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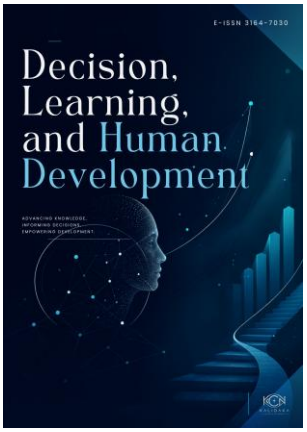
Reserve Officers' Training Corps Demands, Academic Integration, and Academic Performance among First-Year Criminology Students

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ABSTRACT
This study examined how perceived Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) demands relate to academic performance during the first-year transition to higher education. A quantitative descriptive-correlational design involved 61 first-year criminology students at World Citi Colleges in academic year 2025-2026. Perceived ROTC demands were measured with a 30-item, four-point Likert questionnaire covering time commitment, physical demands, and academic integration; academic performance was obtained from official registrar records. Descriptive statistics and Pearson correlations were used. Students reported substantial time commitment (M = 3.06, SD = 0.61) and physical demands (M = 2.89, SD = 0.72), alongside strong academic integration (M = 3.27, SD = 0.40). Overall perceived burden was inversely associated with academic performance ($r = -0.718$, $p < .001$) and family income ($r = -0.286$, $p = .025$). Academic performance was positively associated with physical-demand scores ($r = 0.842$, $p < .001$) and academic integration ($r = 0.455$, $p < .001$), while time commitment was not significant ($r = 0.206$, $p = .111$). The findings distinguish burden from educational integration and indicate that intensive co-curricular programs should be evaluated by both their demands and their alignment with learning.

IMPACT STATEMENT
Intensive co-curricular programs can be simultaneously demanding and educationally meaningful. In this cohort, overall ROTC burden was greater among lower-performing and lower-income students, whereas academic integration was positively associated with academic performance. The broader implication is not that greater military workload improves achievement, but that educational value depends on how institutional demands are aligned with learning and supported by student resources. Colleges can apply this principle by coordinating schedules, strengthening curricular relevance, and identifying students who experience disproportionate burden during the transition to higher education.

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1. Introduction

The transition into higher education is a developmental period in which students must reorganize learning strategies, self-regulation, social roles, and academic expectations. Academic performance during this transition reflects the interaction of cognitive, motivational, behavioral, and contextual resources rather than a single student characteristic. Stress-appraisal processes influence whether demanding environments are experienced as manageable challenges or as threats, while academic adjustment, self-efficacy, study habits, and psychosocial resources contribute to early university performance [1] - [8].

Structured co-curricular commitments can intensify this transition because they compete for time and recovery while also providing routines, responsibilities, and opportunities to develop self-regulatory habits. Research on time management and deliberate study consistently indicates that scheduling quality, prioritization, and strategic use of time are more informative than the simple number of hours devoted to academic work. Evidence from Filipino learners similarly links stronger time management with better academic outcomes, while research in a military-university context suggests that these skills can be deliberately strengthened. Class attendance and self-regulated learning remain complementary mechanisms through which students sustain engagement under competing demands [9] - [15].

ROTC represents a distinctive institutional context because it combines physical training, hierarchical organization, leadership expectations, scheduled formations, and professional socialization with conventional academic study. Research with military cadets has linked physical fitness, training exposure, recovery, resilience, stress regulation, sleep, and health behaviors with performance-related or adaptive outcomes [16] - [27]. These findings nevertheless require contextual interpretation because positive associations may reflect pre-existing discipline, fitness, health behavior, resilience, or institutional selection rather than a direct effect of greater training intensity.

For first-year criminology students, ROTC may be experienced not only as a workload but also as a form of professional learning because leadership, discipline, ethics, and public-service orientation overlap with elements of criminology formation. Research on meaningful co-curricular engagement and student participation indicates that educational experiences outside conventional coursework can relate to academic experience, motivation, persistence, and grades [28] - [30]. Coping and perseverance further shape how students respond to demanding environments [31], [32], while work on pedagogical mentoring illustrates the broader value of coherent institutional support for complex learning demands [33]. The central issue, therefore, is not whether ROTC is uniformly beneficial or harmful, but how different forms of perceived demand and academic integration coexist with academic functioning during the transition to higher education.

