

The Lived Experiences of College Students with Deviant Behavior: A Phenomenological Study

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Publication Date: 2025/05/20

Abstract: Deviant behavior among college students is a multifaceted issue influenced by psychological, social, institutional, and personal factors. This qualitative study employed transcendental phenomenology to explore the lived experiences of college students involved in deviant behavior at a local college in the Province of Bukidnon during the S.Y. 2024-2025. Purposive sampling was used to identify the participants, with 12 participants in the study. A researcher-made interview guide was used to gather the data. Using Colaizzi's data analysis method, six key themes emerged in understanding how college students develop and reinforce deviant behavior. These include navigating the complex realities of college life, experiencing the influences of emotions, peers, and environment on deviant behavior, reflecting on the consequences and embracing the journey to change, influence of environment on behavior, conformity to school rules, and trigger of deviant behavior. The findings also highlight how the environment shapes behavior, how conformity to school rules varies, and what triggers deviant actions. Finally, some students are willing to embrace change and grow from their experiences. Together, these themes reveal the multifaceted influences behind students' behavioral choices. Thus, the study emphasizes the importance of empathetic guidance, reflective discipline, and a supportive academic environment. It further recommends future studies to understand the journey of college students better.

Keywords: College Students, Deviant Behavior, Environment, Lived Experiences, Peer Influence.

How to Cite: Marylou S. Mutia; Dr. Elsa B. Buenavidez; Dr. Genelyn R. Baluyos. (2025) The Lived Experiences of College Students with Deviant Behavior: A Phenomenological Study. *International Journal of Innovative Science and Research Technology*, 10(5), 708-731. <https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/25may845>

I. INTRODUCTION

In contemporary society, education plays a pivotal role in shaping individuals into productive and responsible members of their communities. The academic environment not only promotes intellectual growth but also fosters holistic development. However, alongside this development, deviant behaviors and actions that diverge from accepted social norms have increasingly emerged within educational institutions (Onyemauche, 2020). These behaviors include acts such as examination malpractice, rape, bullying, stealing, truancy, lateness, and sexual immorality (Mogbana & Edward, 2022). Such behaviors raise significant concerns for educators, administrators, and policymakers, as they disrupt learning environments, harm student relationships, and hinder academic success.

Building upon this, deviance in higher education becomes particularly significant due to the increased independence, identity exploration, and pressure experienced during this stage (Phuong, 2022). While college-level deviance may be less severe than high school, it remains prevalent and impacts students' social and academic lives. Mental health struggles and peer pressure are commonly cited causes. Once labeled troublemakers, students face stigmatization and struggle to build positive relationships

with teachers (Chikwature Mutare Polytechnic, n.d.). To counter these issues, educators must implement clear behavioral guidelines and trauma-informed practices and collaborate with families and counselors (Akinlolu & Salawu, 2024).

Deviance encompasses a broad spectrum of behaviors, ranging from minor nonconformity to serious criminal acts (Ansar, 2024). Behaviors such as school violence, self-harm, substance abuse, smoking, and excessive internet use often stem from psychological distress and peer influence (Nickerson, 2023; bakk, 2024). Supporting this, research has shown that stress, lack of sleep, and mental health issues significantly contribute to the development of such behaviors (Zhang, 2024; Wu, 2024). A latent class analysis by Yip (2024) identified key predictors of deviance, such as gender, domestic violence exposure, and poor school belonging factors, especially evident among ethnic minority groups.

In addition to these internal factors, modern influences such as social media and entertainment play a considerable role in shaping deviant behaviors. For instance, Azzaakiyyah (2023) describe how these platforms have redefined social interactions and personal identity construction. Media content, including music and television, has been shown to contribute to aggression and deviance (Mambo & Nyamai,

2023). Zheng (2024) highlights a direct link between stressful life events, online deviance, and the buffering role of perceived social support.

While absenteeism has been a frequent subject of study, other forms of classroom deviance remain underexplored, as Grabmair (2020) contends. At the same time, ethical norms, particularly descriptive ones, have positively influenced classroom conduct (Malone, 2024). Thus, differences in deviant behavior have also been associated with gender and family dynamics. Dullas et al. (2021) observed that males are more inclined to engage in severe forms of deviance and that lower family satisfaction correlates with higher instances of such actions. The influence of mass media and peer groups continues to be critical (Ruelos et al., 2023), and current educational interventions are often viewed as insufficient to address these complex issues (Phoung & Trang, 2023).

Despite the growing body of research on adolescent deviance, there is still a notable lack of qualitative studies focusing on the lived experiences of college students. Much of the existing literature emphasizes quantitative factors such as socioeconomic status and peer influence. This gap in the literature could be filled by adopting phenomenological approaches to understand better student motivations, emotional struggles, and coping mechanisms. Community engagement is essential in fostering moral development and encouraging prosocial responsibility (Hudson & Brandenberger, 2023). The overall school climate has been found to influence deviance levels. Students with disciplinary records frequently report feelings of social isolation and disconnection from teachers and peers, further emphasizing the need for supportive environments.

Adding to the psychological context, adolescents are especially vulnerable to emotional impulses due to the natural progression of brain development wherein the limbic system, which governs emotion, matures earlier than the prefrontal cortex responsible for rational thinking (Fatima, 2024). In this regard, guilt or shame can act as internal deterrents to misconduct (Curtis, 2023), although ethical expectations alone may be insufficient without emotional intelligence and self-awareness (Oluakanwa, 2024).

College students often juggle academic responsibilities alongside financial and emotional pressures as part of their daily challenges. Study by Lee-Chua, Q. N. (2022) reveal that students frequently rely on personal motivations such as faith, family support, and aspirations for the future to navigate these pressures. These findings reinforce the idea that coping mechanisms are shaped by individual personality traits and life experiences (Junto et al., 2023).

Another important factor to consider is academic policies' confusion, which can inadvertently contribute to deviant behavior. Despite institutional efforts to promote integrity, students often receive inconsistent or unclear messages regarding acceptable academic conduct (Bens, 2022). When personal values conflict with observed behaviors or institutional standards, this can lead to psychological discomfort and reduced well-being (Chrystal et

al., 2019). However, when delivered constructively, feedback can promote student resilience and aid in their academic and personal adjustment (Winstone & Boud, 2019; Kalaivani, 2021; Putwain et al., 2020). Students' interpretation of feedback significantly affects their capacity to self-regulate and engage meaningfully in learning (Panadero et al., 2023).

Identifying information is a dynamic and situational process deeply influenced by social and environmental factors. Students may undergo sudden behavioral changes in response to temporary stressors or evolving identities. Research by Colladon and Grippa (2021) demonstrates how inaccurate self-perception correlates with poor academic performance, suggesting a pressing need to develop students' self-awareness and ability to evaluate themselves accurately. Thus, addressing deviance effectively requires a comprehensive approach that integrates emotional regulation, ethical development, supportive feedback, and nurturing school climates.

The significance of this research is particularly pronounced in higher education institutions where diverse student populations bring varying backgrounds, values, and challenges. Understanding the lived experiences of college students with deviant behavior can provide valuable guidance for educators, counselors, and administrators in developing proactive measures to address these issues. Moreover, the findings can contribute to broader societal efforts to destigmatize struggles associated with deviant behavior and promote a culture of empathy, understanding, and support.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study was anchored on the theories of Social Learning Theory (Albert Bandura, 1977), Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1969), and Strain Theory (Merton, 1938), which provide an understanding of the lived experiences of college students with deviant behavior.

Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977) suggests that people learn behaviors by observing others, especially those close to them, like family, friends, or role models. If someone sees others engaging in deviant actions and being rewarded or not punished, they might think such behaviors are acceptable or desirable. This theory also helps explain how social media and online communities influence behavior, especially among young people (Wilson, C., & McDarby V., 2022). In this study, Social Learning Theory is a framework for understanding how college students acquire and reinforce deviant behavior through observation, imitation, and social interactions. Behaviors are learned from role models such as peers, family, or media and are influenced by reinforcement or punishment. Exposure to environments where deviance is normalized may contribute to its persistence. Additionally, research indicates that peer deviant behavior negatively impacts academic performance (Jiang, 2023), further highlighting the significance of social influence in shaping student behavior.

Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1969) explains how early emotional bonds influence future relationships, particularly between children and their caregivers. A child either forms a secure attachment or experiences an insecure attachment to their parent. Those with secure attachment tend to be independent, possess a positive self-image, and maintain healthy relationships. They are less likely to misbehave, as they feel secure and their emotional needs are met. In contrast, individuals with an anxious, insecure attachment style are highly dependent on relationships and frequently fear rejection and criticism.

The Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1969) helps to explore how early relationships with caregivers influence college students' deviant behavior. According to Attachment Theory, individuals develop internal working models of relationships based on their early experiences with primary caregivers, which shape their ability to form secure or insecure attachments in adulthood. Students with insecure attachment styles may struggle with emotional regulation, leading to deviant behaviors as a way of coping with stress or seeking validation. Even if they are unaware of it, they long for affection and reassurance from their caregivers (Aute et al., 2020). The framework helps understand how attachment-related issues, such as neglect or inconsistent care, may contribute to developing and persisting deviant behaviors in college students.

Strain Theory (Merton, 1938) suggests that society sets goals and rules for achieving them. People who cannot meet these goals through accepted methods experience frustration or emotional strain. This can lead them to choose alternative ways to cope, which might include deviant behavior. Merton identified five ways people respond to strain: conformity, innovation, ritualism, retreatism, and rebellion. The theory highlights how feeling disconnected from societal expectations can push individuals to use deviant strategies to cope with their struggles.

This theory provides a framework for understanding how social pressures drive deviant behavior. When students face barriers to achieving culturally valued goals, such as academic success or social acceptance, they may resort to deviance as a coping mechanism. Strain from academic, social, or financial challenges, including self-funding education, has been linked to deviant behaviors (Darling, 2020). This study uses a phenomenological approach to explore how students perceive and respond to these pressures, revealing the personal and environmental factors contributing to their deviant actions.

Together, these theories provide a framework for understanding how various social influences and personal experiences shape deviant behavior among college students.

III. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The research study focused on the lived experiences of college students with deviant behavior. The study yielded six major themes due to thorough scrutiny of their experiences. The themes are (1) navigating the complex realities of college

life, (2) experiencing the influences of emotions, peers, and environment on deviant behavior, (3) reflecting on consequences and embracing the journey to change, (4) influence of environment on behavior, (5) conformity to school rules, and (6) triggers deviant behavior. These themes describe the experiences of college students with deviant behavior in a local college in Bukidnon.

Deviant behavior among college students represents more than just a breach of school rules; it often reflects deeper emotional, psychological, and social struggles that students face during a pivotal stage in their development. Behaviors such as absenteeism, classroom disruptions, and disrespect toward authority figures may arise from internal challenges like stress, anxiety, and identity confusion, as well as external influences such as peer pressure, unclear academic policies, and strained relationships within the school environment. The growing impact of social media adds another layer, as students may seek attention or belonging through content that pushes boundaries or defies institutional norms. Rather than labeling these individuals simply as troublemakers, it is important to understand their actions within the broader context of their lived experiences. By approaching student deviance with empathy, consistency, and support, educators and institutions can foster a more inclusive and responsive academic environment that encourages personal growth and positive behavioral change.

