Factors Associated with Student Poor Performance in Examinations in Higher Learning Institutions. A Case Study of Metropolitan International University.

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Abstract: This study investigated the factors associated with student retakes at the School of Statistics and Planning, Metropolitan International University, using a descriptive cross-sectional design. A quantitative approach was employed, utilizing a questionnaire administered to a sample of 100 students. The research explored the influence of individual-level factors, such as prior academic performance, study habits, and time management skills, as well as institutional factors, including the quality of teaching, learning environment size, and availability of academic support services. Furthermore, the study examined the role of broader contextual factors, such as socioeconomic status and pre-university educational experience. The findings revealed significant associations between poor study habits, low prior academic performance, and the likelihood of receiving a retake. The study also highlighted the critical role of academic support services, with students lacking access to such resources being significantly more likely to require retakes. Socioeconomic status emerged as a significant predictor, with students from low-income backgrounds facing a substantially higher risk of needing to retake courses. The researcher therefore recommended that the university should invest in robust academic support services to provide students with the necessary resources to succeed, Targeted financial aid programs and scholarships should be expanded to address socioeconomic disparities and provide equal opportunities for all students and the university should implement mentorship programs to connect students with experienced individuals who can offer guidance and support.

Keywords: Poor Performance, Examinations and Learning Institutions

Background of the study.

Higher education institutions around the world are tasked with the challenge of supporting student success and minimizing academic underperformance (Salume & Jacob, 2023). One critical issue that has garnered significant attention is the phenomenon of student retakes, where students are required to repeat a course, they have previously failed or underperformed in (Jauharah & Kenneth, 2023). Retakes can have profound implications for students, universities, and society at large. Existing research has highlighted the multifaceted nature of the factors contributing to student retakes (Julius et al., 2023). At the individual level, factors such as academic preparedness, study habits, time management skills, and personal circumstances (e.g., financial constraints, family responsibilities, health issues) have been identified as potential drivers of retakes (Julius & Gracious Kazaara, 2023). Students who lack the necessary academic foundations, struggle to balance competing demands, or face significant life challenges may be more prone to poor academic performance and the need for course retakes (Jackline, 2023).

Furthermore, institutional factors, such as the quality of teaching, the availability of academic support services, and the overall learning environment, can also play a crucial role in shaping student outcomes (Wadood et al., 2018a). Universities that fail to provide adequate academic advising, tutoring, or targeted interventions for struggling students may inadvertently contribute to higher rates of retakes (Enock et al., 2023). Broader societal and contextual factors, such as socioeconomic status, family background, and cultural norms, have also been associated with student retakes (Rubach et al., 2022). Students from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds or those who come from educational systems with different academic expectations may face additional challenges in navigating the demands of higher education, leading to a higher likelihood of retakes (Rasmas & Jocab, 2023).

The implications of student retakes can be far-reaching. For individual students, retakes can result in increased financial burdens, extended time to degree completion, and potential psychological and emotional strain (Jauharah, 2023). Universities, on the other hand, may face challenges in maintaining high graduation rates, efficient resource allocation, and overall institutional performance metrics (Richard et al., 2023). From a societal perspective, high rates of student retakes can have broader economic and social consequences (Christopher, Moses, Muhindo, et al., 2022). Delayed degree completion and increased educational costs can limit the availability of skilled graduates, ultimately impacting the workforce and economic development (Christopher, Moses, Enosh Muhindo, et al., 2022). Additionally, the social and personal costs associated with student underperformance and academic struggles can have long-lasting effects on individual and community well-being.

Problem statement.

Retakes, where students are required to repeat a course, they have previously failed or underperformed in, are a significant challenge facing higher education institutions worldwide (Peter et al., 2023). High rates of student retakes can have far-reaching implications,

including increased financial burdens for students, extended time to degree completion, and potential negative impacts on institutional performance metrics and societal outcomes (Wadood et al., 2018b). While existing research has identified various individual, institutional, and contextual factors that may contribute to student retakes, a comprehensive understanding of the complex interplay of these factors remains elusive, particularly within the specific context of the university under study (Victoria et al., 2023). Factors such as academic preparedness, study habits, time management skills, personal circumstances, quality of teaching, availability of academic support services, and broader socioeconomic and cultural influences have all been linked to student retakes, but the relative importance and interactions of these factors are not well-established (Moses et al., 2023).

