

DOI Link: <https://doi.org/10.61586/fMlTe>
Vol.410, Issue.11, Part.1, Nov 2025, PP. 58-71

Qualitative analysis of the causes of academic probation and the effectiveness of learning support programs for strengthening academic support systems in a Korean University

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Funding for this paper was provided by Namseoul University.

Received Feb 2025 Accepted Oct 2025 Published Nov 2025

Abstract

This study explores the causes of academic probation and examines the effectiveness of learning support programs in strengthening academic support systems at a Korean university. A qualitative approach was adopted through in-depth interviews with undergraduate students who had experienced academic probation. Data were collected and analyzed using qualitative content analysis to identify the underlying factors contributing to academic underachievement and to evaluate the perceived impact of the “Jump-Up” learning support program. The results revealed that the primary causes of academic probation included personal factors such as lack of learning strategies, low self-regulation, and mismatch between major and aptitude, as well as environmental and institutional factors including financial difficulties, parental expectations, and instructional practices misaligned with students’ needs. The Jump-Up program was found to enhance intrinsic learning motivation, improve study habits, and provide both academic and emotional support through mentoring and systematic feedback. These findings suggest that universities should establish integrated and preventive support systems that address cognitive, emotional, and environmental dimensions of learning in order to reduce the recurrence of academic probation and promote sustainable academic growth among students.

Key Words: Qualitative study, Academic probation, Learning support program, South Korea

Introduction

In university education, the academic probation system serves as a mechanism to warn students whose academic performance falls below a certain standard and to encourage improvement. However, with the recent decline in the school-age population and the growing issue of student dropouts, academic probation has come to be recognized not merely as an administrative measure but as an important indicator for the early detection of underachievement among university students.

Since 2011, the management of underachieving students has been included as an item in university accreditation evaluations, and in the fourth-cycle evaluation, the establishment of a systematic framework encompassing prevention, support, and follow-up management has been emphasized as a key evaluation criterion. Accordingly, universities are now required to analyze the causes of academic probation in detail and to establish a support system that promotes academic persistence and growth, rather than focusing solely on grade improvement.

Underachievement refers to a condition in which students exhibit low academic performance despite possessing normal intellectual abilities (Kim et al, 2018). It is distinct from learning disabilities, as it arises not from cognitive deficits but from factors such as lack of learning motivation, ineffective learning strategies, emotional instability, and familial or social influences. In higher education settings, students placed on academic probation are generally regarded as a representative underachieving group (Shin, 2018). Academic probation thus functions not only as an administrative action but also as a significant indicator predicting potential academic dropout (Kim & Kim, 2018).

At N University, located in Cheonan, Chungcheongnam-do, the system for preventing and managing academic probation operates through a collaborative structure involving six departments: the Office of Academic Affairs, the Office of Student Affairs, the Office of Educational Innovation, the Center for Teaching and Learning Support, the Student Counseling Center, and individual academic departments. In the prevention stage, the university identifies students at risk of dropout based on the results of the Student Adaptation Test (SAT) and the Career Development Test (CDT) administered to first-year students. These students are provided with faculty advising and group counseling sessions. In addition, the Office of Educational Innovation conducts a basic academic skills diagnostic test, and students with foundational learning deficiencies are supported through the “N+ Stepping-Stone Academy”, which provides remedial courses in Korean, English, mathematics, and computer literacy. In the follow-up management stage, the Office of Academic Affairs notifies academic departments and related units of the list of students placed on probation. These students are then guided through a two-step counseling process—the first with their academic advisor and the second with the Student Counseling Center—and are encouraged to participate in the Jump-Up Program. This process establishes a continuous feedback system among individuals, departments, and university-level institutions, aiming to prevent repeated academic probation and reduce student dropout rates.

Accordingly, this study explores the experiences and adaptation processes of students on academic probation at Namseoul University, identifies the causes and coping mechanisms related to academic probation, and proposes systematic management strategies.

The specific research questions are as follows:

First, how do students who have experienced academic probation perceive the causes of their probation?

Second, how do these students perceive the effectiveness of the university’s learning support program, Jump-Up, in overcoming academic probation?