Navigating the Complex Realities of College Life. This theme illustrates the total contrast between students' pre-college expectations and the realities they face once immersed in academic life. Many students reported encountering unexpected emotional, psychological, financial, and social challenges that tested their resilience and adaptability. The transition to college often shifted their focus from thriving to merely surviving, as daily struggles became a norm rather than an exception (Schreiner, 2020; Gopalan & Brady, 2020). Rather than offering ease and growth as anticipated, the college environment frequently demanded persistent effort to cope with its pressures (Means & Pyne, 2021).

Experiencing the Influences of Emotions, Peers, and Environment on Deviant Behavior. This emphasizes how college students' actions are shaped by emotional states, peer dynamics, and environmental pressures (Hong et al., 2021; Liu & Wang, 2020). Emotional vulnerability, especially in environments that stress belonging, can heighten susceptibility to negative influences and impair self-regulation (Miller & Prinstein, 2021). As students form their identities, they often face conflicting social cues that challenge their moral judgment. In such high-pressure settings, survival often overrides comfort, making resilience a daily necessity (Means & Pyne, 2021).

Reflecting on Consequences and Embracing the Journey to Change. This theme underscores the transformative impact of recognizing personal mistakes and actively pursuing growth. Students consider the consequences of disciplinary actions and reflect on the

emotional and social insights gained through these experiences (Smith & Brown, 2020).

Influence of Environment on Behavior. Environmental factors deeply influence student behavior. Elements such as family background, peer influence, school atmosphere, and personal experiences collectively shape how students perceive and respond to situations (Bronkema & Bowman, 2021; Liu & Wang, 2020). This theme emphasizes that behavior is not solely the result of personal choice but often stems from external pressures and contextual factors. In college, subtle and explicit influences impact students' emotions, decisions, and social interactions (Gopalan & Brady, 2020).

Conformity to School Rules. This theme revealed the participant's responses that following school rules is seen not only as a formal duty but also as a reflection of personal and social responsibility. Students acknowledged the role of institutional policies in maintaining order, though some described internal emotional conflicts and occasional lapses in adherence (Nguyen & Walker, 2021). This theme

illustrates that rule-following is internalized in varied ways, ranging from genuine acceptance and respect to confusion or resistance, influenced by students' values, experiences, and authority interpretations (Lopez & Martin, 2020).

Triggers of Deviant Behavior. The findings suggest that student misconduct is frequently triggered by emotional strain, provocation, and peer influence rather than being consistent or intentional. Many behaviors were described as situational responses to stress or interpersonal tension. Participants openly reflected on their emotional vulnerabilities and the external pressures that contributed to their actions (Miller & Prinstein, 2021; Hong et al., 2021), emphasizing that deviant behavior often stems from reactive, not premeditated, responses to challenging circumstances.

Deviant behaviors for college students generally refer to actions or behaviors that deviate from established social norms, rules, or expectations. Examples include academic cheating, alcohol use on campus, vandalism, bullying, harassment, assault, theft, frequent class skipping, disruptive behavior, and fighting.



Fig 1 Schematic Diagram of the Study

IV. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study explored the lived experiences of college students with deviant behavior in one of the colleges in the Province of Bukidnon. It is to deeply explore and gain a comprehensive understanding of the personal and contextual experiences of college students who engage in deviant behavior. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

- What are the lived experiences of college students with deviant behavior? and
- What is the context of the lived experiences of college students with deviant behavior?

V. MATERIALS AND METHODS

➤ Design

The study utilized Transcendental Phenomenology, a qualitative approach by Edmund Husserl (1913) that explores lived experiences by setting aside biases to grasp their essence. It emphasizes "epoche" (suspension of judgment) and intentionality (conscious experience of objects) for a pure understanding of human experiences. The phenomenology is a style of inquiry that uses Colaizzi's (1978) seven-step data analysis process to understand human experience. This design was considered suitable for the study as it deeply explores students' narratives, capturing their perceptions, emotions, and social influences. Bracketing biases provide an unfiltered, human-centered perspective on deviant behavior, revealing its essence beyond theoretical assumptions.

➤ Setting

The research was conducted at a reputable local college in the Province of Bukidnon, a first-class municipality in the Northern Mindanao region known for its diverse student population. Renowned for its vibrant educational landscape, the college plays a key role in local development and academic growth. Offering a wide range of programs, including Education and Criminology, it attracts students from neighboring municipalities aspiring to careers in law enforcement, education, and related fields. With nearly 6,000 enrolled students, the college is central to shaping the academic and professional futures of individuals in the region, making it an ideal setting for this study.

The school serves a diverse student body and actively addresses cases of deviant behavior through its guidance center. The center plays a crucial role in fostering self-discipline and personal accountability. It provides support and intervention to help students overcome challenges and become responsible, well-rounded individuals.

Common cases handled include academic cheating, alcohol use on campus, vandalism, bullying, harassment, assault, theft, frequent class skipping, disruptive behavior, and fighting, all of which significantly deviate from campus norms and rules. The guidance center promotes individual accountability and contributes to a safer and more disciplined school environment by managing and guiding students involved in such behaviors.

Given these factors, the college provides an optimal setting for this study, as it allows for an in-depth examination of student behavior, institutional disciplinary measures, and the broader implications of deviant conduct in an academic setting. The diverse student body, the prevalence of behavioral challenges, and the structured interventions create a rich context for understanding the effectiveness of disciplinary programs, their impact on student development, and their role in maintaining order within an educational institution.

➤ Participants

The study's participants were the college students exhibiting deviant behavior at a college in the Province of Bukidnon. The researcher used purposive sampling to select participants likely to provide valuable insights into the study's objectives. This ensured that the data was rich and directly applicable to understanding the lived experiences of college students with deviant behavior.

This group comprises male and female students to ensure a diverse sample. Participant selection was based on the following criteria: 1) currently enrolled as a college student, 2) aged 18 to 30 years old 3) referred to the Dean of Student Affairs or Guidance Center for engaging in deviant behaviors, 4) acknowledges involvement in or has been identified with deviant behavior, 5) able and willing to share their lived experiences in one-on-one interviews, and 6) those who have experienced deviant behavior over the last three years, including academic cheating, alcohol use on campus, vandalism, bullying, harassment, assault, theft, frequent class skipping, disruptive behavior, and fighting. This targeted selection process ensured that participants were well-equipped to provide valuable and meaningful insights for the research.

➤ Instrument

For this research, the researcher designed the interview guide in such a way that the researcher could identify the lived experiences of a college student with deviant behavior. The opening questions set the stage for the interview by encouraging participants to share background information about their home and school life. This context helps them understand how their upbringing and school environment may influence their behavior, including deviant actions. Core questions explore specific instances of deviant behavior, examining the emotional, psychological, and external factors behind the actions and the consequences faced. These questions aim to link past behavior with personal growth and future aspirations. The exit questions serve as a reflective close, prompting participants to consider what they would change to achieve their goals and how they feel after sharing their experiences, offering insights into emotional processing.

The interview questions are structured to ensure consistent, comparable data, providing reliable insights into the lived experiences of college students with deviant behavior. They are valid as they directly address the research objective, covering emotional, psychological, and social factors to capture the full scope of the participants' experiences, contributing valuable data to the study.

The interview guide's validity is supported by its clear alignment with the research objectives, ensuring it directly addresses the key elements of students' lived experiences with deviant behavior. By focusing on emotional, psychological, and social factors, the guide captures a comprehensive view of the participants' experiences, allowing for rich, meaningful data collection. The open-ended nature of the questions provides flexibility for participants to share their unique perspectives, enhancing the depth and authenticity of the findings. Thus, the progression from background to core to reflective questions ensures a consistent approach across all interviews, promoting reliability in the data collected. The instrument is well-suited for a qualitative approach, as it facilitates in-depth exploration and captures the nuances of each participant's experiences.

➤ *Data Gathering Procedure*

The researcher secured a permit from the Office of the Graduate School Dean and the pre-determined questions and interview guide for panel validation and review. Upon receiving approval, the researcher sought permission from the College President and Dean of Student Affairs, where the study was conducted, to gather data through in-depth interviews.

The researcher then identified potential participants whose experiences were relevant to the study of college students with deviant behavior. After selecting the participants, the researcher explained the study's purpose, provided them with a signed copy of the transmittal letter, and personally requested permission for an interview, facilitating scheduling. This process was supported by informed consent and an interview guide outlining the study's purpose, procedures, participants' rights, and the researcher's responsibilities. Interviews were conducted in settings comfortable for the participants.

The study began with a series of distinct interview sessions where each participant was interviewed separately to explore the research topic in detail. During the interviews, the researcher encouraged participants to share their lived experiences, uncovering the underlying meanings through their responses and the researcher's interpretations. The interview results were transcribed using both written notes and simultaneous audio recordings, ensuring the accuracy and integrity of the data. After conducting the interviews, the researcher saved the recordings on the recording device and transcribed them verbatim. For participants who used languages or dialects other than English, the transcriptions were translated into English while carefully preserving the meaning and nuance of their responses. Special attention was given to maintaining the essence of their experiences and ensuring that the translations remained faithful to the original context. This process enabled the identification of universal essences and provided a deeper understanding of the participants' experiences from their perspectives and the researcher's.

Once the transcriptions were completed, the researcher began categorizing the data. This involved systematically reviewing the transcriptions and identifying significant

statements about the participants' experiences with deviant behavior. These statements were then grouped into preliminary categories based on shared themes and patterns within the data. Each category represented a distinct aspect of the participants' lived experiences, such as challenges faced, coping mechanisms, or perceptions of institutional responses.

From the categorized data, the researcher identified broader themes across the participants' experiences. These themes reflected the underlying structures of meaning that participants attached to their deviant behaviors. By comparing and contrasting the categories, the researcher was able to distill these overarching themes, ensuring that they accurately captured the collective experiences of the students involved. Themes were developed with attention to Colaizzi's phenomenological method, which emphasizes understanding the deeper meaning of human experiences as they relate to the phenomenon under study.

The final step in the data-gathering process was the interpretation of the identified themes. The researcher analyzed the themes of the research questions, exploring how each theme shed light on the lived experiences of college students with deviant behavior. The interpretation process sought to understand the broader social, psychological, and cultural implications of these behaviors, as well as their impact on the student's academic and personal lives. By linking the themes to existing literature and theoretical frameworks, the researcher provided a comprehensive interpretation of the phenomenon, ensuring that the findings were contextualized within the broader field of study.

➤ *Ethical Considerations*

The researcher secured approval from the Misamis University Ethics Committee before the interview commenced. Approval from the School President regarding the scope and limits of the study was also obtained before proceeding with the interviews. Additionally, this research ensured the complete confidentiality, anonymity, and integrity of the participants' responses during the interview process. The researcher guaranteed that no participants suffered any physical, mental, or emotional harm from their involvement in the interviews. Upholding the dignity of the participants was a top priority throughout the study. The research was dedicated to maintaining transparency and accuracy in its objectives, avoiding any form of misrepresentation or exaggeration. The researcher also adhered to the guidelines outlined in Republic Act No. 10173, generally known as the "Data Privacy Act of 2012." These measures allowed the researcher to safeguard the privacy and confidentiality of the qualitative research.