1.1. Research problem and gap

Existing military-education research provides useful evidence on fitness, resilience, stress, recovery, and time management, but much of it is drawn from service academies, officer-cadet settings, or specialized military populations. This leaves two related gaps. Empirically, less is known about first-year students in non-academy higher-education settings who must negotiate ROTC alongside a professionally oriented degree. Conceptually, prior work often treats military training either as a burden or as a developmental benefit, rather than distinguishing dimensions that may operate differently. Time commitment and physical demands can consume resources, whereas academic integration reflects the perceived alignment of ROTC with learning and professional goals. Examining these dimensions within the same cohort can clarify whether a demanding co-curricular program is experienced as a simple competing obligation or as a context in which burden and educational value coexist. World Citi Colleges provides the empirical setting for this test, but the broader contribution concerns how structured institutional demands relate to learning and academic functioning during an important educational transition.

1.2. Research objectives

The study aimed to examine the relationship between perceived ROTC demands and academic performance among first-year criminology students during the transition to higher education. Specifically, it sought to: (1) describe respondents by age, sex, academic performance, and family income; (2) determine the perceived extent of ROTC time commitment, physical demands, and academic integration; (3) test associations between respondent profile variables and overall perceived ROTC demand; (4) test the association of each ROTC-demand dimension with academic performance; and (5) derive evidence-informed institutional support priorities from the results. The study therefore treats ROTC as a structured co-curricular context and tests statistical associations without assuming that the observed relationships are

causal. The null hypotheses stated that the tested profile and ROTC-demand variables would not be significantly associated with academic performance or overall perceived ROTC demand at the .05 level.

2. Literature review

The study is anchored first in a transactional view of stress, in which environmental demands acquire psychological significance through appraisal in relation to perceived coping resources [1]. This perspective is useful for ROTC because the same schedule, physical requirement, or institutional expectation may be experienced as manageable by one student and burdensome by another. Evidence on student stress and coping supports the importance of this appraisal process for learning and wellbeing [2], [31].

A second perspective concerns self-regulation and time allocation. Time-management research distinguishes purposeful planning and prioritization from raw hours spent on a task [9] - [11]. Filipino evidence likewise links time-management practices with academic performance [12], and studies of self-regulated learning and attendance show how students organize behavior to maintain academic engagement when demands compete [14], [15]. From this perspective, ROTC may constrain available time while also requiring routines that could support more deliberate regulation of remaining academic time.

A development-in-context perspective connects these mechanisms to the first-year transition. Academic adjustment and self-efficacy are shaped not only by individual characteristics but also by the environments in which students learn and participate [6] - [8]. Student-engagement research similarly indicates that meaningful participation in institutional activities can be associated with persistence and academic performance [29], [30]. ROTC can therefore be conceptualized as one component of the educational environment that may simultaneously impose strain and provide structure, belonging, professional relevance, or opportunities for agency.

Physical demand and academic integration complete the framework. Cadet studies link fitness, resilience, coping, and healthy routines with adaptive or performance-related outcomes [16] - [20], [22], [23], [27], but such evidence does not establish that greater physical demand itself causes better academic performance. Academic integration is conceptually different: it captures whether students perceive ROTC content, values, support, and scheduling as compatible with their academic and professional learning. Research on co-curricular engagement provides a basis for expecting such alignment to matter [28], [30]. Together, these perspectives support a model in which burden and integration are related but non-equivalent features of the same institutional experience.

2.1. Conceptual model: Co-curricular demands in developmental context

The conceptual model treats time commitment, physical demands, and academic integration as distinct perceived dimensions of ROTC rather than as a single undifferentiated exposure. Time and physical demands represent potential resource costs, whereas academic integration represents the perceived compatibility of ROTC with criminology learning, institutional support, and professional relevance. These dimensions are tested separately in relation to academic performance, while age, sex, academic performance, and family income are examined as profile correlates of overall perceived demand. This structure allows the study to test a theoretically important distinction: a program can be demanding without being educationally misaligned, and it can be well integrated without eliminating strain. Grade point average is used as a proximal academic outcome; it should not be interpreted as a comprehensive measure of human development, wellbeing, agency, or capability. Figure 1 summarizes the tested associations and does not imply causal pathways.

