2. What prevents children of incarcerated parents that enroll in four-year degree programs from completing the degree?	Experiencing a lack of support *Being faced with financial difficulties* *Being faced with the lack of physical support* *Being faced with the lack of emotional support*	32	70%
	Needing to balance time and resources between personal, professional, and family responsibilities	10	22%

	Experiencing emotional distress due to various life challenges *Feeling depressed and alone* *Choosing to set boundaries* *Feeling incomplete*	9	20%
	Experiencing stigma for having an incarcerated parent	7	15%
RQ3. What do students of incarcerated parents identify as needs to have access to in order to complete a four-year degree or higher?	No Answer	1	2%
	Needing increased support and assistance programs *Provision of financial assistance through grants, scholarships, flexible jobs, etc.* *Availability of mentors with the same experiences* *Availability of experienced counselors* *Offering partnership programs to connect students and parents* *Availability of mental health services*	34	74%
	Having access to relevant knowledge and information in successfully completing their studies	5	11%
	Having parents to support them achieve their dreams	4	9%
	No Answer	3	7%
	Offering food, housing, or transportation assistance	2	4%
	Needing more awareness on the difficulties of students with incarcerated parents	1	2%
RQ4. How do support systems contribute to students with incarcerated parents' attainment	Receiving strength and encouragement from family members, friends, and mentors to keep them in school amidst financial and emotional struggles	43	93%

of a four-year degree or higher?			
	Admitting the lack of support during college	4	9%
RQ5. How does college participation contribute to students with incarcerated parents' attainment of a four-year degree or higher?	Joining sporting teams, school, and other organizations	34	74%
	No extra programs and activities during college due to the lack of time *Lack of time to join due to work and school requirements*	8	17%
RQ6. How does grit level contribute to the student's attainment of a four-year degree or higher?	Not Applicable	20	43%
RQ7. What are identified as challenges of students with incarcerated parents?	Needing to withdraw from college due to family and work responsibilities	16	35%
	Withdrawing from college due to depression	4	9%
	Withdrawing from school due to the lack of motivation, stemming from parents' incarceration	4	9%
	Withdrawing from college due to grades and delays	2	4%
	Still persevering despite the lack of support	2	4%
	(Same as RQ2)	(Same as RQ2)	(Same as RQ2)

*Note: *Subtheme/s*

Research Question 1. What Motivates Children of Incarcerated Parents to Pursue four-year Degrees? The first research question asked about the motivations of

the children of incarcerated parents in pursuing their four-year degrees. From the responses of the 46 participants who addressed the open-ended questions of the survey, the majority (76%) reported that their desire for a better future was their main reason for working hard to complete their degrees. These participants saw education as a tool that could lead them to having a good life and career. Also, they wanted to study to care for their families. Meanwhile, 24% of the participants indicated that they pursued their education as they were influenced by their family members and relatives. Three other minor themes emerged but recorded less than 20% of the references; thus, these themes may require further research to improve their trustworthiness. A limited number of participants pointed out their sources of motivation as improving one's knowledge and abilities (9%), having the desire to pursue their passion (7%), and believing that education could keep them away from trouble (4%).

Major Theme 1: Having the Desire to Have a Better Future. The first major theme of the study discussed the participants' desire to have a better future which they believed could be attained by completing their studies. As Participant 12 commented, "To break the curse and evolve as a person." For Participant 35, education is the key "To achieve my dreams." Similarly, Participant 46 added that, "I thought it would give me a different life."

Subtheme 1: Seeing education as the pathway to a good life and career. The first subtheme under the first major theme reported how participants viewed education as the pathway to having a good life and profession in the future. These participants believed that by working hard to obtain a diploma, they would have more opportunities to better-paying jobs which could also lead to their ability to provide for themselves and their

families. According to Participant 2, pursuing studies was crucial as they wanted to achieve many things in life. At the same time, they wanted to be a good role model to their child, to show them that education is the key to success. The participant narrated,

> I thought going to college with what I was supposed to do after High School. Seeing my brother go to school and being successful and how proud my mother was of him made me want to do the same. Eventually I went to school because I wanted to provide a better life for my own child and to show him that he can be successful without being in entertainment.

Furthermore, Participant 10 commented how school became their 'outlet' amidst the many life struggles and issues. They also understood that education is a necessity to succeed in life, stating, "School has always been an outlet for me. I also understood that the advancement in my education would give more doors/ opportunity for me to succeed." Participant 11 shared their passion for learning, adding that, at the same time, education could help him make more money in the future. The participant answered, "I love to learn and felt if I was more educated, I could make more money." Consequently, Participant 21 emphasized that education could help them get out of poverty, saying, "Poverty, I believe that only knowledge can change fate." Participant 28 added that education could also be related to financial security, sharing, "I wanted to pursue a college degree because I felt at the time it represented financial security." Lastly, Participant 29 pursued their studies as they wanted to earn more, saying, "[I] Want a better job and earn more money."

Subtheme 2: Having the capacity to take care of family in the future. The second subtheme that followed was interrelated to the first theme where the participant

noted that education could lead to better work and financial security. As a result, they also shared how their education and work would provide them with the resources and capacity to take care of their family members. Participant 16 answered that, "I need to have job skills to make better money to take care of my family." Participant 23 explained how education is the first resource needed to have a brighter future for them and their family, saying: "I wanted to pursue my dream course, earn a degree, then look for a better paying job so that I could get my mom a house, a place she can call her own home and supporting my younger sibling." For Participant 26, the desire to succeed is always there, which they want to share with their family. The participant commented, "The desire to succeed and make a better life for myself and my family." Meanwhile, Participant 30 stated, "I want to live a better life for my parents and younger brother in the future. On the other hand, I also hope to improve my current living condition." Finally, Participant 34 narrated the following: "So that after I graduated, I could look for a well-paying job and support my younger brother and see him to school. I also wanted a better life than the one my mom provided for me."