To ensure the systematic and ethical collection of data, the researcher began by introducing themselves to the participants and discussing the purpose of the study. The participants were then given a copy of the informed consent form for review and signing. The researcher explained the interview structure, which involved audio recording and note-taking. Participants were reassured that their identities would remain confidential throughout the study and in the final report. It was also emphasized that they had the right to

discontinue their participation at any time without consequence. The researcher invited any questions from the participants to ensure clarity and comfort. Before the interview, the researcher tested the audio recording device to ensure it functioned properly. Finally, efforts were made to ensure the participants felt comfortable and at ease during the interview process.

➤ *Data Analysis*

The study used Colaizzi's method of phenomenological analysis to explore participants lived experiences related to the phenomenon under investigation. This method involves the following steps:

- *Making sense of or acquiring a feeling for the protocol.*

The first step in Colaizzi's (1978) data analysis method involves acquiring a deep understanding of the research protocol. The researcher reviewed the study's protocols for clarity and consistency, transcribed the interview data accurately, and checked the transcriptions to ensure alignment with the interview content. This process ensured that no alterations or inconsistencies occurred. To protect confidentiality, participant names were replaced with unique response numbers, maintaining anonymity and privacy.

- *Extracting Significant Statements.*

The second step involved extracting significant statements (SS) from the transcriptions. The researcher identified phrases or sentences directly related to the phenomenon (Colaizzi, 1978) and selected the most relevant ones that captured participants' experiences. These statements were organized in a table and coded consecutively (e.g., SS1-SS57) for clear identification and organization. The researcher carefully picked out meaningful quotes and moments from the students' stories that truly reflected their experiences with deviant behavior, organizing them thoughtfully to begin making sense of what they had shared.

- *Formulation of Meanings.*

After extracting the significant statements (SS), the researcher formulated meanings (FM) while ensuring they remained faithful to participants' original intentions, avoiding misinterpretations. Each meaning was checked for consistency and accuracy. Following Colaizzi's (1978) guidelines, the researcher aimed to uncover deeper meanings and multiple perspectives, ensuring a direct connection to the data. To ensure validity, the researcher regularly consulted with an advisor. After formulating the meanings, they were organized into thematic clusters reflecting key patterns across the data. The researcher took each meaningful statement and gently explored what it revealed about the students' experiences with deviant behavior, making sure to stay true to what the participants really meant.

- *Organizing the Cluster Themes.*

The next step involved organizing the formulated meanings into cluster themes. The researcher re-read the transcripts, reviewed the significant statements (SS) and formulated meanings (FM), and identified key themes. Similar meanings were grouped into cohesive clusters, each representing a central aspect of participants' experiences. The

researcher consulted with an advisor to validate and refine the themes, ensuring they accurately reflected the participants' lived experiences and provided insight into the study's central issues. The researcher brought together similar insights and ideas, grouping them into themes that reflected the shared struggles and experiences at the heart of the students' stories.

- *Integration of Results and Exhaustive Description.*

The fifth and sixth steps of Colaizzi's method involved integrating the results into a comprehensive description of the phenomenon. The researcher synthesized the cluster themes and meanings into a coherent narrative, carefully reviewing the data to ensure all aspects were captured. This process aimed to identify the fundamental structure of the phenomenon, providing a detailed account of the participants' challenges and experiences in online teaching. The researcher synthesized the clustered themes into an exhaustive description that captured the core essence of students' emotional, social, and personal experiences with deviant behavior.

- *Validating.* The final step in Colaizzi's method involved the validation of the findings.

To ensure the accuracy and authenticity of the results, the researcher returned to the participants and asked them to validate the descriptive findings. Participants were given a copy of the detailed description and asked to confirm whether it accurately reflected their experiences and challenges while teaching online. The researcher allowed participants to review the findings and offer feedback. All participants had the chance to verify whether the exhaustive description aligned with their personal experiences. Once the participants confirmed the accuracy of the findings, the researcher finalized the analysis, ensuring that the results were valid and grounded in the participants' actual experiences..

VI. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The demographic profile of the students with deviant behavior in this study reveals key insights into their age, gender, educational attainment, and family background. The participants, aged between 18 and 30, represent a range of young adults pursuing higher education. Gender did not emerge as a distinguishing factor, as both male and female individuals demonstrated comparable determination and focus in their academic and personal lives. Regarding educational standing, most participants are enrolled in their third or fourth year of college, indicating an advanced stage in their undergraduate journey. A smaller proportion of the individuals are in their second year, suggesting varying paces in their academic progression, possibly influenced by personal, social, or economic factors.

This combination of age, academic standing, and family background underscores a complex interplay of social and personal factors influencing the behaviors and attitudes of students with deviant behavior. These findings suggest that deviant behavior does not necessarily stem from a lack of ambition or capability; instead, these individuals often possess strong intrinsic motivation and navigate challenges in environments that shape their developmental trajectories. The

most common deviant behavior observed among participants in this study was disrespect towards authority figures, particularly instructors and staff. This behavior manifested in various forms, including verbal confrontations, disruptive actions during class, and instances of defiance in interactions with faculty members. Such behaviors appeared to be driven by a perceived lack of respect for institutional authority and a tendency to challenge established norms. In some cases, this disrespect was also expressed through social media platforms, where participants engaged in public criticism or defamation of faculty. This recurring pattern suggests a deeper issue related to the students' emotional and psychological responses to authority figures, underscoring the need for further exploration of the factors that contribute to such deviant behavior in the college environment.

Fifty-two significant statements (SS) were identified from the interviews and then interpreted. These interpretations were coded and categorized into 6 cluster themes. Further analysis refined these themes into twelve subthemes, ultimately leading to the identification of six core themes:

- Theme 1: Navigating the Complex Realities of College Life
- Theme 1: Coping with daily challenges
- Theme 2: Struggling with Self-Discipline and Emotional Regulation
- Theme 2: Experiencing the Influences of Emotions, Peers, and Environment on Deviant Behavior
- Theme 3: Environment and Peers in Shaping Behavior
- Theme 4: Emotional Reactivity
- Theme 3: Reflecting on Consequences and Embracing the Journey to Change
- Theme 5: Acceptance and Responsibility
- Theme 6: Learning from Consequences
- Theme 4: Influence of Environment on Behavior
- Theme 7: External Influences Shaping Deviant Behavior
- Theme 8: Interplay of Personal Struggles and Social Influence on Deviant Behavior
- Theme 5: Conformity to School Rules
- Theme 9: Perceptions and Internalization of School Rules
- Theme 10: Confrontation with Authority and Realization of Consequences
- Theme 6: Trigger of Deviant Behavior
- Theme 11: External Triggers and Social Influences
- Theme 12: Internal Conflict and Emotional Responses

➤ *Navigating the Complex Realities of College Life*

This theme vividly portrays how students grapple with the realities of their academic journey. Many students expressed how their expectations before entering college starkly contrasted with their experiences. The transition to college life introduced a series of unforeseen emotional, mental, financial, and social challenges that tested their resilience and capacity to adapt. The environment became a space where survival outweighed ease, and students learned to push through hardship as a daily necessity rather than a rare experience.

This theme, cluster 1, which is Navigating the Complex Realities of College Life, is composed of two sub-themes: Coping with daily challenges, and Struggling with Self-Discipline and Emotional Regulation

Coping with daily challenges. College life is often a difficult and overwhelming journey, filled with academic pressures, personal struggles, and emotional challenges that test students' resilience daily. The reality of being in college is far more demanding than many expect, as students are confronted with financial hardships, self-doubt, family expectations, and the constant pressure to succeed. Despite these hardships, students find different ways to cope.

Participant 1 reflected on the inevitability of daily challenges, acknowledging that while negative behaviors and attitudes exist, positive interactions with others provide encouragement and valuable life lessons. This perspective shows self-awareness and acceptance of imperfection, yet also highlights the importance of social support in managing daily stress. Similarly, Participant 2 emphasized the overwhelming nature of academic challenges but demonstrated resilience by striving to overcome obstacles to succeed and complete their education. This perseverance illustrates how hope and ambition are strong motivating forces for students under pressure.

Participant 5 added another layer to this struggle by describing college life as significantly more difficult and exhausting than anticipated. Their account reveals the physical and emotional fatigue that many students experience, emphasizing that the reality of college life often exceeds the stress they had imagined beforehand. Participant 6 introduced a more personal and painful dimension to the daily challenges, discussing the burden of financial hardship and emotional hurt caused by unsupportive relatives. Despite these setbacks, faith in God and inspiration from their parents' sacrifices were powerful coping mechanisms that kept them moving forward. This highlights how spiritual beliefs and family loyalty often become pillars of emotional strength in difficult times. In addition, participant 7 portrayed college life as a serious and sometimes fear-driven experience, rooted in a deep sense of responsibility toward family expectations. The fear of failure and the strong desire not to disappoint loved ones drove their persistence and dedication. Their narrative shows how emotional pressures, though heavy, can also motivate students to exert their best efforts in pursuit of academic success.

"In everyday life, it's normal to face challenges, but we need to face them because they give us important lessons in our daily life. My daily experience is that even if I have a bad attitude, there are always some people that treat me good" (P1)

"As a college student, it's really hard for me because of the challenges that I have encountered, but I strive so hard to overcome all the challenges to be successful and finish my college." (P2)

"It was for my daily life. It was great, but I guess it was given that college life was harder and stressful, and I mean harder than it looks, and stressful, and to the second question, my daily experience was quite exhausting and at the same time harder than I thought." (P5)

"For me, ma'am, it is not easy, especially with the lack of financial support, ma'am. It is also painful in my life when even my relatives bring me down as a student. Every day, I think about my faith in God and the sacrifices of my parents because they are the ones who truly understand, ma'am." (P6)

"My life in college is serious, and I was scared to fail, to not disappoint my family and I tried my very best not to disappoint them (P7)

Students' experiences align with the findings from various studies in the literature, demonstrating the complex ways in which they navigate the challenges of college life. Lee-Chua, Q. N. (2022) highlighted that individuals often draw on faith, family support, and personal life goals to overcome obstacles. This perspective is mirrored by the students' experiences, where faith and family are key sources of strength during difficult times. Similarly, Thurman (2016) pointed out that the complexities of college life, such as health issues, financial stress, and the challenge of balancing work and study, often hinder students' ability to manage their personal and academic lives. Zambito (2017) also noted that financial hardship is particularly pronounced among students with additional familial responsibilities, such as mothers, who face unique challenges in their pursuit of education.

Moreover, Dockery (2022) observed that parental expectations significantly influence students' motivations. The desire not to disappoint family members drives many students to work harder and strive for academic success. Collectively, these studies underscore the notion that, despite the diversity of individual struggles, students tend to rely on their internal strengths and external support systems to cope with the demands of college life.