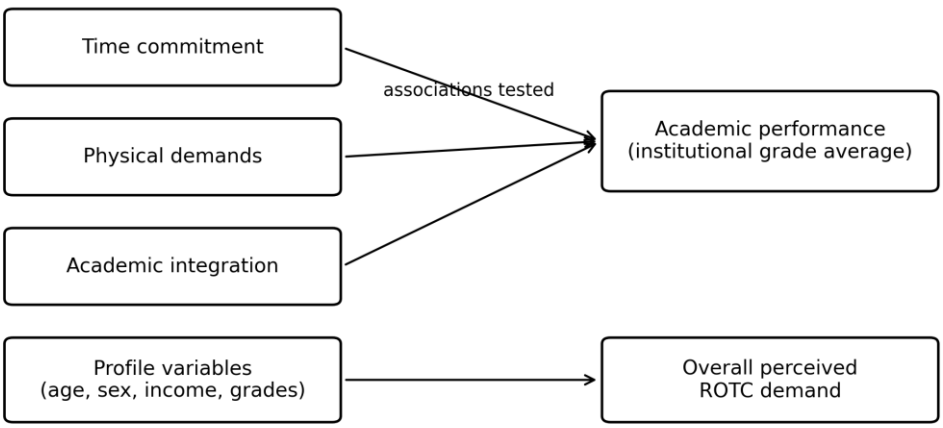


Figure 1. Conceptual representation of the associations tested in the study. Arrows denote hypothesized statistical associations, not causal effects.

3. Methods

3.1. Research design

A quantitative descriptive-correlational design was used to characterize perceived ROTC demands and examine their statistical associations with academic performance. The study was conducted at World Citi Colleges, Guimba Campus, during academic year 2025-2026 and focused on students navigating the first-year transition while simultaneously completing criminology coursework and ROTC. The design was appropriate because the study sought to estimate patterns of association among naturally occurring variables rather than manipulate training exposure or infer causal effects.

3.2. Participants and sampling

The target population comprised first-year students enrolled in the Bachelor of Science in Criminology program who were concurrently completing ROTC. A purposive sample of 61 students participated. Eligibility required active first-year criminology enrollment and concurrent ROTC participation. The non-probability, single-campus sample was appropriate for the defined cohort but limits statistical generalization beyond the study setting.

3.3. Operational definitions / Variables

Perceived ROTC demands were assessed using a customized 30-item questionnaire with three 10-item subscales: Time Commitment, Physical Demands, and Academic Integration. Items used a four-point response scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree, and 4 = Strongly Agree. Time Commitment represented perceived scheduling and study-time pressure; Physical Demands represented perceived exertion, fatigue, discomfort, and recovery requirements; and Academic Integration represented perceived relevance, coordination, support, and compatibility between ROTC and criminology learning. Academic performance was represented by official cumulative grade point average obtained from the Registrar's Office. GPA is treated as a proximal academic outcome rather than a comprehensive indicator of student development. Age, sex, and family income were analyzed as profile variables, and an overall perceived ROTC-demand score was used in the profile-correlation analysis reported in the source dataset.

3.4. Data collection

Data collection proceeded in three phases. First, administrative permission was obtained from the College of Criminology, ROTC Unit Command, and Registrar’s Office, and written informed-consent procedures were prepared. Second, the paper-based 30-item questionnaire was administered during scheduled class periods with standardized instructions and researcher oversight to reduce missing responses. Third, with participant authorization, cumulative academic records covering the first and second semesters were retrieved from the Registrar’s Office. Survey responses and academic records were matched using coded identifiers so that analysis could be completed without retaining participant names in the working dataset.

