
Example Assignment #1

I. Statement of Research Topic

The effectiveness of specialized courts for juvenile offenders in relation to recidivism is an important area of study. There are some who believe that it is sufficient to have juvenile court in general, and even those who believe that a separate juvenile court is not necessary. However, others believe that the rehabilitative nature of juvenile justice is better implemented through the use of specialized courts, more specifically, domestic and family violence court. Investigation into the efficacy of such a specialized court is thus an important step in the prevention of future domestic and family violence acts by today's youthful offenders.

II. Theoretical Proposition(s)

- A. Specialized juvenile delinquency courts decrease the likelihood of associated recidivism.

III. Definitions

- A. Specialized juvenile delinquency courts: Specialized juvenile courts within the broader jurisdiction of juvenile delinquency court that are designed to better address the underlying issues related to specific delinquent offenses. Court associated personnel, such as District Attorneys, public defenders, probation officers, and Judges receive special training related to a specific delinquent offense.
- B. Recidivism: A tendency to lapse into a previous condition or pattern of behavior; especially, or a falling back or relapse into prior criminal habits.

IV. Hypothesis

- A. Juvenile domestic and family violence offenders assigned to a specialized domestic and family violence court will commit fewer recidivist offenses compared to those assigned to a general jurisdiction juvenile court.

V. Variables

- A. Independent variable – juvenile delinquency court (categorical)
1. Level 1: General jurisdiction juvenile delinquency court
 2. Level 2: Specialized juvenile domestic and family violence court
- B. Background variables
1. Gender: Male or Female (categorical)
 2. Ethnicity: Caucasian, African American, Hispanic, Asian, Other (categorical)
 3. Age (continuous)
- C. Dependent Variable – Recidivism
1. DV measure₁: Number of probation violations related to a prior domestic or family violence offense (continuous)
 2. DV measure₂: Number of probation revocations related to a prior domestic or family violence offense (continuous)
 3. DV measure₃: Number of recidivist arrests for domestic or family violence offenses (continuous)

For the example variables there are some important things to note:

Independent variable – juvenile delinquency court

1. The independent variable is a single variable which has two levels (groups); it is not two separate variables.
2. You may have more than one independent variable if you wish, but you are only required to have one.

Background variables – gender, ethnicity, and age

1. There are three separate background variables (i.e., gender, ethnicity, and age).
2. For the two categorical variables (gender and ethnicity) the attributes are listed for each variable. For gender, the attributes are male and female.

Dependent variable - recidivism

1. The dependent variable is a single variable, which has three dependent measures (i.e., three measures of a single variable).
2. You are required to have at least one dependent variable, which may have one or more measures.
3. Alternatively, you may have several separate dependent variables, which are mutually exclusive.

Note about whether variables are continuous or categorical:

1. A variable is continuous if the data collected for it is some sort of a count. For example, age would be a continuous variable if you simply asked subjects how old they were on a survey, and provided a space for them write in their age.

For example:

How old are you? ____ (Please indicate your age)

2. A variable is categorical if you define specific categories for it. Age can be a categorical variable as well if you define specific age categories. Instead of asking subjects for their specific age (i.e., a single number), you could opt to have them choose which age category they fall into by checking the appropriate box.

For example:

- 15-19
- 20-24
- 25-29

Please note that when you have numerical categories, there cannot be any overlap amongst the categories. The categories must be mutually exclusive.