Together, these experiences illustrate how students navigate the complexities of college life by drawing on both internal resilience and external relationships and values. Each student's journey is shaped by a unique combination of these factors, enabling them to manage their difficulties. Some students build perseverance, pushing through setbacks by setting personal goals and maintaining a strong commitment to their dreams. Others turn to faith, finding emotional refuge and guidance in their spiritual beliefs, which offer comfort and stability amidst uncertainty. Social support, whether from friends, mentors, or even acts of kindness from strangers, is crucial in helping students feel valued and less isolated in their struggles. Additionally, a strong sense of familial duty motivates many students to persevere. The desire not to disappoint their loved ones becomes a powerful force that sustains them through exhaustion, fear, and self-doubt.

These coping strategies reflect the multifaceted challenges students encounter and the remarkable human capacity to adapt, endure hardships, and find meaning and growth even in the most trying circumstances of college life.

Struggling with Self-Discipline and Emotional Regulation. College life presents various emotional and academic challenges that test students' ability to regulate their behavior and manage their emotions effectively. Many students experience difficulty maintaining self-discipline due to distractions, overwhelming workloads, or internal emotional struggles.

Many college students face significant challenges in maintaining self-discipline and regulating their emotions, often experiencing fluctuations in motivation and behavior. Participant 11 described his experience as a mixture of easy and hard times because of his attitude of sometimes sabotaging himself, especially in managing his time. He often gets distracted by things, hence the delay in the completion of important tasks.

"As a college student, I could describe it like riding a roller coaster, a lot of ups and downs, some days are smooth, some days are hard because of my attitude. I often sabotage myself, for instances I already have a plan how to manage my time whole day but suddenly I get distracted by some reasons and because of that I get delayed with my tasks that needs to be done (P11)."

Another participant echoed this struggle, stating that while the experience was smooth for the most part, there are instances where motivation is lost, thus making it hard for him to focus, which then eventually leads to losing interest in important things. This is highlighted in the answer:

"The flow is smooth but most of the time is challenging and my behavior influence my daily experience that it made me tardy and losing interest of everything (p9)."

This reflects how fluctuations in emotional regulation can lead to procrastination, decreased motivation, and disengagement from academic and personal responsibilities. Interestingly, some students find that starting the day with a positive mindset can set the tone for better emotional management. One participant shared that his typical day mainly consisted of praying, studying, doing academic requirements, and household chores. Moreover, this participant also emphasizes the importance of having a positive mindset. Admittedly, when things become overwhelming, she tends to do things others may feel disrespectful and uncomfortable. These are revealed in this answer:

"My typical day as a college student, ma'am, is pray, study, school, or station, and boarding house. A positive and happy day, ma'am. Whenever I start my day with a positive mind, it influences my mood, becoming happy. But sometimes, because of being too overwhelmed, I tend to do things that others may not like or feel disrespectful" (P4)

This illustrates the dual nature of emotional regulation while positive routines such as prayer, studying, and maintaining a structured daily schedule can enhance well-being and contribute to a generally positive outlook, emotional overwhelm can still trigger lapses in behavior. Despite beginning the day with optimism, internal stress or unprocessed emotions may surface, leading to impulsive actions that deviate from social norms or are perceived as disrespectful by others. This highlights the fragility of emotional balance and the importance of developing deeper coping mechanisms. It also suggests that surface-level positivity may not always buffer against underlying psychological struggles, especially when emotional burdens accumulate without adequate support or release. The participant's experience underscores the complexity of maintaining self-regulation in the face of internal pressures and external expectations.

Supporting this, Onyemauche (2020) noted that as educational institutions foster holistic development, they also witness a rise in deviant behaviors such as truancy, tardiness, and academic disengagement which often stem from unresolved emotional and psychological distress. Although sometimes subtle in college, these behaviors are still significant due to increased independence and identity exploration during this stage (Phuong, 2022). Psychological pressures, peer influence, and internal emotional turmoil are frequently identified as contributing factors (Zhang, 2024; Wu, 2024). Moreover, the emotional volatility of adolescence and early adulthood, driven by neurological development where emotional processing matures faster than rational thinking, further complicates self-regulation (Fatima, 2024).

Intrapersonal challenges like self-control and emotion management are reflected in this topic and are frequently connected to early relationship experiences. According to attachment theory, people with insecure attachment styles may struggle to control their emotions, impulses, and the development of constructive coping strategies. Without strong emotional foundations, students may find it difficult to handle the rigors of college life, which could result in them turning to unhealthy or abnormal coping mechanisms.

➤ *Experiencing the Influences of Emotions, Peers, and Environment On Deviant Behavior*

Experiencing the Influences of Emotions, Peers, and Environment on Deviant Behavior captures the interplay between internal emotions and external stimuli in shaping student behavior. College students are not insulated from their environment. A complex combination of emotional states, peer dynamics, and situational pressures often shapes their actions, attitudes, and decisions. Heightened vulnerability to external influence may occur when emotional well-being is compromised, particularly in environments where acceptance and belonging are emphasized. This theme reflects how students, while developing their sense of identity and autonomy, may navigate conflicting emotional and environmental signals that challenge their moral judgment and behavioral control. Understanding this dynamic is crucial in designing interventions that promote emotional regulation,

supportive peer relationships, and healthy campus environments that foster personal accountability and growth.

This theme cluster, *Experiencing the Influences of Emotions, Peers, and Environment on Deviant Behavior*, is composed of two sub-themes: *Environment and Peers in Shaping Behavior and Emotional Rectivity*.

Based on participant narratives, it is evident that both environmental factors and peer influences significantly shape behavior, particularly in emotionally charged or socially complex settings. Several participants described how their conduct is directly influenced by their peers and the atmosphere around them.

Environment and Peers in Shaping Behavior. This sub-theme explores how the behavioral choices of individuals are not made in isolation but are shaped by their environment and the peers they associate with. The participants' experiences highlight that behavior can shift depending on the setting, such as being at home, in school, or around certain people. For some, their surroundings directly affect their emotional stability and reactions when in a familiar or emotionally charged environment, they may become more irritable or reactive, suggesting that contextual factors trigger or trigger deviant tendencies.

Peer influence emerged as a powerful element in shaping behavior. Some individuals reported that their friends know how to respond when they are emotionally unstable, showing that peers can act as regulators of behavior. However, peers can also become enablers of deviant acts. Several participants admitted to being influenced to make poor decisions because of the actions or encouragement of their peer groups. This includes talking excessively in class, teasing classmates, or engaging in disruptive behaviors that impact academic performance and social relationships. The desire to belong or be accepted by a group often overrides personal judgment, leading to actions inconsistent with their usual values or character. These are pointed out in the following answers:

"My behavior depends on my surroundings." (P3)

"My friends knows my attitude to if they saw me that I am not in the mood they will keep silent because they know I easily got mad and I find it hard to control my emotions. (P7)

In my class, they see me as a talkative person because I like talking to my seatmates and tease them, sometimes because of my friends, they influence me to make bad decisions." (P2)

"Sometimes my mood will suddenly change when I'm with my friends, so their the ones will adjust and do not to trigger my grumpy mood." (P3)

Additionally, participants shared instances where their deviant behaviors were fueled by external substances such as alcohol, again showing the role of the environment, both social and physical, in enabling misconduct. Even when

individuals know that certain behaviors are inappropriate or harmful, the influence of peers and the situational environment can impair self-control and decision-making. The internal conflict between personal values and external pressures further emphasizes how behavior is a product of emotional regulation and social context.

These reflections underscore the importance of understanding deviant behavior not simply as a personal flaw but as a response to social dynamics and environmental conditions. Protective and risk factors can exist within peer groups and environmental settings, and recognizing this complexity is essential for effective intervention and behavioral guidance.

"My bad behavior is that even I'm already inside the class I do not listen and just facing my cellphone, sometimes I tease my classmates having a video of them while they are discussing in front. It's not good because if I continue it at the end, I'm still the one who gets poor. They become mad, they say I should not do bad things, especially making bad records in school. My instructor was shocked because they know I am not like that I was just influenced with alcohol." (P1)

The participants' narrative clearly illustrate how environmental contexts and peer relationships influence individual behavior, particularly among students. These accounts reflect key psychological and social theories emphasizing the role of situational and social factors in behavior regulation, which aligns with Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, suggesting that an individual's behavior is shaped by interactions within their immediate environment. This dynamic interaction is particularly significant in adolescent and young adult populations, where identity and behavior are still forming.

Peer influence emerges as a significant factor in behavioral choices. This demonstrates how peer pressure and social modeling can contribute to positive and negative behaviors. Recent studies reinforce this, noting that peers strongly impact decision-making, especially in adolescence, where there is an increased desire for social acceptance (Laursen, B., & Veenstra, R., 2021).

Additionally, the social regulation of emotional responses is evident. Participant 7 and Participant 3 both described how their friends adapt to their moods to avoid triggering emotional outbursts. This reflects how emotional reactivity can shape peer interactions and how peers, in turn, modulate their behavior in response (Lopez & Tan, 2021).

Emotional Reactivity. This captures how sudden mood shifts and difficulty managing emotions can contribute to deviant behaviors. Participants in the study revealed that their actions particularly negative or disruptive ones often stemmed from emotional responses that were hard to control, such as anger, irritability, or frustration. When triggered by peers or environmental factors, these emotions often led to impulsive behavior such as arguing, teasing, or disengaging from responsibilities.

Individuals with heightened emotional reactivity may struggle to regulate their impulses in challenging situations, especially when surrounded by people or environments that do not support healthy emotional expression. This can create a cycle where negative emotions are reinforced by negative responses from peers, further pushing the individual toward deviance as a coping mechanism or form of emotional release. These is revealed in this answer:

"I could not control myself when I heard something that I feel unfair to me. So, I cannot control myself; whatever comes into my mind, I immediately take action." (P10)

Participant 10's experience clearly reflects an example of emotional reactivity, where intense emotional responses particularly anger or frustration are difficult to manage. The participant admits to acting impulsively when perceiving something as unfair, indicating a low threshold for emotional triggers and limited capacity for emotional regulation. Instead of pausing to reflect or consider consequences, their immediate reaction is to act based on emotion, which can lead to deviant or disruptive behavior.

This experience demonstrates how emotional reactivity can override rational thinking, especially when the individual feels wronged or disrespected. It also shows a lack of coping mechanisms for handling perceived injustices, making people more vulnerable to impulsive decisions that may harm themselves or others. In a broader context, such behavior may escalate conflicts, damage relationships, or lead to disciplinary consequences in school or social settings.

Overall, this participant's experience illustrates the emotional vulnerability contributing to deviant behavior and highlights the importance of emotional intelligence and self-regulation in appropriately managing behavior. Research supports this pattern, indicating that individuals with high emotional reactivity are more prone to aggressive, impulsive, or non-conforming behaviors when confronted with perceived threats or unfairness (Johnson & Dvorak, 2021). Emotional dysregulation is often linked to poor academic performance, peer conflict, and disciplinary issues in college settings (Martinez et al., 2023).