3.5. Data analysis

Frequencies and percentages summarized respondent profiles. Means and standard deviations summarized the three ROTC-demand dimensions. Pearson product-moment correlations were used for bivariate associations. For internal statistical consistency during manuscript preparation, two-tailed p values and Fisher-z 95% confidence intervals were recomputed from the reported Pearson r coefficients and N = 61, using alpha = .05. This manuscript-level consistency check did not constitute reanalysis of the raw dataset; the corrected inferential values should therefore be verified against the original statistical output before final publication. Correlation magnitudes were described approximately as weak (|r| < .30), moderate (.30 <= |r| < .50), strong (.50 <= |r| < .80), and very strong (|r| >= .80).

3.6. Validity, reliability, and trustworthiness

Subject-matter experts reviewed the survey for face and content validity before administration. Standardized in-class instructions, real-time oversight, and completeness checks were used to strengthen administration quality. Objective academic records from the Registrar’s Office reduced reliance on a single self-report data source. However, the source manuscript did not report internal-consistency coefficients for the three subscales or the overall score. This psychometric information should be supplied from the original validation output before submission because it affects the precision with which the questionnaire scores can be interpreted.

3.7. Ethical considerations

The source manuscript states that the Research Ethics and Research Development and Publication Office of World Citi Colleges - Guimba Campus provided ethical review and administrative authorization, with additional permissions from the College Dean, ROTC Unit Command, and Campus Registrar. All 61 participants provided written informed consent and could decline or withdraw without academic or disciplinary penalty. Coded identifiers were used for matching survey and registrar data, and results were

analyzed in aggregate. The ethics approval identifier and approval date were not provided in the source manuscript and should be inserted before submission if such identifiers were issued.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Results

4.1.1. Participant profile

The participant profile is summarized in Table 1. Most respondents were 18-19 years old (91.8%), 72.1% were male, and 62.3% had an academic standing of 87 or above. Most respondents also came from households reporting monthly income of PHP 20,000 or below.

Table 1. Participant profile (N = 61).

Characteristic	Category	n	%
Age	17	1	1.6
Age	18	39	63.9
Age	19	17	27.9
Age	20	2	3.3
Age	21	2	3.3
Sex	Male	44	72.1
Sex	Female	17	27.9
Academic performance	75-80 (Passed)	4	6.6
Academic performance	81-86 (Fair)	19	31.1
Academic performance	87-92 (Good)	28	45.9
Academic performance	93-97 (Very Good)	9	14.8
Academic performance	98-100 (Excellent)	1	1.6
Monthly family income (PHP)	5,000 and below	13	21.3
Monthly family income (PHP)	5,001-10,000	16	26.2
Monthly family income (PHP)	10,001-20,000	25	41.0
Monthly family income (PHP)	20,001-30,000	4	6.6
Monthly family income (PHP)	30,001 and above	3	4.9

4.1.2. Perceived time commitment

Students agreed that ROTC imposed substantial time demands (overall M = 3.06, SD = 0.61). As shown in Table 2, the highest-rated item concerned difficulty balancing ROTC and academic requirements (M = 3.23), followed by sacrificing personal or social time (M = 3.20).

Table 2. Perceived ROTC time commitment.

Item	Indicator	M	SD	Interpretation
1	Weekly drills and formations take up significant time.	3.02	0.65	Agree
2	ROTC schedule often conflicts with academic classes.	2.92	0.88	Agree
3	More than three hours per week are spent on ROTC activities outside scheduled drills.	3.05	0.74	Agree
4	Uniform preparation and travel reduce study time.	3.15	0.93	Agree
5	Balancing ROTC and academic requirements is challenging.	3.23	0.72	Agree
6	Personal or social time is sacrificed to meet ROTC demands.	3.20	0.87	Agree
7	ROTC requires long periods on campus, including weekends.	3.15	0.83	Agree
8	Unscheduled ROTC activities disrupt study routines.	2.95	0.94	Agree
9	Required ROTC time feels disproportionate to academic credit.	2.97	0.77	Agree
10	ROTC time contributes to stress and exhaustion.	2.98	0.90	Agree
Overall	Time commitment	3.06	0.61	Agree

4.1.3. Perceived physical demands

Physical demands were also rated in the Agree range (overall M = 2.89, SD = 0.72). Table 3 shows that post-drill exhaustion received the highest mean (M = 3.07), whereas discomfort from required uniforms and gear received the lowest mean (M = 2.62).