Minor Theme 1: Being influenced by family members and relatives. The first minor theme that followed was the influence of family members and relatives on the lives and decisions of the students in pursuing their studies. The stories of these participants' parents and relatives encouraged them to continue their education despite the many challenges they faced. As Participant 2 shared, they became inspired seeing their mother's delight when their brother finished school. The participant answered, "Seeing my brother go to school and being successful and how proud my mother was of him made me want to do the same." Similarly, Participant 4 also pursued their education for

their mother, saying, "My mom wanted me to. She felt like it would keep me out of trouble and help me to make a decent living." For Participant 7, their grandmother was a big influence in their decision as well as their mother's educational success. The participant shared, "My great grandmother always talked about me growing up and going to college. My mother had a master's degree." Finally, Participant 8 highlighted the value of education in their family. The participant commented, "Both my mother and father held college degrees. education is very important my family."

Research Question 2. What Prevents Children of Incarcerated Parents who Enroll in four-year Degree Programs from Completing the Degree? And Research Question 7. What are Identified as Challenges of Students with Incarcerated Parents? The second and seventh research questions of the study focused on the barriers and challenges faced by the children of incarcerated parents as they pursued their four-year degree programs as well as life in general. The majority (70%) of the participants emphasized the lack of support in terms of their financial, physical, and emotional needs. Meanwhile, another 22% of the participants indicated the difficulty of balancing their time and other resources between their personal, family, work, and academic needs. The other themes that require further research were the participants' admission that they encountered emotional distress due to various life challenges such as feeling depressed and alone, choosing to set boundaries, and feeling incomplete (20%). Fifteen-percent of the sample also experienced a stigma for having an incarcerated parent. Lastly, 2% failed to provide an answer relating to the trials they encountered as they worked to complete their education.

Major Theme 2: Experiencing a Lack of Support. The second major theme of the study discussed the lack of financial, physical, and emotional support as the participants struggled and fought to survive the daily challenges while they were in the process of obtaining their 4-degrees. For 70% of the participants, it was extremely hard to pursue their education with the inadequate support that they had. As Participant 34 commented, they had a "Lack of enough support system." Meanwhile, other participants were specific on the types of support that they needed as they worked to complete their degrees.

Subtheme 1: Being Faced with Financial Difficulties. The first subtheme that emerged was the experience of being faced with financial burden and difficulties as the students worked and searched for additional resources for their education. According to Participant 1, it was hard for him to pursue both their athletic and academic dreams without their father. With the absence of their father, they felt the need to work in order to not place as much burden to their mother. The participant narrated,

> As an athlete I never had my father there, so I fit into the stereotype of the black girl with no father which bothered me. I was envious of other relationships with their fathers, and because so much of the financial burden to care for me and my sister feel on my mother, I felt it necessary to work while I was in school which was a distraction sometimes.

Further, Participant 3 echoed the same sentiments as Participant 1, saying, "Nor having the full physical, financial, or emotional support of both parents." Similarly, Participant 4 added that they did not have enough money to sustain their personal, family, and academic needs. They also noted how they was more concerned about their mother's

struggle to provide for him, saying, "I didn't have money. My mom was struggling."

Participant 18 highlighted how their family did not have a source of income and they

needed to work hard for their tuition fees, stating, "No source of income, all rely on their

own work to earn tuition." Sharing the same experiences as the earlier participants,

Participant 21 also emphasized the importance of working in order to ease the financial

burden from their mother. The participant commented: "To pay my own tuition and take

care of my mother." Meanwhile, Participant 45 noted their personal challenges with

finances and other resources during college, saying, "I had to work and hustle in college

to pay for school and books, and try to help my grandparents with stuff for my baby

sister." Finally, Participant 46 was honest in sharing, "I had no one but family I built in

the streets. Watching them make fast money while I struggle to buy books and pay for

school."

Subtheme 2: Being Faced with the Lack of Physical Support. Along with the lack

of financial support during college, nine participants also noted that they longed for the

physical presence of their parents or other individuals who could have guided them

better. Participant 37 admitted that they felt alone most of the time during their college

journey. The participant narrated the following:

> I didn't have a strong support system. My mom was supportive but she had my
>
> siblings she was taking care of and with my dad being gone things were hard for
>
> her and she was really very consumed. Our family didn't really come around or
>
> help out much. I felt alone, no parent or family. Things got harder when my mom
>
> got sick. I felt pressured by my dad to be more present, and I know they needed
>
> me.

Meanwhile, Participant 38 believed that life was just too difficult in general. They noted how they did not receive any support or encouragement from their parents. They also added how they took it upon themselves to support their other family members as well as their goals in life. The participant answered,

> My mom wasn't really able to encourage me to stay in school. I mean look at her and my dad, buried in student loan debt they'd never be able to pay back, even after she gets out of prison, my bad working multiple jobs to make sure me and my brother were ok. I wasn't interested in school I want a business to set my own terms and how much money I could make. I was born with hustle school was never something I was interested in, I'm just smart.

Finally, Participant 40 also shared that they did not have a strong relationship with their mother. Along with this, they lost their best friend before starting college. Due to these difficult conditions, Participant 40 found it even more difficult to adjust and looked for other outlets to manage their issues. Unfortunately, Participant 40 was unable to manage their problems and got into trouble, leading to their withdrawal from school. They shared,

> I barely had a relationship with my mom, my best friend died months before I started college, and the only person that I could talk to was in prison. I went to the on-campus therapist and she made matters worse. She was extremely judgmental and very condescending. She often implied that I should be angry with my father because he didn't love me enough to not get in to trouble. I began drinking, smoking, using drugs on a regular basis. Not going to class and ultimately flunked out of school.

Subtheme 3: Being Faced with the Lack of Emotional Support. Lastly, six participants shared how they needed emotional support from the people closest to them. This, however, was not present, and the participants fell into stress, pressure, and depression. Participant 8 admitted that they had an "Extreme depression. There was an emptiness that I couldn't shake, it made me cold and mean. I struggled to develop relationships. I made 1 real friend the entire 4 and 1/2 years of college." Similarly, Participant 20 faced difficulties both in "Living economically and emotionally."