This demonstrates that emotional reactivity is not merely a personal weakness but a psychological factor that, when unaddressed, contributes to behavior that deviates from social or institutional norms. Addressing emotional regulation through counseling, peer support, or mindfulness-based interventions could reduce the likelihood of such behaviors escalating emotional responses may lead students to engage in immediate, unfiltered reactions, which may be categorized as deviant within the educational environment.

The Social Learning Theory, which maintains that behavior is acquired through social context-based observation, imitation, and reinforcement, is strongly supported by this theme. Students in college are more vulnerable to peer pressure, and they may imitate and adopt similar habits if they are in surroundings that are permissive

or surrounded by deviant classmates. When emotional reactivity is coupled with modeling or peer pressure, it can result in the social reinforcement of dangerous or impulsive behaviors.

➤ *Reflecting on Consequences and Embracing the Journey to Change*

The theme "Reflecting on Consequences and Embracing the Journey to Change" highlights the deeply human growth process through mistakes, accountability, and reflection. Students share how facing disciplinary actions, experiencing shame, receiving feedback, or struggling with academic pressures can become pivotal turning points in their personal development. Rather than viewing these moments as failures, they see them as opportunities to rebuild, taking ownership of their actions, reassessing their behaviors, and striving to improve. Whether acknowledging personal faults, adjusting after being misinterpreted, or wrestling with the fear of disappointing others, each story reflects the emotional weight and inner strength required to grow. These reflections show that transformation does not happen overnight; it is a gradual journey marked by resilience, self-awareness, and the courage to change. Through these experiences, students develop better habits and a deeper, more compassionate understanding of themselves and others.

This theme cluster, *Reflecting on Consequences and Embracing the Journey to Change*, is composed of two sub-themes: *Acceptance and Responsibility* and *Learning from Consequences*.

Acceptance and Responsibility. This captures the critical turning point when individuals begin to acknowledge their actions and recognize the impact of their behavior on themselves and others. As a sub-theme, it reflects a shift from denial or blame to self-awareness and accountability, essential for personal growth and behavioral change.

Individuals who experience personal reflection after engaging in deviant or inappropriate behavior often develop a heightened sense of accountability, emotional awareness, and social responsibility. This introspection fosters behavioral change and maturity and reinforces the importance of aligning one's actions with personal values and societal expectations. These are revealed in their answers:

"I fix my wrongdoings and admit my faults..." (P2)

"It's very shameful because the school was involved... the result is worse than we expected." (P8)

"My instructor was shocked because they know I am not like that." (P1)

Participant 2 expresses a sense of personal accountability and a willingness to correct past mistakes. This reflects a developing maturity where the individual no longer denies or avoids responsibility but instead takes proactive steps to make things right. Acknowledging faults, the participant shows self-awareness and openness to growth, which are important aspects of behavioral change and

emotional development. Participant 1 is surprised by the reaction of a respected authority figure, indicating that their behavior was out of character. This moment of shock and reflection suggests that the individual values their reputation and feels discomfort at being perceived differently. It also reflects a recognition of having strayed from expected norms, which can serve as a motivator to realign behavior with personal or social values. Participant 8 reveals deep regret and embarrassment after their actions led to unintended consequences that affected others, particularly their school. This recognition indicates a growing understanding of how personal decisions impact a wider community. The statement shows emotional reflection and a heightened sensitivity to reputation and the weight of one's actions, suggesting a shift toward more thoughtful behavior.

These participants demonstrate acceptance and responsibility, recognizing that their actions had negative impacts and expressing either shame, surprise, or motivation to change. Their reflections indicate a turning point toward behavioral correction and personal growth. However, some participants are dealing with identity and social perception, showing how feedback from others, whether accurate or not, can profoundly affect self-esteem and contribute to either deviant behavior or emotional withdrawal. Participant 4 feels misjudged and receives negative feedback, revealing sensitivity to how others perceive them and the emotional consequences of being misunderstood. While participant 9 discusses feeling excluded and how a specific comment altered their self-image, indicating the strong influence of peer opinions and external validation on their self-concept. These are revealed in their answers:

"Sometimes, I often get misinterpreted... I get bad feedback." (P4)

"I felt sometimes out of place and due to that comment... the way I perceive myself changes." (P9)

Individuals, particularly during formative years, are highly influenced by how others perceive them, and this perception plays a critical role in shaping their self-concept and emotional well-being. Sensitivity to external feedback whether from peers or authority figures can lead to feelings of exclusion, misjudgment, or diminished self-worth, highlighting the decisive role of social validation in identity development and interpersonal behavior. In contrast, a participant's statement relates to self-expectation and internal motivation. It contrasts with others who seek to correct their actions based on external judgment, showing a more passive yet intentional approach to behavior and identity.

"Maybe I just don't like giving my best just to be praised... I just want to be an average..." (P11)

Participant 11 prefers being "average" rather than exerting effort for praise. This reflects a personal stance against societal pressure and a desire for authenticity over performance-driven validation. This signifies more than admitting fault; it involves a deeper understanding of how one's behavior affects relationships, disrupts community

harmony, and potentially damages personal goals or reputations. Individuals begin to reflect not only on what they did, but also why they did it, how it made others feel, and what could have been done differently. This reflection leads to a sense of moral responsibility and often a desire to make amends or do better.

For many, this turning point may come after experiencing consequences such as shame, discipline, loss of trust, or social rejection. These consequences serve as a mirror, prompting individuals to confront their actions honestly. Once this level of self-awareness is reached, the person becomes more open to learning from their experiences and making conscious efforts to improve, whether by seeking guidance, avoiding negative influences, or adopting healthier coping mechanisms.

In the context of deviant behavior, Acceptance and Responsibility are key indicators of rehabilitation and transformation. It suggests that the individual is no longer stuck in a cycle of reactionary behavior but is instead moving forward with intention, guided by a clearer understanding of themselves and their role in the community. It is the beginning of a more responsible, reflective, and self-governed identity. According to Hudson & Brandenberger, when students are meaningfully connected to their communities whether through school, family, or peer groups they are more likely to internalize ethical behavior and take accountability for their actions. This internalization of social values supports the notion that self-awareness and reflection, prompted by personal or communal consequences, lead individuals to reevaluate their behavior, much like participants in your study who began to accept responsibility after experiencing shame, discipline, or social rejection.

This reinforces the argument that acceptance and responsibility are not merely reactions to punishment but developmental processes influenced by moral guidance, emotional support, and reflective environments. In educational settings, it also highlights the need for institutions to provide not just discipline but opportunities for reflection, moral reasoning, and community re-engagement critical elements for meaningful behavioral change.

Learning from Consequences is the pivotal moment when individuals internalize the outcomes of their actions and use that awareness to initiate personal growth. This subtheme emphasizes the process by which individuals recognize the impact of their behaviors—whether emotional, social, or moral and derive meaningful lessons that inform future decision-making. It highlights the shift from passive regret to active learning, where consequences catalyze developing accountability, emotional intelligence, and a renewed commitment to positive change.

These instances often prompt deep introspection, helping students recognize the impact of their decisions on themselves and their academic goals, relationships, and future aspirations. For many, it is through facing these consequences that genuine behavioral change and a stronger sense of accountability begin to take root. Participant 7 spent time

reflecting during their suspension, leading to a realization about their wrongdoing. This indicates a precise moment of introspection and acknowledgment of fault, an essential part of accepting responsibility and learning from consequences. While participant 12 experienced emotional distress and fear of not graduating, which likely led to a profound personal reckoning with their actions and their potential impact on future goals. They commented:

"During my suspension, I stayed at home and reflected on my misdeeds... I realized that I shouldn't have done that." (P7)

"I cried a lot that time at home, and I thought I could not graduate." (P12)

Both participants highlight emotional responses and self-reflection triggered by disciplinary or stressful experiences, which became catalysts for internal change and greater self-awareness. Some participants also exhibit emotional resilience and a learning mindset, embracing difficult experiences or feedback as tools for personal development rather than deterrents. Where participant 10 accepted the painful feedback from a teacher and interpreted it as a learning opportunity rather than mere punishment, reflecting emotional maturity and growth. Also, participant 11 speaks of handling criticism or hardship with resilience, showing strength in accepting circumstances without giving up, another sign of personal responsibility and determination to move forward. These answers are revealed in their answers:

"I accept the painful words from the teacher... I learned more from that action." (P10)

"I accept it, and I handle it with resilience so that I should not be discouraged and continue my study" (P11)

The participants' responses indicate that students are capable of transforming negative experiences such as receiving harsh or critical remarks from teachers into opportunities for personal growth and resilience. Rather than being discouraged, they internalize these experiences as constructive feedback, strengthening their determination to continue their education. This suggests that adversity in academic settings, when perceived through a lens of resilience, can contribute to developing a more substantial commitment to learning and a more mature coping mechanism among students.

On the other hand, some participants reflect a proactive coping strategy wherein the student takes responsibility for missed academic activities by seeking opportunities to make up for them. This includes initiating communication with instructors and integrating with other groups to stay engaged and maintain academic progress. It highlights a sense of accountability, adaptability, and initiative, showing the student's commitment to fulfilling academic responsibilities despite previous setbacks. This is captured in the answer:

"I ask my instructors to make up for my behind activities and join other groups to participate." (P1)

Students have the capacity to cope with academic challenges by taking proactive measures to address missed responsibilities. Rather than remaining passive or disengaged after falling behind, they take the initiative to communicate with their instructors, request opportunities to compensate for missed activities, and integrate themselves into peer groups to stay involved in learning tasks. This behavior reflects a high level of personal accountability and reveals an understanding of the importance of consistent academic engagement.

Participants such as participant 7 and participant 12 demonstrated how suspension or fear of academic loss led them to reassess their behavior and acknowledge their faults. Similarly, participants 10 and 11 expressed emotional resilience in accepting criticism and transforming it into a motivational tool for continued academic effort. This aligns with the findings of Winstone and Boud (2019) and Putwain et al. (2020), who assert that feedback, when interpreted constructively, can foster resilience, self-regulation, and deeper engagement with learning.

Moreover, Participant 1's initiative to reach out to instructors and reintegrate into academic tasks highlights a proactive coping strategy that reflects personal responsibility and an understanding of academic accountability. Panadero et al. (2023) supports this, emphasizing that students' perception and use of feedback play a critical role in how they self-regulate and maintain academic performance.

The process described by these participants mirrors what Curtis (2023) terms "internal deterrents," such as guilt and shame, which can catalyze behavior modification. Further, Ohuakanwa (2024) stresses that emotional intelligence and self-awareness are necessary complements to ethical expectations, especially in managing deviance. Emotional responses, therefore, do not merely represent vulnerability; they are critical to developing reflective capacities that inform moral and behavioral growth.

This theme resonates with the strain theory, which holds that deviation occurs when the means to attain societal goals are not aligned with those goals. When students think back on the effects of their behavior, they could be unable to understand that their deviant activities were motivated by frustrations or feelings of inadequacy. Finding acceptable routes to achievement and social integration, accepting responsibility, and managing stress can all be reflected in the process of change.