Table 3. Perceived ROTC physical demands.

Item	Indicator	M	SD	Interpretation
1	Physical training exercises are too rigorous to keep up with.	2.95	0.72	Agree
2	I often feel physically exhausted after drills and training.	3.07	0.81	Agree

Item	Indicator	M	SD	Interpretation
3	Physical demands reduce energy for academic tasks.	2.90	1.00	Agree
4	I have experienced minor injuries from ROTC activities.	2.84	1.07	Agree
5	Required uniforms and gear are uncomfortable or restrictive.	2.62	0.97	Agree
6	Long periods of standing or marching cause discomfort.	2.98	0.83	Agree
7	Physical demands feel more challenging than academic workload.	2.92	0.88	Agree
8	Physical training requirements exceed my current fitness level.	2.95	0.78	Agree
9	Academic performance suffers because of physical fatigue.	2.84	0.97	Agree
10	Physical recovery before regular classes is difficult.	2.84	1.00	Agree
Overall	Physical demands	2.89	0.72	Agree

4.1.4. Academic integration

Academic integration received the most favorable overall rating (M = 3.27, SD = 0.40; Strongly Agree). In Table 4, the highest mean concerned the perceived contribution of ROTC discipline and leadership to criminology coursework (M = 3.52), while coordination to avoid scheduling conflicts was rated lower (M = 3.08).

Table 4. Perceived ROTC academic integration.

Item	Indicator	M	SD	Interpretation
1	ROTC academic content is directly relevant to criminology studies.	3.34	0.66	Strongly Agree
2	ROTC instructors coordinate with academic professors to avoid conflicts.	3.08	0.64	Agree
3	Academic credit is commensurate with ROTC time and effort.	3.23	0.67	Agree
4	ROTC discipline and leadership help performance in criminology courses.	3.52	0.59	Strongly Agree
5	ROTC provides support for managing academic workload.	3.26	0.60	Strongly Agree
6	ROTC academic assignments are manageable with regular coursework.	3.44	0.62	Strongly Agree
7	Mandatory ROTC activities require missing regular academic classes.	2.84	0.90	Agree
8	ROTC helps develop critical-thinking skills applicable to criminology.	3.31	0.67	Strongly Agree
9	Academic performance is a factor in ROTC evaluation.	3.36	0.61	Strongly Agree
10	ROTC values align with ethical foundations of criminology.	3.33	0.65	Strongly Agree
Overall	Academic integration	3.27	0.40	Strongly Agree

4.1.5. Respondent profile and overall ROTC demands

Associations between respondent profile variables and overall perceived ROTC demand are presented in Table 5. Academic performance showed a strong inverse association with perceived overall demand (r = -0.718, 95% CI [-0.821, -0.569], p < .001). Family income showed a weaker inverse association (r = -0.286, 95% CI [-0.502, -0.037], p = .025). Age and sex were not significantly associated with perceived overall demand.

Table 5. Correlations between respondent profile variables and overall perceived ROTC demand.

Profile variable	r	95% CI	p	Inference
Age	-0.112	[-0.354, 0.144]	.390	Not significant
Sex	-0.010	[-0.261, 0.242]	.939	Not significant
Academic performance	-0.718	[-0.821, -0.569]	< .001	Significant
Family income	-0.286	[-0.502, -0.037]	.025	Significant

4.1.6. ROTC-demand dimensions and academic performance

The three ROTC-demand dimensions showed different relationships with academic performance, as summarized in Table 6. Physical-demand scores had a very strong positive association (r = 0.842, 95% CI [0.749, 0.902], p < .001), and academic integration had a moderate positive association (r = 0.455, 95% CI [0.229, 0.634], p < .001). Time commitment showed only a weak positive association and did not reach the .05 significance threshold after the consistency check (r = 0.206, 95% CI [-0.048, 0.435], p = .111).

Table 6. Correlations between ROTC-demand dimensions and academic performance.