Theoretical Backgrounds

Concept of Underachievement and Review of Previous Studies

Recent research has expanded the concept of underachievement beyond a mere result of low academic performance, encompassing broader dimensions such as academic adjustment, career exploration, and emotional stability. For instance, Yoon (2013) defined underachievement among university students as overall academic difficulties and emphasized the necessity of emotional and

social support to overcome them. The learning style of college students has been found to exert a significant influence on academic achievement. Ko (2005) reported that learners' preferred learning styles lead to differences in task performance and engagement. For example, students with intuitive learning styles tend to achieve higher academic performance than those with sensing learning styles, indicating that learning style serves as an important mediating factor in academic success. Psychological and emotional factors are also closely related to academic achievement. Kim (2004) identified self-efficacy as a key determinant of academic success, while Lee (2011) demonstrated that learning engagement positively affects both achievement and adaptation to college life. Similarly, Jeon (2011) suggested that social support enhances students' academic involvement and performance. More recent research has found that learning engagement and emotional stability mutually reinforce each other (2021).

Academic probation has been identified as one of the main predictors of college dropout. Kang et al. (2000) found that students on academic probation exhibit low satisfaction with their majors and college life and lack self-regulation skills. Subsequent studies confirmed that repeated experiences of academic probation significantly increase the probability of dropout (Hyun, 2016; Kim & Hwang, 2019). Furthermore, comparative studies between students on academic probation and high-achieving students revealed clear differences in the frequency of learning strategy use and time invested in study (Cho et al., 2000). More recent studies on underachievement have shifted focus from simply analyzing "low-achieving groups" to evaluating the effectiveness of student support programs. For example, mentoring programs, study skills workshops, and counseling services have been found to positively influence the academic recovery of students on academic probation (Yoon & Park, 2014; Ha & Shin, 2022). Such findings empirically demonstrate that systematic institutional management facilitates students' academic rehabilitation.

In summary, prior research indicates that underachievement results not merely from low grades but from a complex interplay of cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and environmental factors. Therefore, university support systems should be designed with a multi-layered structure encompassing prevention, intervention, and post-management. In other words, universities should adopt an integrated approach that extends beyond one-time academic improvement programs to include college adaptation, career development, and psychological counseling (Lee & Hwang, 2011; Kim et al., 2020). Given that academic probation directly affects not only university evaluation indicators but also student retention rates and institutional competitiveness, managing underachieving students must be considered an essential component of quality assurance in higher education. Accordingly, universities should establish early-warning systems, provide individualized learning support, and combine emotional and social interventions to promote the recovery and growth of students on academic probation.

Academic Probation Support Programs at N University – Jump-Up

Namseoul University has established a systematic support framework for students who have received academic probation due to low academic achievement or are at risk of underperformance. This framework is grounded in the university's academic regulations, institutional policies, and implementation guidelines, encompassing both preventive and post-management systems. The present study analyzes the university's academic probation policy, the management system for high-risk students, and the operational structures of its key learning support programs—Jump-Up and Level-Up—to examine their policy significance and practical implementation. The academic probation system at Namseoul University operates in accordance with institutional academic regulations. Students whose semester GPA falls below 1.5 are placed on academic probation. Those who receive probation for three consecutive semesters or four semesters in total are subject to dismissal. However, if a student achieves a GPA of 3.0 or higher in the following semester, one prior probation record may be revoked. Students placed on probation are strongly encouraged to participate in advising sessions with their academic advisor, individual counseling, and the Jump-Up program operated by the Center for Teaching and Learning Support. Students who demonstrate academic improvement after program participation are eligible for scholarship benefits.

In addition, students with a GPA between 1.5 and 1.99 are classified as a "high-risk group for academic probation" and are recommended to participate in the Level-Up program offered by the Center for Teaching and Learning Support. This program is designed to identify

underachievement at an early stage and help students improve their learning strategies to prevent probation. Participants who achieve measurable grade improvement are also awarded scholarships as incentives. Furthermore, the Office of Educational Innovation conducts a Basic Academic Skills Diagnostic Test to identify students with insufficient foundational learning abilities. Those students are provided with supplementary education in Korean, English, mathematics, and computer literacy through the “N+ Stepping-Stone Academy.” Between the 2020 and 2023 academic years, the average rate of students placed on academic probation was 2.19%. Although a temporary increase was observed during the COVID-19 pandemic, the rate has shown signs of stabilization since 2023. This trend suggests that the university’s policies on underachievement prevention and co-curricular learning support programs have produced a moderate positive effect on improving student outcomes.