➤ *Influence of Environment on Behavior*

The findings revealed that the environment significantly shapes student behavior. The interaction of various environmental factors, such as family dynamics, peer relationships, school climate, and personal experiences, is vital in how students think, act, and respond in different situations. This theme highlights the multifaceted nature of behavioral influence, revealing that behavior is not merely an

individual choice but often a reflection of environmental pressures and life experiences. The environment, particularly in the context of college life, plays a pivotal role in shaping students' behavior. This influence manifests subtly and overtly, affecting their emotional states, decision-making, and social interactions.

This theme, cluster 4, is the Influence of Environment on Behavior, which is composed of 2 sub-themes: *External Influences and Social Pressure*.

External Influences. This theme highlights how various external factors, such as social environments, family dynamics, peer groups, and public perception, significantly shape students' behavioral patterns, particularly those that deviate from expected norms. Participants revealed how these influences often intensified emotional stress or normalized certain negative behaviors, prompting actions that may not align with their usual character. The consistent presence of peer pressure, environmental tension, and familial strain is a powerful motivator behind poor decision-making, emphasizing the importance of supportive systems in adolescent behavioral development. These are captured in their answers:

"In our social environment, even a small misunderstanding makes it a big deal. This kind of attitude influenced me to bring it to school." (P1)

"For me, ma'am, I guess the factor that had a big influence on my behavior is my peers... it can lead you down a wrong path." (P5)

"I was influenced by my environment, Ma'am...because some of my peers and friends pressured me, that is why I did it." (P7)

"Some people even encourage me to continue, and my friends even told me to face the consequences of my actions." (P8)

"We're very tired... many people were ranting about it, so I also did the same..." (P12)

The participants' accounts illustrate how social influence and peer dynamics are crucial in shaping student deviant behavior. Participant 1 described how frequent misunderstandings in their social circle influenced how they dealt with situations at school. Participant 5 reflected on how their peers significantly impacted their behavioral choices. Similarly, Participant 7 mentioned giving in to pressure from friends and peers. Participant 8 shared that instead of being discouraged, they received encouragement from friends to continue the behavior and face its consequences. Participant 12 admitted that being surrounded by openly frustrated others led them to mimic the same behavior.

These accounts reveal that deviant behavior is often a product of social reinforcement. The normalization of misconduct, emotional contagion, and the desire for social acceptance all contribute to students' decision-making

processes. When peers validate or echo negative attitudes and actions, individuals may internalize these behaviors as acceptable or justified. As seen in the participants' experiences, the school becomes an environment where external influences especially from social and peer groups directly shape conduct, sometimes overriding personal values or institutional norms.

Students' behaviors in academic settings are not formed in isolation; they are often the result of complex interactions between personal experiences and external influences. Among these, family relationships and social perceptions are critical in shaping how students view themselves and respond to their environments. Through the participants' reflections, it becomes evident that both the home environment and how others perceive them can significantly affect their behavior and decision-making processes in school. These are captured in their answers:

"My family relationship influenced my behavior." (P3)

"The way they viewed me made me feel like I would never change, ma'am." (P6)

Both family dynamics and the perceptions of others play critical roles in shaping a student's behavior and self-image. Participant 3 emphasized how the relationships within their family influenced their actions, revealing that the home environment plays a foundational role in shaping a student's emotional responses and behavioral tendencies. When family relationships are strained or unstable, students may express these challenges through behavior in school. On the other hand, supportive and nurturing family relationships can promote positive behavior and help students navigate academic challenges more effectively. In this case, the participant recognized that their school behavior was influenced by family dynamics, highlighting how deeply family experiences can impact student actions.

Similarly, Participant 6 shared how their self-perception was heavily shaped by how others viewed them. This underscores the impact of external judgment or negative labeling, which can create psychological barriers to change. When students feel their efforts are dismissed or perceive themselves as incapable of improvement, it often leads to self-doubt and a sense of resignation. This internalization of negative perceptions can diminish motivation and reinforce deviant behavior as a means of coping or seeking acceptance. The participant's experience illustrates how harmful external validation or the lack thereof can be to a student's self-belief, potentially stifling personal growth and development.

This research aligns with existing literature highlighting the role of external factors, including family dynamics, peer influence, and societal perceptions, in shaping deviant behavior in students. Mogbana and Edward (2022) emphasize the influence of peer pressure and mental health struggles on student behavior. Similarly, Phuong (2022) asserts that deviance in higher education often stems from identity exploration and the pressures associated with independence. These external influences, alongside peer pressure, continue

to be key factors in students' behavioral choices. Studies by Lee-Chua, Q. N. (2022) and Junto et al. (2023) further reinforce the importance of family support, faith, and individual aspirations as coping mechanisms in navigating academic and emotional pressures.

Social Pressure. College life is often an emotionally complex journey, where personal experiences and inner battles silently shape a student's path. Beneath the surface of lectures and deadlines lie deeper struggles, loss, betrayal, emotional pain, and the lingering effects of trauma that many students carry with them daily. While some manage to cope in healthy ways, others may respond through risky or deviant behavior, not out of defiance, but as a way to navigate their unresolved pain and need for connection.

Participants elaborate on how personal experiences have shaped the individual's behavior or perspective. In behavior, personal experiences often serve as powerful influencers, where individuals draw from what they've lived through to understand their reactions, choices, and attitudes. Participant 2 speaks to the learning from past situations, implying that their experiences have contributed to their approach to life. In addition, Participant 10's more succinct mention of "personal experiences" hints that the person's actions or mindset may directly result from their life history. However, it leaves space for the reader to interpret its influence. These are revealed in their answers:

"I get this through my personal experience because, in my experience, I am just a go-with-the-flow person." (P2)

"Personal experiences." (P10)

Participant 2 emphasizes being a "go-with-the-flow" person, which introduces a passive or reactive approach to situations. This suggests a tendency to avoid making strong or deliberate decisions, opting instead to follow the currents of what's happening around them. For some, this can represent a coping mechanism, especially in challenging environments where the individual might feel there's no point in resisting the flow of events or social expectations.

Individuals who have faced uncertain or complex situations might have developed a more passive approach, having learned to avoid confrontation or make decisions that go against the grain. Combining these two elements can reveal more profound insights into why someone may lean towards conforming to their environment instead of asserting control or resisting external pressures. Conversely, past traumas or emotional challenges can lead to more reactive behavior for others. As Participant 9 expressed, deeply impactful events, such as loss and betrayal, often trigger a defensive response, where an individual feels powerless against external forces and may adopt passive or submissive coping strategies. The combination of manipulation and emotional pressure can heavily influence their subsequent behavior.

"I was manipulated... I lost my parents, and I was betrayed and pressured..." (P9)

However, not all experiences lead to passivity. Some individuals facing adversity may embrace risk-taking or adopt a nurturing role. Participant 11 reveals a complex blend of resilience, emotional endurance, and a sense of purpose shaped by personal experience. This indicates a more proactive behavioral approach, where taking on risks and responsibility allows them to feel empowered, often as a way to gain control or derive purpose from challenging circumstances. These sentiments are revealed in the answer:

"I'm a risk taker... I save all the nagging... gives me a chance to nurture younger people..." (P11)

These varying responses highlight the complexity of human behavior. Whether adopting a more passive, reactive, or proactive stance, individuals' actions are profoundly shaped by how they interpret and cope with their challenges. This study responds to the noted gap in qualitative research on student deviance (Grabmier, 2020; Phoung & Trang, 2023), offering a nuanced look into how trauma, peer influence, and emotional distress shape behavioral responses. The findings align with broader research highlighting that unresolved pain may lead to passivity or conformity (Wu, 2024; Yip, 2024), while others turn adversity into growth through risk-taking or caregiving roles (Lee-Chua, Q. N., 2022; Hudson & Brandenberger, 2023). Furthermore, emotional regulation, self-awareness, and peer dynamics remain critical factors in student behavior (Curtis, 2023; Panadero et al., 2023; Ruelos et al., 2023), reinforcing the need for trauma-informed and student-centered approaches within college environments.

These themes highlight the ways in which classmates, social norms, and the environment shape students. According to Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory, people pick up new behaviors through imitation, reinforcement, and observation. Students are exposed to new social dynamics and peer groups in college settings. Students may adopt deviant behaviors as acceptable responses if these groups model them (e.g., substance use, rule-breaking) and reinforce them (e.g., through peer praise or short-term stress reduction).

➤ *Conformity to School Rules*

The insights gathered from the participants showed that adherence to school rules is not only viewed as a formal obligation but also as a personal and social responsibility. Students expressed an awareness of the importance of following institutional policies to maintain order, although some admitted to emotional conflicts and lapses in judgment. This theme highlights how rules are internalized differently, with reactions ranging from acceptance and alignment to misunderstanding and rebellion. This theme, cluster 5, which is Conformity to School Rules, is composed of 2 sub-themes: *Rule Internalization and Authority Confrontation*.

Rules Internalization. College students' behavior is influenced not only by social dynamics and personal experiences but also by their perceptions and internalization

of institutional rules. For some, school regulations may be considered rigid constraints that feel disconnected from their experiences, fostering resistance or indifference. When these rules are poorly communicated, perceived as unjust, or inconsistently enforced, students may find it difficult to regard them as meaningful, often leading to non-compliance or passive defiance.

For example, Participant 2 exhibits a strong moral alignment with following rules, viewing them as crucial for preventing mistakes and ensuring order. Participant 3 underscores the importance of fairness, believing that rules should apply equally to everyone. They emphasize the need to adapt to these rules for the greater good, viewing personal adjustment as a key factor in promoting a positive and harmonious environment. In contrast, Participant 4 reflects a deep internalization of the institution's norms, feeling a natural and instinctive alignment between their values and the rules. It suggests that they follow them without conscious effort because they see them as inherently right. These are captured in their answers:

"The right thing to do is to follow the rules to avoid mistakes inside the school." (P2)

"The rules in college are for everyone... we should adjust for goodness." (P3),

"I see it as a natural norm and rules... I feel that they are aligned with my beliefs and actions." (P4)

Following rules can be seen as a proactive way to prevent mistakes, with individuals viewing them as essential for maintaining order and avoiding misbehavior. For some, rules are viewed through the lens of fairness and the collective good, with adherence as a way to contribute to a harmonious and responsible environment. Others may experience rules that align with their personal beliefs, where compliance feels effortless and congruent with their values. These different perspectives illustrate how people engage with rules in varying ways: as a preventive measure for personal discipline, a social responsibility for the greater good, or a natural extension of personal ethics and values.

However, some participants conveyed confusion, disagreement, or misalignment with rules, which may lead to deviant behavior. Participant 5 acknowledges the purpose of rules, recognizing that they are for their good, and admits to an inner conflict or rationalization that leads them to break those rules. Participant 8, on the other hand, attributes rule-breaking to ignorance rather than intentional defiance, stating that a lack of awareness led to misconduct. Participant 9 expresses a disconnect between their values and actions and the institutional rules, feeling that the rules were not aligned with what they thought or did. These challenges are captured in their answers:

"It's for our good... but students like us, we sometimes have different thoughts that lead us to break... rules." (P5)

"We're ignorant of the rules, and that made it wrong."
(P8)

"I felt it wasn't aligned on what I am thinking and on what I am doing." (P9)

Breaking rules can stem from a variety of reasons. Some individuals may acknowledge the importance of rules, understanding that they are meant for their good, but still experience inner conflicts or rationalizations that lead to breaking them. This reflects a tension between knowing what is right and acting on personal impulses or circumstances. Others may break rules not out of defiance, but due to ignorance or a lack of understanding of the rules or expectations. Additionally, some may feel a disconnect between their beliefs and the institution's expectations, finding it difficult to reconcile their values with the imposed rules. This misalignment can lead to frustration, as the rules may feel inauthentic or challenging to follow. These factors show that rule-breaking can result from a combination of rationalization, lack of knowledge, and a misalignment between personal and institutional values.

