

Validity Study Relationship Between Police Academy Performance and Cadet Level of Education and Cognitive Ability

Stephen J. Scarfo
Radford University

This study looked at the relationship between education and cognitive ability and the performance of 152 cadets in a 24-week police academy. The results indicate that cognitive ability ($r = .51$) and number of college credits ($r = .31$) are related to academy grades. There was no relationship between prior military experience and performance in the academy ($r = .06$). African Americans scored lower on the cognitive ability test and received lower grades in the academy than did their White counterparts. Neither gender nor age was related to academy performance.

Sample

N	152 graduates of a 24-week police academy in Texas
Gender	85% were men, 15% were women
Race	White = 79.6%, African American = 6.6%, Hispanic = 10.5%, Other = 3.3%
Age	$M = 25.13$; $SD = 3.74$, range = 20-41
Education	High school diploma = 77.6%, Associate's degree=9.2% Bachelor's degree = 11.8%, Master's degree = 1.3%
Military	32% had prior military experience

Predictor Information

The predictors in the study were scores on a civil service exam measuring general cognitive ability, prior military experience (0=no, 1=yes), and level of education. Four measures of education were used: Degree earned (0=high school diploma, 1=associate's degree, 2=bachelor's degree, 3=master's degree), years of education, number of college hours, and whether the cadet majored in criminal justice (0=no, 1=yes).

Criterion Information

The criteria were the average of academic tests taken during the 24 weeks the cadets were in the academy and the final class ranking. The mean class average was 90.29 with a standard deviation of 3.69.

Results

As shown in Table 1, cognitive ability and education were significantly related to GPA in the academy. A regression analysis indicates that cognitive ability ($R^2=.26$) and education ($R^2 = .02$) together account for 28% of the variance in academy grades. Neither having a criminal justice major nor military experience was related to academy performance. African Americans scored significantly lower on the Civil Service Exam and received significantly lower academy grades than did their White counterparts. Neither age nor gender was related to academy performance.

Table 1: Correlations among variables

	Education				Demographics				Academy Performance	
	Years	College Hours	Degree	CJ Major	Race	Gender	Age	Military	GPA	Rank
1. Cognitive ability	.16	.37*	.26*	-.14	-.18*	.04	-.09	-.20*	.51*	.05
Education										
2. Years of education		.49*	.40*	.07	.00	-.08	-.02	-.20*	.04	.02
3. Years of college			.49*	.20*	-.12	-.11	-.07	-.16	.31*	-.19*
4. Degree				-.05	-.08	-.07	.03	-.09	.25*	-.12
5. Criminal justice major?					.01	-.04	.01	-.02	-.08	-.03
Demographics										
6. Race						-.13	-.04	.04	-.40*	.32*
7. Gender							.02	-.22	-.05	.04
8. Age								.27*	.06	-.09
9. Military experience									.06	.13
Criteria										
10. Academy average										-.58*
11. Academy rank										