Minor Theme 1: Needing to Balance Time and Resources between Personal, Professional, and Family Responsibilities. The first minor theme that followed was the challenge of being able to manage all their daily responsibilities along with their academic requirements. From the open-ended part of the survey, 10 of the 46 participants reported the countless responsibilities and duties they had even at a young age. One example was Participant 9's personal experience, saying, "I was forced to work a full-time job while playing ball and going to school full time." Similarly, Participant 10 added the difficulty of "Dividing my time for school, work and family." Participant 21 also shared that they needed to work for their tuition and support their mother, stating, "To pay my own tuition and take care of my mother." Participant 22 admitted that they were the sole provider in their family, commenting, "I had no support and was responsible for my two siblings." Finally, Participant 25 shared the difficulty of needing to attend to their mother as well as their other personal issues, saying,

> My mom was struggling to adjust to me being gone and I missed being with her.
>
> It's always been me and her. I never really had to do school work either so I

would get in trouble for not going to class and doing the work but I never had to, before.

Research Question 3. What do Students of Incarcerated Parents Identify as Needs to have Access to in Order to Complete a four-year Degree or Higher? Based on the barriers and challenges identified above, the participants also shared the needs that they believe were crucial to successfully completing their desired degrees or even higher. For 34 of the 46 participants, they constantly shared the value and importance of receiving increased programs that are focused on providing support and assistance for students with incarcerated parents. The participants were also particular as they recognized the areas that need much development to assist them, including financial assistance in various ways, mentors with similar experiences, knowledgeable counselors, partnership activities to connect the students with the parents, and the provision of mental health services. Meanwhile, five other minor themes were also established but received less than 20% of the references of the total sample. These themes may require further research to advance their trustworthiness: having access to relevant knowledge and information in successfully completing their studies; having parents to support them achieve their dreams; offering food, housing, or transportation assistance; and needing more awareness on the difficulties of students with incarcerated parents.

Major Theme 3: Needing Increased Support and Assistance Programs. The third major theme is heavily linked to the second major theme or the challenge of inadequate support in many areas. The participants then recommended and called for better and more targeted programs that could better assist their needs in college given their unique conditions and struggles. According to Participant 39, students with

incarcerated parents must be equipped with the knowledge and guidance to successfully reach their desired path or goals. The participant narrated,

> Any type of service or something that would be able to help me find ways to navigate college life, workload, class expectation, work, etc. having people say go to school and get a degree but not knowing the inner workings of individuals family dynamics or personal situations almost put me in a worse position because in addition to the mental and emotional pain I carried just from what I had already been through, and was going through, now I have to add failing out of school. I was at the lowest point of my life then.

Meanwhile, Participant 44 added the need for programs that could guide the students, saying, "A way to help back home or programs to help navigate being away and staying focused on school."

Subtheme 1: Provision of Financial Assistance through Grants, Scholarships, and Flexible Jobs. The first subtheme that emerged was the request to have access to the different types of financial assistance. Twenty-three of the 34 participants indicated that the government and schools must offer other types of financial aid or support that could fit into the conditions of students with incarcerated parents. As shared by Participant 1, there must be "Additional financial assistance that was not a loan and mentorships with individuals with like experiences." Meanwhile, Participant 2 asked for a better support system that would allow them to focus on their studies without being concerned about their financial needs and issues, saying,

> I think if I had better dedication and a support system knew that my financial status was Secure, I would have been able to complete my degree because having

those things out of the way I would have been able to solely focus on being a

mother and studying rather than juggling multiple jobs in addition to school and

mothering.

Participant 4 added that financial assistance could be in form of jobs that would allow

them to earn better, saying, "Jobs that I could work that made more money. Mentors they

understood what was going on and could help me figure things out better." Participant 5

also asked for the provision of "More funds to pay for school to take the burden off my

mom." Participant 45 simply wanted to be given more opportunities to earn money while

studying, saying, "Better opportunities to make livable wages while in school." Finally,

Participant 46 asked for help in terms of tailoring the assistance based on their unique

needs and situations, stating, "Help!!! With school, livable wages, relatable counselors,

programs for people like me."

Subtheme 2: Availability of Mentors with the Same Experiences. The second

subtheme discussed support in terms of having mentors with the same background and

experiences, as 10 of the participants believed that they could understand them better. As

per Participant 3, it would be helpful to have "Mentorship programs with people with like

stories. Partnership or programs to keep my dad involved in some way." Participant 22

added that they need someone who can understand the situation and guide them

accordingly, saying, "Some guidance on how to navigate school work and home life,

someone that understood the situation I was in and could help." Finally, from Participant

27,

A group of individuals with similar experiences that could have given insight on

how they dealt with having an incarcerated parent. People going through the same

things so that we didn't feel like outsiders because of our experience/current

situation.

Subtheme 3: Availability of Experienced Counselors. Under the third subtheme or

the request to be provided with knowledgeable and experienced counsellors, four

participants expressed how they needed professionals who could listen and help them.

Participant 8 shared how professionals could play a key role in making them understand

themselves better and see life in a more positive way, saying,

I believe my counselor being there to assist me in dealing with my thoughts

feelings and emotions is what made the process easier for me. Especially when it

came to navigating and understanding what occurred and how I felt about it.

Similarly, Participant 12 also stated the need for "Counseling. Someone to listen to me."

Finally, Participant 42 commented the need for professionals who can listen and give

advice without prejudice, stating, "Therapy and support from ppl that understood what I

had going on that wouldn't judge me."

Subtheme 4: Offering Partnership Programs to Connect Students and Parents. The

fourth subtheme was the suggestion of Participant 3 that programs must also facilitate the

connection and communication of the students with their incarcerated parents. Participant

3 found this to be crucial to focus on their studies better without worrying about the state

of their father. The participant stated, "Mentorship programs with ppl with like stories.

Partnership or programs to keep my dad involved in some way."

Subtheme 5: Availability of Mental Health Services. The fifth and final subtheme

was the call to provide attention to the mental health needs of underprivileged students.