These varying perspectives on rules and compliance are consistent with broader research on rule internalization in educational settings. Studies indicate that students' perceptions of fairness and alignment with institutional norms are central to understanding their behavior. For instance, Mogbana & Edward (2022) and Phuong (2022) emphasize that poorly communicated or inconsistently enforced rules can lead to non-compliance or passive defiance, particularly when students feel the rules are unjust or irrelevant. Zhang (2024) and Nickerson (2023) discuss how a lack of awareness or understanding of rules can lead to unintentional rule-breaking, echoing Participant 8's experience of ignorance. Additionally, Ansar (2024) highlights that when students feel a disconnect between personal beliefs and institutional rules, they may rationalize their actions or feel frustrated with the rules, as seen in Participant 9's experience. These findings underscore that rule-breaking often emerges from a complex interplay of rationalization, misunderstanding, and emotional misalignment with authority, which mirrors the challenges outlined in this study.

Authority Confrontation. Confrontation with authority often serves as a turning point for college students involved in deviant behavior, prompting them to recognize the real-life consequences of their actions. These encounters, whether through disciplinary measures or reflective discussions, can lead to guilt, accountability, and a desire for change, especially when handled with fairness and empathy. Some participants express awareness of the consequences of their actions and the role of rules in maintaining discipline:

"They didn't agree with what I did... they saw me as a troublemaker..." (P6)

"I was called in the DSA... I realize that when you make a mistake... you'll get expelled..." (P7)

"Rules and regulations in college are essential to discipline every student..." (P11)

Participant 6 highlights how others' judgment and labeling, such as being seen as a "troublemaker," significantly impact their self-perception. This suggests that how individuals are judged by others, particularly in a school environment, can influence how they view themselves, potentially leading to internalized shame or frustration. Participant 7 reflects on the consequences of their actions, particularly the realization that making mistakes can lead to severe consequences such as expulsion. This awareness indicates that Participant 7 understands the gravity of rule violations and the serious repercussions of not adhering to institutional expectations. Also, Participant 11 acknowledges the importance of rules and regulations in maintaining discipline within the college environment. They recognize that rules play a crucial role in preventing misconduct and ensuring that students follow proper conduct, underlining their belief in the necessity of rules for order and accountability.

The impact of external judgment, such as being labeled a "troublemaker," can profoundly affect how individuals perceive themselves, potentially leading them to internalize negative labels that influence their future actions. This internalization can result in feelings of alienation or resistance, further complicating the individual's relationship with rules and authority. On the other hand, awareness of consequences, such as the realization that mistakes can lead to serious repercussions like expulsion, is a strong motivator for rule compliance. This understanding of the stakes can lead to a heightened sense of accountability, where individuals recognize the tangible outcomes of their actions and adjust their behavior to avoid negative consequences.

Acknowledging the importance of rules as a means of maintaining discipline underscores the idea that institutional norms are essential for creating an orderly and accountable environment. For some individuals, recognizing that rules are not merely restrictive but are necessary for ensuring fairness, safety, and order can foster a sense of respect and commitment to those rules. These factors social perception, the awareness of consequences, and belief in the importance of rules play a significant role in shaping behavior, motivating individuals to adhere to institutional expectations and navigate the complexities of their social and academic environments.

More so, there is a participant point to emotions affecting their decision-making, potentially leading to deviant behavior:

"It's just that... our emotions were very skeptical that time than our thoughts." (P12)

Emotions played a significant role in their decision-making process, potentially clouding rational judgment. The participant suggests that at that moment, emotions, such as frustration or stress, overwhelmed their logical thinking, leading them to act impulsively. In the context of deviant

behavior, this reflects how heightened emotions can override careful decision-making. When individuals are emotionally charged, they might act on impulse rather than thinking through the consequences of their actions. For example, during periods of emotional distress, students may be more likely to break rules or engage in behaviors that they might typically avoid if they were thinking more clearly.

The findings on authority confrontation align with existing research that underscores the role of external judgment, emotional responses, and the awareness of consequences in shaping deviant behavior. Studies by Chikwature Mutare Polytechnic (n.d.) and Akinlolu & Salawu (2024) suggest that disciplinary actions, such as being labeled a "troublemaker" or facing consequences like expulsion, significantly impact students' self-perception, potentially leading to feelings of shame and social alienation. These experiences can reinforce internalized negative labels, further complicating their relationship with authority and institutional rules. Conversely, research by Zhang (2024) and Wu (2024) highlights that awareness of consequences, such as serious repercussions for rule violations, is a strong motivator for compliance. Understanding the gravity of actions encourages accountability and adjustment of behavior.

Additionally, Nickerson (2023) and Mambo & Nyamai (2023) support the idea that emotions play a pivotal role in decision-making, especially in emotionally charged moments. The tendency to act impulsively when overwhelmed by stress or frustration underscores the importance of emotional regulation in preventing deviant actions. These findings emphasize that the intersection of emotions, external judgment, and awareness of consequences is crucial in understanding how college students navigate authority and institutional expectations.

These themes show how students understand, follow, or disobey institutional regulations. First, Social Learning Theory clarifies how peer or authority figure conduct may affect students' compliance or disobedience to school norms. Students may emulate similar behavior if they see others successfully avoiding penalties or reaping the rewards of deviation. Second, Strain Theory is particularly pertinent to the themes, people may feel stressed when they believe that there is a disconnect between the acceptable ways to accomplish culturally dictated goals like academic success and the actual methods of achieving them like academic support. Deviance may result from this stress, particularly if students perceive no other realistic paths to achievement or if authority people apply the rules in an unfair manner. The idea of deviation as a coping strategy and the eventual recognition of its unsustainable repercussions are consistent with Theme 10's emphasis on confrontation and consequence realization.

➤ *Triggers of Deviant Behavior*

This theme revealed that deviant behavior among students often arises from emotional distress, provocation, and peer dynamics. Rather than being habitual, many instances of misconduct were described as reactive or situational. Participants recognized their vulnerabilities and

offered insights into the personal and external conditions fueling inappropriate actions.

The theme underscores the situational and emotionally driven nature of deviant behavior. It highlights that students' misconduct is frequently not rooted in deliberate defiance but instead in emotional overwhelm, social pressure, or a lack of emotional regulation. Emotional distress, such as frustration, anger, grief, or anxiety, emerged as a common internal trigger that compromises decision-making and self-control. In these moments, deviant actions may be outlets for suppressed feelings or attempts to assert control in emotionally turbulent situations. This theme, cluster 6, Triggers of Deviant Behavior, comprises 2 sub-themes: *External Triggers* and *Psychological Struggles*.

External Triggers. Many students engaged in deviant behavior not solely out of internal intent, but as a reaction to external stimuli such as being provoked, mocked, or pressured by peers. These external elements can either trigger emotional responses like anger or provoke curiosity and thrill-seeking behavior, especially when in the company of peers. The statement of participant two illustrates how verbal provocation or bullying can serve as a trigger for misconduct. In such cases, the student's reaction is not premeditated but rather a response to being targeted or disrespected, escalating into deviant actions. The mockery is a psychosocial trigger, leading to behavior that may defy rules or societal expectations.

"One thing that triggers me is when someone mocks me... that's the reason why my deviant behavior arises." (P2)

"When the whole group gathers together... confidence kicks in... out of curiosity..." (P5)

Participant 5 claims that the influence of group dynamics and peer presence is evident. Being in a group gives the individual a sense of courage or invincibility, which may embolden them to try actions they would typically avoid. When combined with peer encouragement or perceived acceptance, curiosity can lower inhibitions and lead to risk-taking or rule-breaking behavior.

External triggers, whether provocation or peer influence, play a crucial role in shaping behavior. These external factors act as catalysts that can push college students toward deviant actions, even if such behaviors are inconsistent with their usual personality or values. When students are placed in environments where they feel challenged, provoked, or encouraged by others, their decision-making processes may shift, often leading to impulsive or reactionary behaviors.

Students often react to how others treat them or what the group expects of them. In college life, where social identity and peer acceptance are significant, individuals may be influenced by group norms or social expectations. For instance, when students are mocked, teased, or excluded, they may experience a heightened emotional state such as anger, embarrassment, or a need to defend themselves, which can trigger deviant responses. Similarly, being part of a peer

group that normalizes or encourages risk-taking and rule-breaking can lead individuals to act out of character to gain approval, avoid rejection, or simply feel a sense of belonging.

This claim is supported by Phuong (2022), who notes that students become especially vulnerable to peer pressure in college environments where identity exploration and autonomy are heightened. The desire for social belonging becomes a central psychological need, and in their efforts to fit in, students may adopt behaviors that diverge from accepted social or institutional norms. This aligns with the observed tendency of students to conform to group expectations or act defensively in socially threatening situations.

Likewise, Ruelos et al. (2023) emphasize that peer influence significantly shapes deviant behavior among adolescents and young adults, particularly within educational institutions. Their findings affirm that the presence of peers can amplify behavioral risks, especially when group dynamics promote or tolerate rule-breaking. This further reinforces the idea that students' deviance may often be less about personal inclination and more about contextual and relational pressures.

These external influences may override personal judgment or self-control, especially in emotionally charged or socially pressured situations. Under stress or emotional turmoil, the ability to regulate behavior is often compromised. Students may engage in deviant behavior not because they are inherently inclined to do so, but because external triggers place them in a mental and emotional state where their capacity for rational thought and self-regulation is diminished. This is particularly true in moments of provocation (verbal attacks) or peer-driven excitement (group mischief), where the student's focus shifts from long-term consequences to immediate emotional or social gratification.

In essence, external triggers and social influences create a powerful context for deviance, underscoring the importance of understanding behavioral issues not only as individual choices but as responses to broader social interactions. This highlights the need for educational institutions to develop strategies that promote respectful communication, positive peer engagement, and emotional regulation to prevent misconduct.

Psychological Struggles. Deviant behavior among college students can emerge as a reaction to emotional distress and internal struggles triggered by external situations. The participants' experiences show that deviance is not always planned or habitual; it is often a spontaneous response to emotional provocation, stress, or unresolved internal conflict.

“My deviant behavior will trigger if someone shouted at me... I choose to be silent...” (P3)

“When I am in a bad mood... it really triggers my deviant behavior...” (P4)

As claimed by participant 3, there is an internal struggle between the urge to react and the decision to remain passive. The shouting acts as an external stimulus, but the emotional tension within the student becomes the real trigger. The silence may be a coping mechanism, but the underlying anger or frustration signals an unresolved inner conflict. While Participant 4 clearly shows how negative emotional states, like being in a bad mood, lower the individual's threshold for self-control. The participant's deviant behavior is emotionally driven, often without rational processing, highlighting how mood significantly influences decision-making and conduct.