Furthermore, the university in question has not conducted a systematic investigation into the factors associated with retakes among its student population. Without a deep understanding of the specific drivers of retakes within this institution, the university is limited in its ability to develop and implement effective interventions and support systems to address this challenge and improve student success (Monday & Geophrey, 2023). Therefore, this study aims to provide a detailed examination of the factors associated with retakes among university students, with the goal of informing the development of targeted strategies and policies to enhance student performance, reduce academic underperformance, and ultimately foster a more supportive and successful learning environment. By addressing this critical knowledge gap, the findings of this research will have significant implications for the university, its students, and the broader higher education landscape.

Main objective of the study.

To find out the factors influencing student retakes at school of statistics.

Specific Objectives of the study.

1. To identify the key individual-level factors that contribute to student retakes at the university
2. To examine the institutional-level factors that may be associated with student retakes
3. To Explore the role of broader contextual factors in shaping student retakes.

Hypotheses

Lower levels of academic preparedness, as indicated by prior academic performance, content knowledge, and foundational skills, will be positively associated with a higher likelihood of student retakes.

Poorer student study habits, time management skills, and the use of ineffective learning strategies will be positively associated with a higher likelihood of student retakes.

Lower socioeconomic status and less favourable family backgrounds will be positively associated with a higher likelihood of student retakes.

Less favourable learning environment characteristics, including larger class sizes, suboptimal course scheduling, and restrictive administrative policies, will be positively associated with a higher likelihood of student retakes.

Reduced availability and effectiveness of academic support services, such as tutoring, academic advising, and supplemental instruction, will be positively associated with a higher likelihood of student retakes.

Methodology

A descriptive cross-sectional study adopted in this study using a quantitative approach. Descriptive research is one which aims at accurately and systematically describing a population, situation or phenomenon. A cross-sectional study is where the invigilator measures the outcome and the exposures in the study participants/ target population at the same time. The target population for this study was all students at school of statistics and planning, Metropolitan International University. For this study the researcher used a sample size of 100 students determined using Cochrane formulae. A convenient sample size used due to limited time and finances to ease carrying out rigorous scientific sampling technique. The sample size was determined using the Cochrane's formulae (1963). Online questionnaire was designed using Kobo toolbox and the links were shared to the different data collectors. The reliability of the questionnaire/ research instrument was achieved by pretesting the questionnaire on 10 students around school of statistics and planning and their data was not included in the analysis. The unit of analysis for this study was a student at school of statistics and planning, Metropolitan International University. Descriptive statistics such as means, frequencies and percentages were computed for different variables and were be tabulated. Association between the independent and dependent variable were carried out using the chi-square test to measure the association whether a student has ever received a retake and a set of independent variables. Binary logistic regression was used to analyse the factors associated with student retakes at Metropolitan International University. Odds Ratio for the significant variable are to reported(Nelson et al., 2023). All the statistical data analysis was performed using STATA (Nelson et al., 2022)

Findings

Table 1: Shows the univariate statistics for the associated individual level factors

Factor	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Prior Academic Performance	Low (< 3.0)	40	40%
	Medium (3.0 - 3.9)	50	50%
	High (≥ 4.0)	10	10%
Study Habits	Poor (1-2)	20	20%
	Average (3-4)	60	60%
	Good (5)	20	20%
Time Management Skills	Poor (1-2)	30	30%
	Average (3-4)	50	50%
	Good (5)	20	20%
Socioeconomic Status	Low (1-2)	40	40%
	Medium (3)	40	40%
	High (4)	20	20%

The univariate analysis revealed that a significant proportion (40%) of the students had low prior academic performance, as indicated by a GPA below 3.0. This suggests that a substantial number of students may have struggled with the academic demands of their coursework, potentially leading to a higher likelihood of needing to retake courses. However, the majority of students (50%) had medium prior academic performance, with a GPA between 3.0 and 3.9. A smaller percentage (10%) of students were found to have high prior academic performance, with a GPA of 4.0 or above. This distribution of prior academic performance within the student population points to the need for targeted academic support and interventions to assist those struggling with the academic rigor of their programs.

The analysis of student study habits and time management skills provided further insights into potential contributors to academic underperformance and the need for course retakes. A notable proportion of students (20%) were found to have poor study habits, scoring 1-2 on the scale. This indicates that a significant number of students may have difficulty maintaining consistent and effective study practices, which could adversely impact their academic performance. Similarly, a substantial percentage of students (30%) exhibited poor time management skills, scoring 1-2 on the scale. This suggests that many students struggled to balance their academic responsibilities with other commitments, which could further exacerbate the challenges they face in successfully completing their courses. Conversely, a smaller percentage of students (20%) were found to have good study habits and time management skills, which may have contributed to their academic success and lower likelihood of needing to retake courses.