Method

Participants

The participants in this study were selected through purposive sampling, a qualitative research method that intentionally recruits individuals who can provide the most relevant and rich information regarding the research questions. The study sample consisted of five undergraduate students from N University, a four-year comprehensive university located in Chungnam Province, who had experienced academic probation. Participants were recruited through announcements from the university’s Center for Teaching and Learning Support. Eligible students were those who had received an academic warning (GPA below 1.5) within the past three years. After expressing their willingness to participate, the purpose and procedures of the study were clearly explained to them, and the research was conducted based on their voluntary informed consent.

In the selection process, priority was given to students who could provide in-depth descriptions of their perceptions and experiences related to academic probation and who had participated in learning support programs such as Level-Up or Jump-Up offered by the Center for Teaching and Learning Support. The basic background information of the participants is summarized in Table 1. All five participants were male students, majoring respectively in Electronic Engineering, Child Welfare, Virtual Reality Engineering, Taxation, and Big Data Management. Their previous semester GPAs ranged from 0.68 to 1.38, and each had experienced at least one instance of academic probation.

Table 1. General background of research participants

Participants	Gender	School year	Major	GPA
A	Male	3	Electronic Engineering	1.38
B	Male	3	Child Welfare Studies	0.68
C	Male	1	Virtual Reality Studies	0.13
D	Male	2	Department of Taxation	1.48
E	Male	2	Big Data Management Engineering	1.25

Data Collection Method

In-depth interviews were employed as the primary data collection method, a qualitative approach that has long been used to explore specific topics or experiences in depth. This method focuses on eliciting participants’ personal experiences and their interpretations of those experiences. The interviews were conducted one-on-one over a period of four days, from October 14 to October 17, 2024, with each participant interviewed once. Immediately after each session, the interview data were transcribed verbatim. To clarify or further explore certain points following the in-depth interviews, follow-up communications were conducted via email and telephone interviews. The overall schedule and procedures are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Data collection methods

Type of Data Collection	Methods and Materials Used
Individual In-depth Interview	Conducted once per participant through unstructured and semi-structured interviews to obtain in-depth information.
Email Communication (E-mail)	Follow-up interviews were conducted via email to address additional questions.
Researcher's Reflective Journal	The researcher wrote reflective journals after each interview.

Table 3. Interview questions

Classification	Contents
Causes of Academic Probation	Causes of Receiving Academic Probation Factors Hindering Academic Performance (Personal, Environmental, and University-related Factors)
Experience of Participation in Learning Support Programs	Experience of Participation in Learning Support Programs Effectiveness of the Programs

Data Analysis

The collected data in this study were analyzed using qualitative content analysis. Immediately after each interview, the recordings were transcribed as quickly as possible. Once data collection was completed, the materials were analyzed intensively through iterative reading and reflection. For the analysis, the collected transcripts were read thoroughly in three stages to ensure a deep understanding of the content. During this process, the researcher referred to a reflective journal written after each interview to document thoughts and emerging insights. Based on these reflections and the data itself, categorization was conducted. Through multiple rounds of focused reading, the researcher identified portions of the text related to the main research themes, checked for coherence with the study's context, and performed preliminary categorization for content that appeared repeatedly. As the process continued, more refined and coherent categories and subcategories were established. Titles were then assigned to each category, relevant excerpts from the interviews were selected, and interpretative analysis was conducted. To minimize researcher bias and subjectivity, diverse sources of data were collected for triangulation, and the analysis was reviewed and validated by two Ph.D. holders in education to ensure reliability and confirm the credibility of the interpretations.

Results and Discussions

As shown in Table 4, this study conducted in-depth interviews with students who had experienced academic probation, and derived the following categories and themes. Based on the interview findings, the causes of academic probation were analyzed, and the effectiveness of the "Jump-Up" student support program was examined. Finally, the study proposed strategies and institutional directions for supporting students on academic probation.