This aligns with the findings of Onyemauche (2020), who noted that deviant behavior frequently stems from morally distressing or psychologically uncomfortable experiences that compel individuals to react in ways that challenge social norms. The emotional discomfort described by the participants reflects the exact conditions under which deviance may emerge. Furthermore, Ansar (2024) supports this view by asserting that psychological distress is a key driver of misconduct, especially when individuals lack effective coping mechanisms. These studies reinforce the idea that deviance is often a byproduct of emotional imbalance and psychological conflict, rather than purely a willful disregard of rules.

Together, these reflections illustrate that emotions such as anger, frustration, and stress are central to understanding deviance. When students lack emotional regulation skills or support systems, they may be more likely to react inappropriately to stressful stimuli, leading to actions that violate social or institutional norms.

These themes explore the underlying reasons and catalysts for deviant behavior. Attachment Theory, which deals with emotional reactions and internal conflict. Difficulties with identity development, emotional regulation, and managing interpersonal stressors are common symptoms of insecure or disordered attachment styles, and they can lead to deviant reactions when stress levels rise. As to the strain theory, students may feel under pressure to act in a deviant or rebellious manner as a release when they are confronted with excessive demands, marginalization, or failing to live up to expectations. A comprehensive picture of how deviation might arise from an unresolved tension between social pressure and personal vulnerability is presented by the confluence of situational (external) and emotional (interior) elements.

➤ Exhaustive Description

The lived experiences of college students with deviant behavior reveal a complex interplay of internal struggles, external pressures, and contextual influences. At the core of these experiences is the ongoing challenge of adjusting to the multifaceted demands of college life. Students frequently navigate academic stress, personal responsibilities, emotional instability, and social expectations. These overlapping factors create a climate where deviant behavior may arise not from intentional rebellion but as a reaction to overwhelming life circumstances and a lack of emotional regulation.

College presents a space where personal development and identity formation are constantly in flux. Many students grapple with financial hardships, unstable family dynamics, and emotional vulnerabilities, weighing heavily on their academic performance and self-conduct. The struggle to meet personal and familial expectations adds to the emotional burden, often leading to frustration, self-doubt, and diminished motivation. In such conditions, deviant behaviors—from non-compliance with rules to impulsive acts—often emerge as coping responses to emotional fatigue or environmental stress.

Emotions and mood fluctuations significantly shape student behavior. Students who lack effective coping strategies may react impulsively in stressful situations or lash out when emotionally overwhelmed. Their behavior tends to shift depending on their social environment, indicating that deviance is often context-dependent rather than intrinsic. Peer influence plays a crucial role in shaping behavior; students are susceptible to group dynamics, often conforming to group norms even when these involve risk-taking or misconduct. They also struggle with regulating their emotional reactions, sometimes resulting in poor decisions and inappropriate conduct.

The consequences of these actions often lead to a period of reflection and moral reckoning. After facing disciplinary actions such as suspension, academic setbacks, or public criticism, students begin to internalize the implications of their behavior. This reflective phase is marked by a growing awareness of responsibility, recognizing personal fault, and a developing desire to change. Emotional responses such as shame, regret, and disappointment are common during this stage, signaling a shift from denial or deflection to acceptance and accountability.

As they confront the aftermath of their actions, students also become more aware of how others perceive them, particularly authority figures and peers. Their self-image may shift in response to negative feedback or social exclusion, which can either motivate change or deepen their internal conflicts. In some cases, students deliberately avoid high expectations or social pressure, preferring to maintain a low profile to avoid judgment. This behavior reflects a subtle form of self-protection that underscores deeper emotional struggles.

Despite their challenges, many students show signs of resilience and transformation. Over time, they begin to realign their behavior with personal values, develop better emotional control, and actively seek to recover academically or socially. This journey is rarely linear, but it demonstrates the capacity for growth when students can reflect, correct, and reintegrate. Their experiences suggest that deviant behavior should not be viewed in isolation but as part of a broader developmental process influenced by social, emotional, and environmental factors.

These findings suggest a more compassionate and holistic approach to managing deviant behavior in college settings. Instead of relying solely on punishment, institutions

should foster reflective spaces, provide emotional support, and address the root causes of behavioral issues. Doing so supports student development and contributes to cultivating a more inclusive and understanding academic community.

In line with Colaizzi's (1978) seventh stage, the final comprehensive description was given back to the study participants for validation in order to guarantee the validity of the results. A synopsis of the main ideas and the basic framework of the lived experience was sent to each participant once they were contacted individually. They were asked to read the description and comment on how accurate it was and how well it matched their personal experiences. After responding, every participant attested that the results truly reflected their opinions. This procedure assisted in verifying the reliability of the analysis and the legitimacy of the data.

➤ *Validation of Findings*

Following Colaizzi's (1978) final step in phenomenological analysis, the validated themes were returned to the participants to confirm the accuracy and authenticity of the findings. Each participant reviewed the thematic summaries and affirmed that these accurately reflected their lived experiences as college students exhibiting deviant behaviors.

➤ *Summary*

This study delves into the lived experiences of college students with deviant behavior in one of the colleges in the Province of Bukidnon during the S.Y 2024-2025. Specifically, this study sought answers to the questions: What are the lived experiences of college students with deviant behavior?; and What is the context of the lived experiences of college students with deviant behavior? The study utilized Transcendental Phenomenology, a qualitative approach by Edmund Husserl (1913) that explores lived experiences by setting aside biases to grasp their essence. It emphasizes "epoche" (suspension of judgment) and intentionality (conscious experience of objects) for a pure understanding of human experiences.

Purposive sampling was used to select the twelve (12) participants based on psychological attributes, where participants aged 18–30 who were referred for misconduct such as cheating, vandalism, or bullying were selected for in-depth interviews. The interview guide focused on emotional, psychological, and social factors influencing their behavior. Ethical standards, including informed consent and data privacy, were strictly observed. Data were gathered through audio-recorded, one-on-one interviews, transcribed, and analyzed to identify themes and uncover the essence of their experiences, providing insights into student behavior and institutional responses.

➤ *Findings*

The findings of this study are the following;

The lived experiences of college students with deviant behavior highlighted three major themes such as Navigating the Complex Realities of College Life includes the subthemes

Coping with Daily Challenges and Struggling with Self-Discipline and Emotional Regulation. Experiencing the Influences of Emotions, Peers, and Environment on Deviant Behavior consists of Environment and Peers in Shaping Behavior and Emotional Reactivity. Reflecting on Consequences and Embracing the Journey to Change includes Acceptance and Responsibility and Learning from Consequences.

In the context of the lived experiences of college students with deviant behavior, three major themes emerged with six subthemes. Influence of Environment on Behavior includes the subthemes External Influences, which refers to the impact of family background, community setting, and social environment, and Social pressure, highlighting how internal challenges are intensified by external social pressures. Conformity to School Rules encompasses Rules Internalization, which reflects students' varying acceptance of institutional norms, and Authority Confrontation, which points to how encounters with school discipline contribute to behavioral awareness. Triggers of Deviant Behavior consists of External Triggers, such as peer pressure and situational stressors, and Psychological Struggle, referring to the emotional turmoil and unresolved issues that provoke non-conforming actions.

VII. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following are the conclusions:

This study concludes that deviant behavior among college students is deeply rooted in a complex web of personal, social, and environmental influences. The lived experiences of participants reveal that overwhelming academic demands, emotional instability, peer pressure, and financial strain create conditions where deviant behavior can emerge as a coping mechanism or reaction to stress. Many students lacked the emotional regulation skills and support systems needed to navigate these pressures effectively, leading them to make decisions that diverged from societal and institutional norms.

Furthermore, the context of these experiences underscores the powerful role of environment in shaping student behavior. The findings show that both physical settings and social dynamics such as community values, family background, and peer relationships contribute to how students perceive and respond to challenges. When combined with internal struggles, these external influences amplify the likelihood of engaging in deviant acts. However, the study also reveals students' capacity for growth through reflection, responsibility, and change, suggesting that interventions focused on emotional support, community-building, and positive reinforcement can play a critical role in guiding at-risk students toward healthier behavior patterns.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are made:

Guidance counselors may strengthen the guidance and counseling services to support the students through counseling or support groups to manage stress and anxiety. Building positive networks, reflecting on their actions, and participating in personal development programs can help them make responsible choices, cope with challenges, and avoid negative behaviors.

Parents provide emotional support, maintain open communication, and encourage responsibility and accountability. Promote healthy coping mechanisms, such as exercise or journaling, to help students manage stress and avoid negative behaviors.

Guidance counselors may offer counseling and workshops to help students manage stress and develop important skills. Peer support programs and safe spaces for reflection can provide students with guidance, promote positive behavior, and encourage better decision-making and emotional regulation.

School administrators provide holistic support through guidance services programs addressing academic, emotional, and personal development. Create an inclusive environment, fairly enforce rules, and address external stressors like financial or family challenges, helping students cope with pressures and reduce deviant behavior.

Future researchers are encouraged to explore intervention strategies that effectively combine emotional resilience training, peer mentoring programs, and environmental improvements to reduce deviant behavior among college students.

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A. Appendix A

➤ Interview Guide

• Part I: Profile Questions

Ask the participant the following for the demographic profile

- ✓ Sex _____
- ✓ Age _____
- ✓ Family Birth Order _____
- ✓ Year Level _____

• Part II: Opening Questions

- ✓ How old are you, what is your gender, what is your birth order and what year are you in college?
- ✓ What degree program are you enrolled in, and how would you describe your academic performance?
- ✓ Who do you currently live with, and what is your parents' highest educational attainment?
- ✓ How would you describe your peer group, and have you ever received any disciplinary actions in school?
- ✓ How do you typically deal with academic or personal challenges, and who do you rely on for support?

• Part III: Core Questions

- ✓ Describe a typical day in your life as a college student? How does your behavior influence your daily experiences?
- ✓ How do your peers, teachers, and family members perceive or react to your behavior? Please share specific instances.
- ✓ What are the challenges or consequences you faced due to your behavior in school or social settings? How did you handle them?
- ✓ In what ways do you think your behavior has shaped your academic performance and personal relationships?

- ✓ Please recall any moment when you felt misunderstood or judged because of your behavior. How did that experience impact you?
- ✓ What factors do you think have influenced your behavior (e.g., family background, social environment, personal experiences)?
- ✓ How do you perceive societal norms and rules in college? Do you feel they align with your own beliefs and actions?
- ✓ What are specific situations, events, or environments that trigger or reinforce your deviant behavior? Please describe them?
- ✓ How do you view the support systems available to you (e.g., school counseling, peer groups, family guidance)? Have they been helpful or not?
- ✓ What changes or interventions do you think could help students like you navigate college life better?

• Part IV: Exit Question

- ✓ What else you would like to share about your experiences that we haven't discussed but you feel is important?