According to Participant 26, all students must have equal rights and access to education,

notwithstanding their status or condition in life. Aside from education, additional services must also be provided. This participant shared, "Everyone should have access to higher education despite their financial circumstances. Additionally, having access to mental health services and case management would be beneficial for underprivileged students."

Research Question 4. How do Support Systems Contribute to Students with Incarcerated Parents' Attainment of a four-year Degree or Higher? The fourth research question explored the contribution of support systems in the attainment of the participants' four-year degree or higher. Forty-three of the 46 (93%) participants indicated that they still managed to receive strength and encouragement from the people around them. Such encouragement allowed them to pursue their dreams despite the financial and emotional issues they were going through. Meanwhile, a limited number of participants again reiterated that they received little to no support at all during college.

Major Theme 4: Receiving Strength and Encouragement from Family Members, Friends, and Mentors to Keep Them in School Amidst Financial and Emotional Struggles. Almost all of the participants noted that they managed to survive school and life due to the presence of their family members, friends, mentors, coaches, and teachers. According to Participant 1, their relatives worked hard to show their genuine care and concern for him: "My grandmother, great grandmother, my other and my aunt. They came to my sporting events, checked on me, encouraged me to make good decisions, and assisted financially to ensure I had necessities and wants from time to time." Similarly, Participant 3 also witnessed the support of their "Mom, maternal grandparents and great grandparents, my father's older son, family, and friends." Also, Participant 4 was also encouraged by their mother and friends. They were patient in

reminding and convincing to pursue their education. They stated, "My mom and my friends. They all Try to talk me into staying in school. My friends tried to help me with my work." Participant 10 highlighted the role of their family in their college life, saying, "My family was my biggest support system they encouraged me help me to stay focused and mentored me through my struggles." Meanwhile, Participant 11 had many mentors who guided and directed him to the right decisions and path. The participant noted, "I have a few mentors that's supported me enough to start college but once started most of the support was [non-existent]." Participant 26 shared how the different members of their family contributed to making their life a little easier and manageable, saying, "My grandmother sent me gas money. My mother was emotionally supportive. My older sisters were role models for me." Participant 27 also received much support from their family and friends. The participant commented, "My father, family, and old family friends and those that were around prior to my mom going away were very supportive emotionally and financially. They sent money, care packages, and stayed in touch, visiting when possible." Finally, Participant 39 discussed the role of their teachers in providing the right motivation: "Old teachers encouraged me to go to school some kept in touch the best they could but I changed phone numbers a lot so that didn't last long. So really no one."

Research Question 5. How Does College Participation Contribute to Students with Incarcerated Parents' Attainment of a four-year Degree or Higher? The fifth research question of the study asked about the influence of college participation on the students' attainment of their degrees. The open-ended responses of the participants simply answered whether they joined extracurricular activities or programs without

explaining or providing much detail on why they did or did not participate. From the

analysis, the researcher found that 34 of the 46 (74%) participants joined various clubs,

teams, and organizations during college. Meanwhile, seven participants noted that they

were not able to participate as they did not have the time to join given their work

responsibilities. Five participants failed to indicate their college participation experiences.

Major Theme 5: Joining Sporting Teams, School, and Other Organizations.
The fifth major theme of the study reported the active participation of the majority of the

participants in various groups and organizations. As shared by Participant 31, they joined,

"Team sports, club purchasing." Meanwhile, Participant 32 added, "I did marching band

my first semester, and it was loads of fun." Participant 34 explained how they

participated both in sports and other programs that aimed to help make concrete changes,

saying, "I used to love playing volleyball. And I also volunteered in charity activities and

cleaning up the environment." Finally, Participant 41 narrated how they became an active

member of organizations and groups. They also admitted, however, that their

participation decreased, and their interest in education slowly faded as well. The

participant shared,

> I was in different clubs and organizations. I really joined things to figure out what
>
> I liked and didn't like and made friends along the way, until circumstances
>
> changed all of that. I started off at about 5-10 hours a week. After everything
>
> happened it went down to about maybe five then to none at all. When I lost that
>
> ability to connect and be immersed on school culture, my connection to school
>
> slowly but surely faded away.

Research Question 6. How Does Grit Level Contribute to the Student's Attainment of a four-year Degree or Higher? The sixth research question of the study explored the influence of grit level on the attainment of a four-year degree or higher. From the analysis of the open-ended responses of the participants, the students had various perceptions and experiences which led to the development of minor themes where the number of references were relatively low. Twenty (43%) of the participants failed to provide responses in connection with the sixth research question. Meanwhile, 16 of the 46 (35%) reported how they were forced to withdraw from college due to their other responsibilities in life. Participant 2 shared that they were not able to complete their degree as they needed to attend to and take care of their child: "I didn't complete my degree because I had a child and it became really hard to work and go to school and be a mother at the same time." Participant 4 added that they also needed to stop going to school as they wanted to work multiple jobs and help their family. The participant commented, "I dropped out to help my mom take care of my little sisters so she wouldn't have to struggle and work multiple jobs." Meanwhile, Participant 5 admitted that "Everything became too much so I took a break and just ended up not going back." For Participant 37, the different problems and issues became too much to manage: "My dad was incarcerated, my mom was ill, and there was no one else to take care of my siblings but me." Participant 38 lost the will to pursue their education because "I was only getting it for my mom and she wasn't going to be able to see me graduate." Finally, Participant 39 explained the following:

I dropped out to work. I had no clue how I was ever going to be able to pay back

the amount off debt I was goanna be in if I stayed in school on student loans

because I lost my academic scholarship because my grades were terrible.

Qualitative Summary

Through the thematic analysis of the open-ended responses of the 46 participants

from the survey, I addressed the purpose of the study along with the seven qualitative

research questions of the study. The 40 themes uncovered all pertained to the perceptions

and experiences of students with incarcerated parents as they pursued their four-year

college degrees or higher. Under this component, the strong desire of the participants to

have a better future was uncovered. A key barrier for academic achievement among

students with incarcerated parents is a lack of financial, physical, and emotional support.