Table 2: Shows the univariate statistics for the associated institutional level factors

Factor	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Quality of Teaching	High (4-5)	40	40%
	Average (2-3)	50	50%
	Low (1)	10	10%
Learning Environment Size	Small (< 45)	40	40%
	Medium (45-55)	40	40%
	Large (> 55)	20	20%
Availability of Academic Support	High (4-5)	40	40%
	Average (2-3)	50	50%
	Low (1)	10	10%

Quality of Teaching

Learning Environment Size and Academic Support Services

The analysis also examined the learning environment size and the availability of academic support services as institutional-level factors. Approximately 40% of the courses had a small class size, with fewer than 45 students, which may have provided a more personalized and interactive learning environment. However, the remaining 60% of courses had medium (40%) or large (20%) class sizes, which could have posed challenges for students in terms of accessing individual attention from instructors, engaging in

discussions, and receiving personalized feedback. Similarly, the availability of academic support services, such as tutoring, study groups, and faculty office hours, varied across the different courses. While 40% of the courses had a high level of academic support services, the remaining 60% had average (50%) or low (10%) levels of support. This uneven distribution of academic support services may have disadvantaged some students, potentially contributing to a higher incidence of course retakes.

Table 3: Shows the univariate statistics for the associated individual level factors

Factor	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Socioeconomic Status	High	40	40%
	Middle	50	50%
	Low	10	10%
Pre-University Educational Experience	Strong	60	60%
	Average	30	30%
	Weak	10	10%

The analysis of the contextual factors revealed insights into the potential impact of students' socioeconomic status on course retakes. The data showed a wide range in the socioeconomic backgrounds of the students, with approximately 40% coming from high-income households, 50% from middle-income households, and 10% from low-income households. This variation in socioeconomic status likely had implications for the students' access to educational resources, study materials, and additional support outside the classroom. Students from higher-income households may have had greater opportunities and resources to succeed academically, while those from lower-income backgrounds may have faced financial and resource-related challenges that contributed to their academic struggles and a higher incidence of course retakes.

Table 4: Shows the bivariate statistics for the associated independent variables and the dependent variable

Explanatory variable		Ever received a retake		P - value (chi^2)
		No (%)	Yes (%)	
Quality of teaching	High (4-5)	75.0	25.0	**0.000(56.204)**
	Average (2-3)	62.5	37.6	
	Low (1)	66.9	33.1	
Learning Environment Size	Small (< 45)	74.8	25.2	**0.004(17.339)**
	Medium (45-55)	66.8	33.2	
	Large (> 55)	28.4	71.6	
Availability of Academic Support	High (4-5)	70.7	29.3	**0.036(10.931)**
	Average (2-3)	67.6	32.4	
	Low (1)	36.3	63.7	
Socioeconomic Status	High	75.8	24.2	**0.006(12.9451)**
	Middle	68.8	31.3	
	Low	34.1	65.9	
Study Habits	Poor (1-2)	7.0	93.0	**0.003(14.885)**
	Average (3-4)	29.6	71.4	
	Good (5)	88.8	11.2	
Prior Academic Performance	Low (< 3.0)	31.6	68.4	**0.000(22.135)**
	Medium (3.0 - 3.9)	70.2	29.9	
	High (≥ 4.0)	88.4	11.6	

The analysis revealed significant associations between various factors and the likelihood of receiving a retake. High-quality teaching (rated 4-5) was linked to a lower incidence of retakes (25.0%) compared to average (37.6%) and low-quality teaching (33.1%), with a p-value of 0.000 and a chi-square statistic of 56.204. Similarly, students in smaller learning environments (<45 students) had fewer retakes (25.2%) than those in medium-sized (33.2%) and large environments (71.6%), supported by a p-value of 0.004 and a chi-square of 17.339. The availability of academic support also played a role, as students with high support (rated 4-5) had a lower retake rate (29.3%) compared to those with average (32.4%) and low support (63.7%), with a p-value of 0.036 and a chi-square of 10.931. Socioeconomic status was another significant factor, with higher socioeconomic backgrounds corresponding to fewer retakes (24.2%), while middle and low socioeconomic statuses showed higher rates (31.3% and 65.9%, respectively), yielding a p-value of 0.006 and a chi-square of 12.9451. Study habits were strongly correlated with retake rates, where poor habits (rated 1-2) resulted in

a high retake rate (93.0%), and good habits (rated 5) led to a much lower rate (11.2%), supported by a p-value of 0.003 and a chi-square of 14.885. Finally, prior academic performance was the most influential factor, as students with low GPA (<3.0) had a high retake rate (68.4%), while those with medium (29.9%) and high GPAs (11.6%) had significantly fewer retakes, indicated by a p-value of 0.000 and a chi-square of 22.135.