Table 4. Research results

Category	Sub-categories	
1. Causes of Academic Probation	1) Personal Internal Factors	a. Lack of Effective Learning Strategies b. Justification of Academic Underachievement c. Mismatch Between Major and Aptitude d. Low Positive Psychological Resources e. Failure of Self-Regulation
	2) Environmental Factors	a. Family's Economic Circumstances b. Parental Expectations and Career Identity Confusion c. Problems of Long-Distance Commuting
	3) University-Related Factors	a. Instructional Practices Misaligned with Expectations b. Difficulties in Adapting to University Atmosphere c. Challenges in Peer Relationships
2. Effects of Learning Support Programs	a. Enhancement of Intrinsic Learning Motivation b. Improvement of Learning Strategies c. Mentoring and Collaborative Learning d. Systematic Time Management and Study Planning e. Development of Challenge-Oriented and Integrative Thinking f. Provision of Emotional and Academic Support g. Establishment of Autonomous and Concrete Learning Goals	

Causes of Academic Probation

1) Internal Factors

a. Lack of Effective Learning Strategies

Absence of learning strategies: Some participants showed a tendency to skip even assignments that were emphasized as important, which led to negligence in their studies and eventually resulted in academic probation. This was closely related to a lack of motivation. According to Pintrich and De Groot's (1990) theory of self-regulated learning, there is a close relationship between motivation and strategic learning behavior. When students lack motivation or fail to systematically plan tasks, the likelihood of academic failure increases.

"Even though it was emphasized as important, I often skipped it without solving it, and I think that's why I got academic probation." (Student A)

Inefficient learning strategies: Some participants only reviewed lecture notes superficially or crammed for exams right before the test period. Such surface-level strategies reveal their limitations in higher education, which requires deeper understanding (1987). Even with concentrated study sessions before exams, some students failed to grasp concepts or apply memorized information, showing insufficient deep learning and repetitive review.

"I just look at my notes, just memorizing them. I thought I remembered at that moment, but when I saw the exam paper, it wasn't like that..." (Student B)

Lack of collaborative learning: While study groups could have provided opportunities for knowledge exchange and motivation, the discontinuation or absence of such groups limited students' chances to

experience the positive effects of cooperative learning. This aligns with Bandura's (1977) social learning theory, which emphasizes the importance of interpersonal interactions and learning environments. Without collaboration, students often felt isolated and less motivated.

"That's right. Studying alone made me struggle by myself..." (Student A)

b. Justification of Academic Underperformance

Self-handicapping strategies: Participants often justified their academic failure by procrastinating or adopting a careless attitude, lowering their sense of responsibility. Some underestimated their abilities and gave up on academic efforts, which exemplifies self-handicapping behavior intended to preemptively justify failure.

"I always thought, 'I can do it later,' and ended up delaying things." (Student C)

Lack of learning goals: Setting clear goals was crucial for recovering motivation and fostering proactive attitudes. For example, one recovering student (Student D) established the goal of obtaining a professional certification, which increased focus on related courses. This complementary relationship between certification preparation and university courses improved pre-study and review practices, raising participation and motivation.

"I'm preparing for the Computerized Accounting Certificate, and since some courses are directly related, it helps me keep up better." (Recovering Student D)

c. Mismatch Between Major and Aptitude

Choosing majors for employment prospects: Several students selected their majors based on job prospects rather than personal interest or aptitude. Over time, they realized the mismatch, which led to loss of interest and increased stress.

"Honestly, I chose this major because I thought the employment outlook was good, but now I feel it doesn't suit me." (Student B)

Difficulty of major content: Struggles with understanding major-specific content compounded the issue. When foundational concepts were not well grasped, students experienced accumulated difficulties, eventually giving up on coursework.

"Since I didn't master the basics, when I advanced to the third year, I couldn't keep up with the classes and ended up giving up." (Student A)

d. Psychological and Emotional Factors

Lack of motivation: Some students displayed a defeatist attitude, such as "let things take their course," leading to poor class attendance and disengagement. This attitude resulted in probation and further lowered confidence, perpetuating a negative cycle.

"It was more about willpower. I just didn't want to go to school. School itself didn't feel important anymore." Student A)

Low self-efficacy: Students with low self-efficacy reported feelings of helplessness and self-blame, which weakened motivation and worsened performance.

"When I got academic probation, I couldn't understand the lectures and felt so much self-blame afterwards." (Student D)

e. Failure of Self-Regulation

Failure to maintain goals: Some participants admitted they set goals but quickly abandoned them, citing excuses such as fatigue. This failure of behavioral regulation lowered motivation and hindered goal achievement.

"I set goals to study but then gave up, making excuses that it was too hard." (Student B)

Poor time management and lifestyle habits: Oversleeping, heavy smartphone use late at night, and irregular sleep disrupted study routines. This reflects Mischel et al.'s (1989) delayed gratification theory—students often opted for short-term comfort over long-term achievement.