In line with this, the participants continued to reiterate the need for increased support

through various effective and helpful programs. The participants also highlighted the

value of support systems as they receive strength and encouragement from family

members, friends, and mentors to keep them in school amid financial and emotional

struggles. They also expressed how joining sporting teams, school, and other

organizations contributed to their positive performance at school.

Summary

The purpose of this mixed-methods study was to explore the possible relationship

between parental incarceration and the outcomes, frequency of participation, motivations,

challenges, and supports of college students with incarcerated parents. In this chapter, I

addressed all research questions through the quantitative and qualitative analyses of the

data sources. In the next chapter of the study, I discuss the findings or themes further in

relation to the literature and framework of the research. I also present the implications,

recommendations, and conclusions based on the mixed methods results of the current

chapter.

Chapter Five: Discussion

Introduction

The purpose of this mixed-method study was to explore the possible relationship between parental incarceration and the outcomes, frequency of participation, motivations, challenges, and supports of college students with incarcerated parents. This encompassed the use of the quantitative and qualitative methods to establish whether a relationship exists between various facets that relate to the academic life of the students whose parents have been incarcerated. To attain this objective, I developed an online survey questionnaire that contained open-ended questions and items from a grit survey (Duckworth et al., 2007) and an academic motivation survey (Vallerand et al., 1993). The quantitative data were analyzed using logistic regression and Chi-Square analyses. The qualitative data (i.e., the open-ended questions) were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis procedure.

The data helped me to identify whether there are differences between the graduates and non-graduates with incarcerated parents regarding academic performance, frequency of participation in extracurricular activities, motivation, and importance of education, grit, and first-generation status. This information allowed me to identify the needs of collegiate students experiencing parental incarceration during their degree-seeking period. I sought to provide answers to the following research questions:

RQ1: What motivates children of incarcerated parents to pursue four-year degrees?

RQ2: What prevents children of incarcerated parents that enroll in four-year degree programs from completing their degree?

RQ3: What do students of incarcerated parents identify as needs to have access to in order to complete a four-year degree or higher?

RQ4: How do support systems contribute to students with incarcerated parents' attainment of a four-year degree or higher?

RQ5: How does college participation contribute to students with incarcerated parents' attainment of a four-year degree or higher?

RQ6: How does grit level contribute to the students' attainment of a four-year degree or higher?

Summary of Key Findings

The majority of the participants had an incarcerated father (65.5%), while only 13.8% had a mother or both parents incarcerated. This indicated that the sampled population was appropriate for the study, as it represented the target population of people who had one or both of their parents incarcerated. Descriptive analysis of the data also revealed that 28 participants (48.3%) withdrew from college while 30 participants (51.7%) completed college. This is an indication of the extent of the problem of the study, which indicates that dropout rates are higher due to the incarceration of parents, as indicated by Gibbons and Woodside (2014), Oliff et al. (2013), and Voigt and Hundrieser (2008). In the subsequent analysis, I sought to indicate the specific variables relating to learning that were related to the incarceration of parents.

I sought to provide answers to the research questions through qualitative analysis and testing of the hypotheses discussed in Chapter Four. Regarding the first research question, the research indicated that students were motivated by the desire to have a better future. In this case, students are motivated by recognizing that education is the only

pathway to obtaining a good life and career, as well as having the capacity to take care of

a future family. In addition, a significant number of participants noted that they were

motivated by family members and relatives. The findings were also proven by H07

testing, which showed that the level of motivation varied between the college students

whose parents were incarcerated and those whose parents were not.

Regarding the second research question, I sought to find what prevents students

from completing their degree. The results indicated that students lacked financial,

physical, and emotional support. In addition, they needed to balance time and resources

between personal, professional, and family responsibilities. This was also revealed from

the first hypothesis, where no evidence justified the rejection of the null hypothesis that

there was no relationship between college graduates and non-graduates, who were

students with incarcerated parents, and the parent incarcerated. In this case, all the parent

incarcerated categories were not significant (p-values > .05).

Regarding the third research question, I sought to understand the needs of the

students whose parents were incarcerated. The results indicated that they needed financial

support, mentorship, counseling, and mental health support. The fourth research question

addressed the support system received by participants. The results showed that the

majority of the participants received strength and encouragement from family members,

friends, and mentors to keep them in school amidst financial and emotional struggles.

The fifth research question sought to determine how students' participation in different

activities influenced their studies. Seventeen-percent of the participants indicated that

they lacked time to participate. Hypothesis testing revealed that there was no relationship

between college graduates and non-graduates, who are students with incarcerated parents,

and the frequency of participation in extracurricular activities (e.g., team sports, clubs, campus activities, intermural sports, organizations).

Regarding the seven research questions, the level of grit was evaluated along with its effect on the attainment of a four-year degree. Data showed that 35% of the respondents noted having a low level of grit and lacked the vigor to complete their studies. Participants indicated that they withdrew due to responsibilities. In relation to this, from quantitative results, a $p = .013$ was enough evidence to reject null hypothesis 8, which stated that there was no relationship between college graduates and non-graduates, who were students with incarcerated parents, and level of grit. This means that students' performance varied between those whose parents were incarcerated and those who were not.

Interpretation of the Findings

RQ1: What motivates children of incarcerated parents to pursue four-year degrees?

While understanding the numerous challenges that are faced by the students whose parents have been incarnated, the researcher sought to understand what motivated them to pursue their four-year degrees. To provide an answer to this research question, data from quantitative research tested H07 that there was no relationship between college graduates and non-graduates, who are students with incarcerated parents, and level of motivation. After the analysis, the results indicated that there is a positive relationship between parental incarceration and the level of motivation among learners. This means that when parents are incarcerated, their children could be positively or negatively affected.

The findings from the qualitative analysis showed that students are motivated by the desire to have a bright future and the capacity to take care of the family. Indeed, the desire to have a bright future attracted 76% of the references. These findings are also consistent with those from the quantitative analysis. The findings conform to the studies conducted by Vang (2021), Murray et al. (2012), and Wildeman et al. (2018). According to Vang (2021), when parents are incarcerated, their children tend to develop self-motivation, which is an intrinsic desire to further their studies regardless of the situation. Vang argued that students are stimulated by the desire to perform better in their studies and make their parents proud. This is also confirmed by Murray et al. (2012) who argued that lack of parental guidance significantly enhances independence and diligence among learners.