ROTC-demand dimension	r	95% CI	p	Inference
Time commitment	0.206	[-0.048, 0.435]	.111	Not significant
Physical demands	0.842	[0.749, 0.902]	< .001	Significant
Academic integration	0.455	[0.229, 0.634]	< .001	Significant

4.2 Discussion

4.2.1. Co-curricular military training as a developmental context

The results indicate that ROTC is experienced simultaneously as demanding and educationally meaningful. Students agreed that the program consumes time and produces physical fatigue, yet they strongly endorsed its relevance to criminology learning. This dual pattern is theoretically important because it challenges a simple beneficial-versus-harmful interpretation of intensive co-curricular participation. In transactional terms, a demand becomes consequential through the relationship between environmental requirements and available coping resources [1], [2], [31]. From a development-in-context perspective, the same institutional experience can constrain time and energy while also providing structure, professional relevance, and opportunities for self-regulation. The present data therefore support treating ROTC as a contextual experience whose academic meaning depends on the configuration of burden and integration rather than workload alone.

4.2.2. Unequal burden during the transition to higher education

Overall perceived ROTC burden was greater among students with lower academic performance and lower family income. During the first-year transition, students differ in the academic, financial, social, and psychological resources available to absorb competing demands. Broader evidence shows that academic adjustment, self-efficacy, psychosocial resources, and study skills are associated with university performance [3], [4], [6] - [8], [29]. The present associations are consistent with the possibility that students with fewer available resources experience identical institutional requirements as more burdensome. However, the correlational design cannot determine direction: academic difficulty may heighten perceived burden, burden may interfere with study, or both may reflect unmeasured contextual factors. The finding therefore supports differentiated support rather than a uniform assumption about how all students experience ROTC.

4.2.3. Time demands, self-regulation, and learning

Time commitment was descriptively substantial but was not significantly associated with academic performance after the inferential statistics were recomputed from the reported r and N. This pattern is consistent with evidence that the quality of time management, prioritization, and self-regulation is more informative than raw time allocation alone [9] - [11], [14]. The finding also aligns with Philippine evidence linking time-management practices to achievement and with military-university research emphasizing deliberate development of time-management skills [12], [13]. For learning theory, the implication is that time pressure and learning regulation should not be treated as interchangeable constructs. A demanding schedule may create risk, but its academic consequence may depend on how students organize study, attendance, recovery, and competing responsibilities.

4.2.4. Physical demands, resilience, and interpretive caution

The very strong positive association between physical-demand scores and academic performance is noteworthy but requires the greatest interpretive restraint. Military-cadet research has connected physical fitness and health behaviors with performance-related outcomes [16] - [18], [27], and resilience studies indicate that coping and regulatory resources can shape adaptation under demanding training conditions [19], [20], [22], [23]. The present measure, however, captures perceived physical demand rather than experimentally assigned training intensity or objective fitness. Students who are more disciplined, physically prepared, health conscious, or persistent may both tolerate demanding training and perform well academically [32]. The association should therefore be interpreted as a marker of co-occurring characteristics within this cohort, not as evidence that increasing physical rigor would improve grades.

4.2.5. Academic integration and professional learning

Academic integration showed a moderate positive association with academic performance and received the highest overall demand-dimension rating. This pattern is consistent with student-engagement research linking meaningful educational participation with academic experience, persistence, and grades [28] - [30]. The strongest integration items in the present study emphasized discipline, leadership, critical thinking, and ethical alignment with criminology. These results suggest that the educational significance of ROTC may lie less in the amount of training completed than in whether students perceive coherent connections between co-curricular activity, professional learning, and institutional support. Such alignment can make a demanding program more intelligible and purposeful without eliminating its resource costs.

4.2.6. Broader implications for learning and student development

The study contributes a distinction between perceived burden and academic integration that is relevant beyond ROTC. Intensive co-curricular experiences can simultaneously consume time and energy and provide structure, belonging, professional relevance, or opportunities to practice self-regulation. Research on first-year adjustment and student engagement suggests that developmental outcomes emerge from

the interaction between individual resources and educational environments [6] - [8], [29], [30]. The present findings extend this logic by showing that different dimensions of the same program need not relate to academic performance in the same way. Conceptually, this burden-integration distinction may be useful for studying other demanding co-curricular contexts such as athletics, service learning, field placements, leadership programs, or professional training, although such transfer should be tested directly. The broader contribution is therefore not a claim about military training alone, but a framework for examining how structured institutional experiences shape learning during educational transitions.