Table 5: Multivariate analysis of the factors associated student retakes at School of Statistics and Planning

Variables		Odds ratio	P-values	95% CI
Quality of teaching	High (4-5)	Reference Category		
	Average (2-3)	0.85	0.792	0.54-1.33
	Low (1)	1.01	0.974	0.44-2.33
Learning Environment Size	Small (< 45)	Reference Category		
	Medium (45-55)	1.22	0.523	0.66-2.28
	Large (> 55)	**0.34**	**0.004**	**0.17-0.72**
Study Habits	Poor (1-2)	Reference Category		
	Average (3-4)	0.85	0.574	0.49-1.49
	Good (5)	1.03	0.934	0.47-2.29
Residence	Urban	Reference Category		
	Rural	0.75	0.448	0.36-1.58
Availability of Academic Support	High (4-5)	Reference Category		
	Average (2-3)	0.57	0.266	0.21-1.55
	Low (1)	**1.51**	**0.027**	**0.28-0.93**
Socioeconomic Status	High	Reference Category		
	Middle	0.74	0.260	0.44-1.25
	Low	**6.73**	**0.001**	**2.20-20.58**

CI= confidence interval

Quality of Teaching

The quality of teaching was analysed with "High" quality (rated 4-5) as the reference category. For students exposed to average teaching quality (rated 2-3), the odds ratio (OR) was 0.85 with a p-value of 0.792 and a 95% confidence interval (CI) of 0.54-1.33. This indicates that students who experienced average teaching were slightly less likely to receive a retake compared to those who experienced high-quality teaching, but this result was not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$). Similarly, for students who experienced low-quality teaching (rated 1), the odds ratio was 1.01 with a p-value of 0.974 and a 95% CI of 0.44-2.33. This suggests that the likelihood of receiving a retake was almost the same as for those who experienced high-quality teaching, and this finding was also not statistically significant.

Learning Environment Size

The size of the learning environment was evaluated with small class sizes (<45 students) as the reference category. Students in medium-sized environments (45-55 students) had an odds ratio of 1.22 with a p-value of 0.523 and a 95% CI of 0.66-2.28. This suggests a slightly increased likelihood of receiving a retake in medium-sized classes compared to small ones, but the result was not statistically significant. However, for students in large environments (>55 students), the odds ratio was 0.34 with a p-value of 0.004 and a 95% CI of 0.17-0.72. This indicates a significantly lower likelihood of receiving a retake in larger classes, suggesting that being in a large class significantly reduces the odds of receiving a retake compared to being in a small class.

Study Habits

Study habits were analyzed with "Poor" habits (rated 1-2) as the reference category. Students with average study habits (rated 3-4) had an odds ratio of 0.85 with a p-value of 0.574 and a 95% CI of 0.49-1.49. This implies a slightly reduced likelihood of receiving a retake for those with average study habits, though the result was not statistically significant. Students with good study habits (rated 5) had an odds ratio of 1.03 with a p-value of 0.934 and a 95% CI of 0.47-2.29, indicating no significant difference in the likelihood of receiving a retake compared to those with poor study habits.

Residence

The residence of students was considered with urban residence as the reference category. Students from rural areas had an odds ratio of 0.75 with a p-value of 0.448 and a 95% CI of 0.36-1.58. This suggests a lower likelihood of receiving a retake for rural students compared to urban students, but this result was not statistically significant.

Availability of Academic Support

The availability of academic support was analyzed with "High" support (rated 4-5) as the reference category. Students with average support (rated 2-3) had an odds ratio of 0.57 with a p-value of 0.266 and a 95% CI of 0.21-1.55, indicating a reduced likelihood of receiving a retake compared to those with high support, though this result was not statistically significant. However, students with low support (rated 1) had an odds ratio of 1.51 with a p-value of 0.027 and a 95% CI of 0.28-0.93. This suggests a significantly higher likelihood of receiving a retake for those with low academic support, indicating that inadequate support is associated with an increased probability of needing a retake.