From qualitative studies, a significant percentage of respondents also noted deriving motivation from their relatives. Indeed, the influence of relatives attracted 24% of the references. These findings are consistent with scholarly research. For instance, Wildeman et al. (2018) indicated that learners become more motivated after they receive support from other parties even after their parents have been incarcerated. Some of the participants indicated that they were motivated to learn to be able to take care of their families. Similarly, several students (24%) were also motivated by their relatives, which kept them going despite their parents' incarceration.

Some of the scholars, however, have indicated that the incarceration of parents negatively affects students' motivation levels. For instance, Muentner et al. (2021) indicated that, when parents are incarcerated, there is evidence of blunted stress reaction, especially for those who witnessed the arrest of their parents, which may lead to PTSD.

In addition, long-term parental imprisonment has a deleterious effect on their children's mental wellbeing, thereby negatively affecting their motivation to learn (Fowler et al., 2021). As such, the findings correspond to the fact that there is a relationship between the incarceration of parents and their children's motivation to learn, but there are inconsistencies concerning the direction of the relationship.

RQ2: What prevents children of incarcerated parents that enroll in four-year degree programs from completing the degree?

From qualitative data, I found that a key factor that prevents children whose parents have been incarcerated from completing their four-year degree program is lack of support. The qualitative analysis results indicated that these students fail to complete education as they are not financially, physically, and emotionally supported. Indeed, lack of support is also noted as a key contributor to poor academic performance and failure to complete studies among students whose parents are incarcerated. According to Laskey and Hetzel (2011), incarceration of parents necessitates moral support from other stakeholders, which is not always forthcoming. Indeed, from the qualitative results, it was evident that participants did not receive the needed social support from the relevant agencies. This is also confirmed by Jones (2018), who argued that lack of support affects the endurance of the learners. Indeed, when students are not able to endure, they lack the determination and motivation to learn, thereby affecting their performance. On this note, the findings from this study conform to the literature that there is a relationship between the incarceration of parents and students' performance, but the direction differs.

From quantitative analysis for H06, I sought to understand whether incarceration of parents affects the academic performance of the students and completion of studies.

From the analysis, the results indicated that there is a positive relationship, which means that even for the parents who are incarcerated, their children could still achieve academically. The findings from the quantitative analysis correspond to that of the qualitative analysis, which indicates that the students receive motivation and support from relatives, helping them complete their studies as well as to attain higher academic performance.

While the findings from this hypothesis correspond to the literature regarding the relationship, a contradiction exists concerning the direction of the relationship. According to Buskirk-Cohen and Plants (2019), there is a relationship between the incarceration of parents and academic performance, but it is a negative one. Buskirk-Cohen and Plants (2019) argued that students whose parents have been incarcerated tend to lack parental support and participation, which makes learning challenging. This was also confirmed by Zolli and Healy (2012), who argued that such students lack resilience, develop low esteem, and cannot uphold their goals, integrity, and core purpose in education and life, affecting their completion rate.

Students' degree completion could also be influenced by their clear understanding of the importance of learning as indicated by Cothern (2019). Concerning this, I sought to reveal whether there are differences in perception of the importance of education among students whose parents have been incarcerated and those whose parents have not. The results indicated that there was no evidence to reject the null hypothesis and, hence, their relationship was significant. This means that there were significant differences regarding the emphasis on the importance of education between the students whose parents were incarcerated and those whose parents were not.

College graduates and non-graduates whose parents have been incarcerated experience many challenges, such as financial difficulties, psychological trauma, lack of parental support, and meeting basic needs, as revealed in previous studies by Cothern (2019), Laskey and Hetzel (2011), and Turney and Goodsell (2018). Due to these challenges, these students tend to lose interest in education and the desire to meet their day-to-day obligations becomes more important, which affects completion rates. The finding that there were differences in the emphasis on the importance of education between students whose parents are incarcerated and those whose parents are not confirms information documented in the literature. This is also evidenced by the fact that despite the students stating from the surveys that their parents find education important, they do not emphasize the importance. This depicts that, despite their willingness to continue with their education and understand how important learning is, they have other more pressing and important challenges to attend to and do not prioritize education (Korzh, 2021).

Low emphasis on education among students with incarcerated parents could also affect the completion rates, which is justified by the lack of social support and guidance (Wildeman et al., 2018). According to Wildeman et al., when they are supported, they have an opportunity to discover and understand the essence of education and the need to attain a degree in general. This assertion is also shared by Turney and Goodsell (2018) who noted that when parents are incarcerated, they may be stressed and lack interest in all other issues, which necessitates psychosocial support. Kosik et al. (2018) also noted that it is essential to support students whose parents have been incarcerated as they develop a disruption and environmental shock, which disorients them due to unexpected

occurrences. In this case, they focus on other issues that could lead to them rejoining their parents and do not focus on education. The findings that there are differences regarding the emphasis on education for students whose parents have been incarcerated and those whose parents have not conform to the literature.

RQ3: What do students of incarcerated parents identify as needs to have access to complete a four-year degree or higher?

Due to the numerous challenges faced by students with incarcerated parents, numerous needs arise. From the qualitative data, the results indicate that there is an increased need for support and assistance programs. According to the study, participants indicated that they needed to be provided with financial assistance through grants, scholarships, and flexible jobs. In addition, students needed support from mentors and counselors who had similar experiences. In addition, students needed to be offered partnership programs to connect students and parents, as well as mental health services. These findings from the qualitative data were also evidenced by quantitative results.

The fact that there are differences in academic achievement between college graduates and non-graduates who are students with incarcerated parents indicates that such students have special needs to complete their studies. After testing $H1_0$, the results indicated that there was no adequate evidence to reject the null hypothesis that there are no differences in academic achievements between college graduates and non-graduates who are students with incarcerated parents. The issue of the academic achievements of students whose parents have been incarcerated has attracted diverse and varied outcomes from researchers.