4.2.7. Practical and policy implications

The results support an institutional strategy that differentiates avoidable burden from educational value. Administrators can coordinate ROTC and academic calendars, monitor repeated class conflicts, provide study-planning and recovery guidance, and direct additional support toward students with lower academic standing or limited financial resources. Academic integration can be strengthened by making explicit links among leadership, ethics, discipline, critical thinking, and criminology learning outcomes. Although developed in a different disciplinary setting, research on pedagogical mentoring also illustrates how coherent guidance structures can support learners facing complex academic demands [33]. Because physical-demand scores were positively associated with grades but were not experimentally manipulated, physical rigor should be managed for safety and readiness rather than increased for presumed academic benefit.

4.2.8. Limitations and directions for future research

Several limitations materially constrain interpretation. First, the sample was small, purposive, and drawn from one campus, limiting generalizability. Second, the correlational design does not establish temporal order or causality. Third, ROTC-demand dimensions were self-reported and may be influenced by response style, current academic standing, or unmeasured personal characteristics. Fourth, the source manuscript did not provide internal-consistency coefficients or full scoring-key details, including the treatment of negatively worded items; these should be verified from the original instrument files. Fifth, the sex distribution was imbalanced and coding information for categorical variables was not documented in the manuscript. Finally, the p values in the source text were not internally consistent with several reported r values and N = 61; this revision therefore reports recomputed two-tailed p values and Fisher-z confidence intervals that should be checked against the original dataset or statistical output before submission. Future research should use multi-site and longitudinal designs, objective indicators of training exposure and fitness, and validated measures of self-regulation, academic adjustment, resilience, wellbeing, agency, and professional identity. Such designs could test whether these processes mediate or moderate the relationship between demanding co-curricular environments and academic outcomes across different student populations.

5. Conclusion

Among 61 first-year criminology students, ROTC was perceived as both demanding and strongly integrated with academic and professional learning. Overall perceived burden was higher among students with lower academic performance and lower family income, while age and sex were not associated with burden. Physical-demand and academic-integration scores were positively associated with academic performance, whereas time commitment was not statistically significant after the inferential consistency check. These findings do not demonstrate that greater ROTC intensity improves grades. Instead, they show that structured co-curricular programs can contain distinct dimensions of strain and educational alignment that coexist differently with academic functioning. The study's broader contribution is the burden-integration distinction: institutional experiences should be evaluated not only by how demanding they are, but also by how coherently they connect with learning and how equitably students are supported during educational transitions. For practice, coordinated scheduling, targeted support, and stronger curricular alignment are more defensible priorities than simply increasing or reducing program intensity.

Ethics approval statement

The Research Ethics and Research Development and Publication Office of World Citi Colleges - Guimba Campus provided ethical review and administrative authorization for the study. The College Dean, ROTC

Unit Command, and Campus Registrar provided the necessary institutional permissions, including authorized access to academic records.

Informed consent statement

All participants (N = 61) provided written informed consent before data collection. The consent process explained the academic purpose of the study, survey participation, authorized access to official academic records, confidentiality and anonymization procedures, and the right to decline or withdraw without academic or disciplinary consequences.

Author contribution statement

Anicia S. Velasco: Conceptualization, Methodology, Formal analysis, Data curation, Writing - original draft, Supervision, Validation, Writing - review & editing, Project administration. Jennica Venice T. Castillo: Conceptualization, Investigation, Validation, Resources, Writing - review & editing.

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Disclosure statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, or publication of this article.

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During manuscript preparation, AI-assisted technologies including ChatGPT, Gemini, and Grammarly were used for language editing, structural refinement, consistency checking, and reference-formatting support. The authors critically reviewed and verified the manuscript and remain fully responsible for the accuracy, originality, interpretation, and integrity of the final work.

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