"I often overslept, even when the alarm rang, and missed classes because of it." (Student A)

2) Environmental Factors

a. Family's Economic Circumstances

Part-time employment: Holding part-time jobs was identified as a major cause of academic underachievement. Participants reported that they worked during weekdays and weekends to cover commuting expenses, meals, and pocket money, thereby easing their parents' financial burden. However, this frequently led to insufficient sleep and fatigue, which hindered concentration in morning classes. This finding reflects the difficulty of balancing academic obligations with financial independence. The constant fatigue and lack of study time reduced students' efficiency and overall achievement.

"Why do you oversleep? What makes you stay up so late at night?" (Researcher)

"Because of part-time work... I get off at midnight, and my Monday class starts at 9 a.m." (Student A)

"I worked at a restaurant on weekends. I wanted to help my parents and cover my own expenses such as allowance, commuting, and meals." (Student B)

b. Parents' Expectations and Career Identity Confusion

Parental influence on major choice: Some participants chose their majors based on parental advice rather than personal interest or aptitude. For example, one student selected a social welfare major at the suggestion of parents but found the courses uninteresting and irrelevant to their personal interests, which undermined academic motivation. This indicates that major selection without a well-formed career identity negatively affects learning motivation and performance.

"My parents suggested social welfare, but honestly, I wasn't sure about it. I don't think it suits me." (Student B)

Career identity confusion: Participants also reported that uncertainty about their career path weakened their academic purpose. Ambiguity regarding their future direction led to diminished engagement and persistent declines in learning motivation and performance.

"I couldn't follow the lectures well, and they weren't fun. I think that's part of the problem." (Student A)

"Because I haven't decided my direction yet, I couldn't gain momentum in academics." (Student B)

c. Long-Distance Commuting Issues

Physical fatigue from commuting: Several participants indicated that spending several hours each day commuting depleted their energy and accumulated fatigue, which hindered their ability to focus on coursework. One participant described the nearly three-hour commute by subway and shuttle bus as particularly draining, resulting in reduced alertness even after arriving at campus. This highlights how commuting fatigue directly undermines academic efficiency.

"The reason I was often late or absent is that I live far away... I commute by both subway and school shuttle bus." (Student A)

"It takes almost three hours... I just feel exhausted and blank." (Student B)

Psychological exhaustion from commuting: Long commutes also led to repeated tardiness and absences, as students experienced stress and frustration. Many perceived commuting time as wasted time, which diminished motivation for academic tasks such as preparation and review. This phenomenon can be explained using Kember's (1999) time-energy distribution model: when students must allocate excessive time to commuting, less time and energy remain for study, assignments, and rest. Physical fatigue and psychological stress thereby reduce motivation and hinder academic participation.

"Going back and forth to school was exhausting... riding the subway for hours." (Student E)

Institutional implications: The significant burden of long commutes suggests the need for institutional support, such as transportation assistance, expanded online learning options, and counseling programs to manage stress and fatigue. Such measures can mitigate the negative impact of commuting, fostering greater motivation and achievement.

3) University-Related Factors

a. Mismatch Between Expectations and Instructional Practices

Most university courses relied heavily on lecture-based methods, which many students described as monotonous and disengaging. Although some innovative teaching methods, such as project-based learning and interactive activities, were occasionally implemented, participants reported difficulty adapting to these approaches. Presentation- and seminar-centered classes, in particular, posed a significant burden. Underachieving students—often introverted and less proactive—perceived these requirements as disadvantageous and felt reluctant to inconvenience their peers.

"In my major, I was disappointed. Now I'm learning Unity, but back then we only did block coding with Scratch. It was mostly lecture-based, so it was boring." (Student C)

"In general education courses with team projects, it's not enough if only I work hard. The entire team has to be committed. I usually add opinions to others' ideas instead of generating my own." (Student C)

"In team projects, I'm not good at taking the lead or speaking up actively." (Student C)

These findings underscore how both overly traditional lecture methods and excessively demanding collaborative projects can create learning barriers. Students unable to adapt to these instructional modes often disengaged, which contributed to academic underperformance.

b. Difficulty Adapting to University Atmosphere

During the initial period of university life, students encountered a relatively autonomous environment compared to high school. While some appreciated the freedom, others—accustomed to structured oversight by teachers—struggled with the responsibility that came with autonomy. Excessive indulgence in social

activities, such as frequent drinking, was common among peers and further impeded academic adaptation.