The majority of the literature has shown that students' poor performance was due to the incarceration of their parents and lack of needed support. For instance, Arditti (2012) noted that most of the students whose parents are incarcerated perform poorly due to a lack of encouragement. On the same note, Laskey and Hetzel (2011) found that lack of adequate support for students whose parents were incarcerated was a primary cause for poor academic performance. Furthermore, students whose parents were incarcerated received limited parental support, which exposed them to psychological and social problems thereby affecting their academic performance (Murray et al., 2012). According to Murray et al., parental incarceration is associated with many challenges that affect the mental wellbeing of the students, hindering them from experiencing personal growth and development, as well as excelling in their academic work. Thus, the finding from the current study that there were no differences between the students whose parents were incarcerated with those whose parents were not disconfirms the findings by Laskey and Hetzel (2011), Arditti (2012), and Murray et al. (2012).

Murray et al. (2012) noted that the challenges that students with incarcerated parents face contribute to poor academic performance. The qualitative findings indicated that these students experience several challenges that may affect their academic life. This is also evidenced from the qualitative data which indicated that some of the problems that were evidenced from the qualitative results include lack of support, financial challenges, mental challenges, and even the need to balance between time and resources, as well as family responsibilities. This also conforms to the findings by Testa and Jackson (2021) who indicated that a significant percentage of the children whose parents were incarcerated are forced to take on a parental role for their young siblings. This is an

indication that the challenges that the students face when their parents are in prison could affect their academic life and the need for adequate support.

RQ4: How do support systems contribute to students with incarcerated parents' attainment of a four-year degree or higher?

I sought to determine the role of support system in contributing to the attainment of four-year degree success of the participants whose parents were incarcerated. From the analysis, it emerged that 93% of the participants received support from those who were close, despite their parents being incarcerated. According to the findings, students received encouragement from their relatives, which enabled them to pursue their dreams despite the financial and emotional challenges that they went through.

The findings were also consistent with the literature, which indicates that members of the family and friends are the closest refuge for the children whose parents have been incarcerated. The students who complete their studies despite their parents being incarcerated attested to the fact that they received support from parents, friends, mentors, and their teachers, and these findings are consistent with those found by Poehlmann-Tynan and Turney (2021). According to Poehlmann-Tynan and Turney (2021), when a relative is available to support the student when the parent is incarcerated, the unification process starts until the child can adjust. As the child adjusts to the outside world, they find that their relatives are helpful despite the absence of the parents. Smyke et al. (2017) found that despite the process of transition being gradual, the presence of another person makes life less stressful. Some scholars, such as King and Delgado (2021), have indicated that the majority of students whose parents were imprisoned did not receive adequate support from relatives, mentors, and teachers. Indeed, King and

Delgado indicated that only 34% of the participants in their study acknowledged having been supported by third parties. This is also confirmed by Balua (2021), who noted that the quality of care that students receive from individuals other than their parents was ineffective and not reliable.

RQ5: How does college participation contribute to students with incarcerated parents' attainment of a four-year degree or higher?

I sought to understand whether students whose parents were imprisoned participated in various school activities. Data indicated that 74% of participants joined various clubs, teams, and organizations during college, while only seven participants noted that they were not able to participate. The findings were also consistent with the hypothesis $H0_5$ test results, which indicated that there was no significant relationship between the frequency of participation and the incarceration status. In this case, the findings indicated that students' participation in extracurricular activities could not be influenced by the incarceration of parents.

The findings contradict the literature in various aspects. According to Cothern (2019), parental incarceration has a variety of effects on a child's life which, in turn, affects their school life activities, such as participation in college extracurricular activities. This is more evidenced when the students develop poor health, thereby affecting their ability to participate in extracurricular activities. The low participation in extracurricular activities has also been explored by other scholars such as Arditti (2012) and Turney and Goodsell (2018), who attribute low participation to stress. According to Arditti, parental imprisonment has negative adverse effects on a child's health. Experiencing a parent being arrested becomes a traumatic and stressful occurrence in a

child's life (Arditti, 2012). Stress and trauma affect a child's participation in extracurricular activities, such as sports, clubs, campus activities, and intermural sports and organizations. The child becomes stigmatized especially when their friends find out that their parents are incarcerated. Turney and Goodsell (2018) argued that the incarceration of parents makes their children feel isolated and shameful, which hinders them from interacting with other students, even in extracurricular activities.

The findings in this study also contradicted those by Turney and Goodsell (2018), who found that incarceration of parents affects the students' participation in extracurricular activities as they experience financial constraints that hinder them from paying lawyer fees, paying for bail, and paying fines and fees. Turney and Goodsell (2018) found a significant number of students are not able to buy sports gear, pay for club fees, or even subscribe to extracurricular activities due to financial constraints. As such, the finding that there is no relationship disconfirms those by scholars and indicates a possible relationship.

Low participation in extracurricular activities could also be associated with behavior changes. According to Arditti (2012), parental improvement leads to children's behavior changes. In most instances, they tend to feel worthless and inferior. Younger children tend to fight with others, which limits their participation in extracurricular activities. This is also evidenced by the qualitative results, which showed that a majority of the students have to change their behavior and assume some roles that hinder them from interacting with others. For instance, some participants noted that they have to assume the role of parents and provide for their families, which deters them from engaging in extracurricular activities. In essence, the findings that there is no relationship

between the incarceration of parents and students' participation in extracurricular

activities disconfirms the literature.

  RQ6: How does grit level contribute to the student's attainment of a four-year

degree or higher?

  A significant number of participants (43%) did not provide a response to this

open-ended question. However, 35% reported that they were forced to withdraw from

college, due to other responsibilities in their life. The results from the qualitative study

also corresponded with those from quantitative analysis. Grit among students could be

influenced by the lack of resilience, as indicated by Duckworth and Seligman (2005).