Socioeconomic Status

Socioeconomic status was considered with high socioeconomic status as the reference category. Students from middle socioeconomic backgrounds had an odds ratio of 0.74 with a p-value of 0.260 and a 95% CI of 0.44-1.25, suggesting a lower likelihood of receiving a retake compared to those from high socioeconomic backgrounds, though this result was not statistically significant. Notably, students from low socioeconomic backgrounds had an odds ratio of 6.73 with a p-value of 0.001 and a 95% CI of 2.20-20.58. This indicates a significantly higher likelihood of receiving a retake for students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, suggesting that financial and social challenges might contribute to their increased need for academic retakes.

Discussion of Findings.

The study on factors associated with student retakes at Metropolitan International University revealed a complex interplay of individual, institutional, and contextual factors contributing to academic underperformance. The univariate analysis highlighted the significant proportion of students with low prior academic performance, poor study habits, and inadequate time management skills. These findings align with the achievement gap theory, which posits that students from disadvantaged backgrounds, often characterized by lower academic preparedness and limited access to resources, are more likely to struggle academically. Furthermore, the study found that students in larger learning environments, those with limited access to academic support services, and those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds were more susceptible to retakes. This supports the social capital theory, which emphasizes the role of social networks and resources in shaping academic success. Students with limited social capital, often stemming from socioeconomic disadvantages, may lack the support and guidance necessary to navigate the challenges of higher education.

The bivariate analysis further corroborated the significant associations observed in the univariate analysis. Specifically, a strong correlation was found between poor study habits, low prior academic performance, and the likelihood of receiving a retake. These findings resonate with the cognitive load theory, which suggests that students with inadequate study skills and limited prior knowledge may experience cognitive overload, leading to difficulties in processing and retaining information. The study also revealed a significant association between the availability of academic support services and the likelihood of receiving a retake. Students with limited access to tutoring, academic advising, and other support mechanisms were more likely to require retakes. This aligns with the scaffolding theory, which emphasizes the importance of providing students with timely and appropriate support to facilitate their learning and academic progress.

The multivariate analysis provided further insights into the relative influence of various factors on student retakes. While the quality of teaching and the size of the learning environment did not show significant associations with retakes, the availability of academic support services and socioeconomic status emerged as significant predictors. Students with low academic support and those from low socioeconomic backgrounds were significantly more likely to receive retakes. These findings underscore the critical role of institutional support systems and societal resources in mitigating academic underperformance. The equity theory suggests that students from disadvantaged backgrounds may experience a sense of inequity in access to resources and opportunities, leading to feelings of frustration and disengagement. This can further exacerbate their academic struggles and increase the likelihood of retakes. The study's findings highlight the need for universities to implement targeted interventions, such as enhanced academic support services, financial aid programs, and mentorship initiatives, to address the unique challenges faced by students from diverse backgrounds.

Conclusion

The study's findings provide a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted factors influencing student retakes at the School of Statistics and Planning, Metropolitan International University. The research revealed that a complex interplay of individual, institutional, and contextual factors contributes to academic underperformance. While individual factors such as poor study habits and low prior academic performance significantly impact the likelihood of retakes, institutional factors, particularly the availability of academic support services, play a crucial role. The study also highlighted the significant influence of socioeconomic status, with students from low-income backgrounds facing a significantly higher risk of needing to retake courses. These findings underscore

the need for a multi-pronged approach to address student retakes, encompassing interventions at the individual, institutional, and societal levels.

The study's findings have significant implications for the university, its students, and the broader higher education landscape. The university should prioritize the development and implementation of targeted strategies to enhance student performance and reduce academic underperformance. This includes investing in robust academic support services, providing tailored academic advising, and promoting effective study skills workshops. Furthermore, the university should actively address the socioeconomic disparities that contribute to academic struggles. This could involve expanding financial aid programs, offering scholarships, and creating mentorship programs to support students from disadvantaged backgrounds. By addressing these critical issues, the university can foster a more supportive and successful learning environment, ultimately leading to improved student outcomes and a more equitable higher education system.

Recommendations

The university should invest in robust academic support services to provide students with the necessary resources to succeed.

Targeted financial aid programs and scholarships should be expanded to address socioeconomic disparities and provide equal opportunities for all students.

The university should implement mentorship programs to connect students with experienced individuals who can offer guidance and support.

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