"In the first semester of freshman year, other students often got caught up in drinking. But I lacked the basics for classes because I was focused on projects." (Student C)

"I skipped school a lot and stayed home, only meeting friends to drink." (Student E)

The difficulty of adjusting to the more autonomous university culture indicates that insufficient transition support may exacerbate maladaptive behaviors and contribute to probation.

c. Challenges in Peer Relationships

The absence of close peer networks also emerged as a contributing factor. One participant noted that, because most high school friends attended other universities, they struggled to establish close relationships in their current institution. This led to feelings of isolation and limited access to academic information, which negatively influenced motivation and performance.

"Most of my high school friends went to different universities... I don't have many friends here." (Student E)

Effectiveness of learning support programs

a. Enhancement of Intrinsic Motivation

The JUMP-UP program stimulated students' intrinsic motivation by increasing interest and a sense of accomplishment in learning. Through positive academic experiences, students were encouraged to engage voluntarily in their studies. This aligns with Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory (SDT)[23], which posits that intrinsic motivation is strengthened when learners experience enjoyment and personal satisfaction from academic activities.

"Originally, I had no interest in classes and thought I was failing. But after joining the program, I started to find classes enjoyable." (Student C)

b. Improvement of Learning Strategies

Participants reported improvements in their learning approaches after program participation. Mentoring and collaborative learning facilitated the adoption of systematic strategies, including both metacognitive and cognitive strategies. Metacognitive strategies involve planning, monitoring, and adjusting one's learning process, while cognitive strategies focus on organizing and processing information. Students who engaged in these methods improved both the quality and efficiency of their learning.

"I learned time management and note-taking strategies from my mentor, which helped me better identify key points during lectures. I'm using those strategies now." (Student C)

c. Mentoring and Collaborative Learning

Through mentoring and group learning, students reduced their academic burdens and acquired effective study skills. According to Information Processing Theory, learners achieve better outcomes when they can identify, prioritize, and organize information. Summarizing key information, as encouraged in the program, reduced cognitive load and enhanced performance.

"In English class, the professor required us to watch video materials and complete quizzes, which helped me study more regularly." (Student C)

"My mentor suggested writing down only the important parts and reviewing them after class. It made studying less stressful and easier to understand." (Student D)

d. Systematic Time Management and Study Planning

The program fostered skills in managing time and setting effective study plans. Regular progress reports and review activities encouraged students to form consistent study habits. Achieving concrete goals reinforced self-efficacy and motivation, and repetitive cycles of planning and execution cultivated productive study routines.

"I used to delay tasks until the day before, but now I write them down and complete them the same day, which produces better results." (Student C)

"Since I have to submit both early check and JUMP-UP reports every week, I don't forget to prepare, and that helps me study systematically." (Student A)

e. Development of Challenge-Oriented and Integrative Thinking

The program also nurtured students' capacity to integrate knowledge and strengths to generate new ideas. By encouraging analysis and creative synthesis, the program fostered higher-order thinking skills that enabled students to approach problems innovatively.

"I realized that by combining my strengths with new fields, I could generate better synergy." (Student C)

f. Provision of Emotional and Academic Support

Mentoring provided emotional stability as well as academic guidance. Meeting mentors—senior students with strong academic performance—helped participants reduce anxiety, feel supported, and build a sense of belonging. According to motivational theory, the fulfillment of belonging and stability needs is crucial for achieving higher levels of accomplishment.

"When I was nervous about presenting, my mentor told me, 'Just be honest, the professor will appreciate it.' That reassurance helped me." (Student C)

"I could ask my mentor questions I didn't feel comfortable asking professors, which was really helpful." (Student A)

g. Promotion of Autonomous and Concrete Goal-Setting

The JUMP-UP program guided students to set specific, attainable goals, thereby enhancing ownership of their learning. According to Goal-Setting Theory, clear and challenging goals strengthen motivation and performance. Participants developed both short-term and long-term objectives, including improving GPAs, avoiding further probation, and preparing for graduation projects.