According to Duckworth and Seligman, grit is predicted by resilience, perseverance, and

resilience. Buskirk-Cohen and Plants (2019) stated that a resilient person develops high

levels of motivation, self-confidence, and strong connectedness. Zolli and Healy (2012)

stated that resilience entails the ability of a person to hold to their core purpose, which is

an attribute that is lacking among students whose parents are in prison.

  The findings also correspond to the assertion by scholars, such as Pappano (2013)

and Cheung et al. (2021), who noted that grit is affected by lack of trust and other adverse

effects that befall students when their parents are in prison. These students lack social-

economic support from their parents, which demotivates them. Indeed, their success and

urge to persevere depend on the quality of the relationship that they nurture. In this case,

a student with incarcerated parents suffers emotional and psychological problems, which

adversely affects their grit level (Cheung et al., 2021). Cheung et al. further noted that

when students are at the college level, it is considered as the peak age period, and the

exclusion of their parents could lead to risky behaviors such as drug abuse, binge

drinking, and sexual behaviors. This reduces grit level by affecting their perseverance and passion.

The grit level among students with imprisoned parents could be affected by mental disturbances. Coker (2021) indicated that when students remember their parents could be suffering in prisons, coupled with the challenges that they have in their daily undertakings, they become mentally disturbed. As explained by Duckworth and Seligman (2005), mental disturbances negatively affect grit level. The findings are also supported by qualitative findings, where participants indicated that mental health services are one of the most important supports that they require. In summary, the findings from the study correspond with the literature that there is a relationship between the incarceration of parents and grit level among students.

Limitations of the Study

The study was faced with several limitations. First, the transferability and generalizability of the findings were limited, as the study was conducted on purposively selected participants. The researcher purposely selected participants whose parents have been incarcerated or were incarcerated during their learning life. Secondly, the study was also conducted with a small sample size, including only 58 participants who completed surveys, which hinders the generalization of the findings to varied populations. The study was affected because the participants were selected from a specific geographic area, which also hindered the transferability and generalizability to other populations. The findings could have been affected by the fact this was a self-report study in which participants provided their opinions. Therefore, the respondent could have been influenced by the order in which questions were asked in the survey. It is also possible

that respondents could have wanted to provide socially desirable responses, which would affect the validity and credibility of the study's findings.

Recommendations

The study focused on the relationship between the incarceration of parents and various variables, such as academic achievement, motivation, the importance of education, and grit. From the study, however, it emerged that social support is a key enabler to students' learning. Therefore, I recommend for further studies to determine the relationship between these variables for students who have received social-economic support. This study was conducted using a self-report approach, which included the use of surveys and questionnaires. Due to the limitations that are associated with this approach, I recommend further research that encompasses analysis of historical data, where reliability and validity of the findings are enhanced. I also conducted this study using a small sample size, which was purposively selected. To enhance the reliability of the findings, further research could be done with larger sample size, a larger geographical size, and randomization of participants to enhance the reliability and validity of the research.

The results of this study indicated that there is a relationship between the incarceration of a parent and their child's academic performance; however, bearing in mind that most of the studies depict a negative direction, further studies ought to be conducted to ascertain the direction of the relationship. Regarding the fourth hypothesis, which sought to determine whether there is a relationship between college graduates and non-graduates who are students with incarcerated parents and first-generation status,

there was no adequate data to test this. I, therefore, recommend future research to focus on the relationship between the incarceration of parents and their first-generation status.

Implications

From the study, it was evident that learners whose parents are incarcerated experience numerous challenges that hinder their success in education. Participants stated from the open-ended questions that they had to balance education and family wellbeing. As such, this study has demonstrated the need for a change in the societal perception regarding parental incarceration. Society ought to provide socioeconomic support to students whose parents are incarcerated. With the understanding that there is increased stigmatization among students whose parents have been incarcerated, there is a need for positive social change to alleviate the suffering among these individuals. In doing so, society can reduce the probability of students engaging in crime-related activities and being imprisoned.

From a practical approach, society, government agencies, and civil society could organize programs that provide mental, financial, and social support to learners whose parents have been imprisoned. The respondents noted that they need mental health services due to increased stress and trauma. They also need social support, such as counseling and motivation. Due to financial challenges that are associated with the incarceration of parents, there is a need to provide financial support, as well. This could be at the society level or through the scholarships offered specifically to this group of students.

The government should also offer policies and programs that provide holistic support to young children whose parents have been incarcerated. This should particularly

target those whose children were the sole financiers and those who have both parents incarcerated. In doing this, the government acts to indirectly reduce the chances of compounding the crime rate that would arise from children whose parents are imprisoned. More importantly, there should be increased awareness of the need to alleviate suffering, stigmatization, and segregation of the children whose parents are imprisoned.

Regarding methodology, this study was conducted based on surveys and open-ended questions, which were developed by me. Due to the significance of this issue, a more standardized survey would be instrumental in measuring some aspects such as grit, motivation, and academic performance among higher education students. From a theoretical perspective, the study has supported Alexander Astin's (1984) theory that active college involvement has an impact on the student's learning, social involvement, and academic excellence.

Conclusion

From the study, it can be concluded that the incarceration of parents affects students' academic performance in various aspects. Incarceration affects the completion rate of education due to a lack of resilience, endurance, and mental disturbances. Parental incarceration causes the students to lose interest in education and consider education to be less important. Students' focus changes to meet the daily challenges that they experience. Researchers have shown that there are no differences in the level of participation in extracurricular status, but it does not negate the need for motivation to enhance greater involvement. It can also be deduced that the academic performance of

students significantly affects their academic achievement. Students' level of grit reduces when their parents are incarcerated and their motivation declines.

Students face numerous challenges when their parents are incarcerated. Some of the challenges that they face include financial challenges, emotional challenges, lack of moral support, and psychosocial challenges. These challenges ultimately affect their education. The majority of the participants agreed to the fact that they are not adequately supported and suffer from stress and depression. Due to the challenges that the students face due to parental incarceration, it can be concluded that because of failure to provide the needed support by all stakeholders, the problem becomes compounded and the chances of these students engaging in crime increases. The need for social support among this population is profound and must be addressed.

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