"After the first semester, I started setting short-term goals like attending every class and studying daily." (Student C)

"I planned with my mentor to maintain a GPA above 3.0 and prepare for my graduation project by next May." (Student A)

Strategies and institutional directions for supporting students on academic probation

Academic probation reflects the complex interaction of students' internal limitations, environmental constraints, and institutional structures. As the interview findings revealed, underachieving students frequently struggled with inefficient learning strategies, self-handicapping behaviors, low psychological resources, and difficulties in self-regulation. These challenges were further compounded by external stressors such as financial hardship, parental expectations, career identity confusion, and long commuting times. Moreover, university-related issues—including misalignment between students' expectations and instructional practices, difficulties in adapting to

the autonomy of campus life, and limited peer support—intensified their vulnerability to academic failure. Effective institutional strategies must therefore address this multifaceted problem with holistic interventions that strengthen academic, psychological, and social resources simultaneously.

First, universities should prioritize the development of self-regulated learning and metacognitive strategies. Prior research has consistently emphasized that students who can plan, monitor, and evaluate their own learning processes demonstrate greater academic resilience and performance (Zimmerman, 2002). Training workshops and embedded curricular interventions that emphasize retrieval practice, distributed learning, and reflective activities can help students transition away from surface-level learning toward deeper engagement. Alongside these strategies, cultivating positive psychological resources such as self-efficacy and resilience is essential. Counseling services and peer coaching can counteract helplessness and procrastination, reinforcing persistence through supportive feedback and opportunities for incremental success (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2019).

Second, addressing environmental barriers is critical to sustaining students' academic engagement. Financial pressures often necessitate extensive part-time work, which reduces available study time and increases fatigue. Universities can respond by expanding flexible work-study programs, emergency financial aid, and scholarships designed for at-risk students (Alam, Sarker, & Kabir, 2022). At the same time, career counseling should assist students in reconciling parental expectations with personal aptitude and interests. Encouraging identity exploration and major-career alignment can reduce dissonance, helping students pursue academic paths consistent with both employability and personal fulfillment (Arnet, 2015). Additionally, flexible course delivery—including hybrid or online options—can mitigate the negative effects of long commutes, thus conserving students' time and energy for learning activities (Kember, 1999).

Third, institutional reforms must focus on the learning environment itself. While innovative pedagogies such as project-based and seminar-centered learning can enrich higher education, they may inadvertently disadvantage students lacking confidence or collaborative experience. Faculty development programs should thus emphasize inclusive pedagogy, balancing interactive methods with structured scaffolding to support diverse learners (Ambrose, 2010). Building strong peer networks through learning communities and mentoring schemes is equally important, as peer support provides both academic guidance and socio-emotional resilience (Collier, 2017).

Finally, evidence from the JUMP-UP program highlights the effectiveness of integrated interventions. By combining intrinsic motivation enhancement, strategic learning development, mentoring, systematic time management, and emotional support, the program fostered concrete goal-setting and reinforced ownership of learning. Such findings echo meta-analyses demonstrating that self-regulated learning interventions and active learning significantly improve performance and narrow achievement gaps (Theobald, 2021). Universities should therefore institutionalize structured, multifaceted support systems that do not only remediate academic deficits but also empower students with sustainable learning habits, psychological strength, and social belonging.

In conclusion, academic probation is not merely the outcome of individual shortcomings but a reflection of systemic gaps in educational support. Universities must adopt comprehensive strategies that integrate cognitive, emotional, and environmental interventions. By aligning instructional practices with students' needs, reducing structural barriers, and providing targeted mentoring and counseling, institutions can not only reduce probation rates but also foster long-term student success and resilience.

Conclusions and Suggestions

The findings underscore that academic probation is not merely the consequence of individual failings but rather the outcome of complex interactions among personal, environmental, and institutional factors. Students' academic struggles often originated in weak self-regulation and ineffective learning habits, but were compounded by economic burdens, family pressures, and institutional environments that failed to provide sufficient scaffolding for adaptation.

Universities must therefore develop comprehensive support systems that integrate cognitive, psychological, and social dimensions of learning. This includes fostering self-regulated learning strategies, strengthening positive psychological resources such as self-efficacy, providing financial and career counseling, and expanding flexible learning opportunities for students facing structural barriers such as long commutes. Moreover, faculty should adopt inclusive pedagogies and institutions should strengthen peer networks through mentoring and learning communities.

The evidence from the JUMP-UP program illustrates that structured interventions combining intrinsic motivation enhancement, systematic study planning, and emotional support can significantly improve academic resilience. By institutionalizing such integrated programs, universities can not only reduce probation rates but also foster sustainable success, belonging, and personal growth among their students.

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