

The working students: Their pains and gains

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Abstract

This quantitative study ascertained the problems encountered by the working students, their coping mechanisms, and the benefits derived from their dual roles. A total of fifty students enrolled in the higher years were the participants in the study. Twelve students were from the College of Engineering (COE), 33 were from the College of Administrative and Financial Sciences (CAFS); and 5 were from the College of Computer Studies (CCS). The statistical tools used for quantitative results were frequency count and ranking. Conducted from May to July 2015 in the Kingdom of Bahrain, the results were as follows: (1) generally, working students' common problems include stress, as they have difficulty balancing their work and studies. They miss their family and friends, they get low marks due to work demands and absenteeism caused by their official function; (2) Despite the dual roles, between work and studies, students still catch up with their family and friends during weekends to unwind, learn the skill of time management by organizing their daily routine, and do relaxation-related activities; and (3) As to benefits, financial security gives them a desirable lifestyle other than their need; their present job is related to their career goals; and the experience and skill learned are appealing to their future employers.

Keywords: working students, pains, gains, coping mechanisms, benefits

1. Introduction

Times have changed. In the milieu of economic and social development, a lot of part time working students are increasingly remarkable. In fact, this tendency has become a controversy among students. Many are wondering whether they should get part time jobs or not, as opinions vary. While some believe that working part time brings a handful of benefits, others are on the opinion that these students can face certain challenges.

At a certain point, students who do not work part time claim that they should save time for their studies and experiences rather than work part time. They find more concentration while not worrying on the pressure from their workplace, while those who consider the benefits of working part time believe that they can get more practical experiences for their future career and businesses, and the skill they learned may be appealing to future employers. Students experience the reality of the world of work they are in. This increases their awareness of time management, making them realize they can do much productively. They not only gain plus factor for their future career, but they also enjoy the lifestyle corresponding to their sacrifices.

Formal training at college or universities only provides students with a basic knowledge, although some claim that the higher the qualifications students obtain, the better their job will be. Nevertheless, one's success at school is not necessarily a guarantee for one's success at work. What one gets from books and how one applies it in practice are two different matters. Working while studying seems to be more helpful as it helps them learn more responsibilities in the world of work, which reinforces their learning in school. Some remark that working undergraduate students are more confident than others when they start a job after graduation. Monetary benefit is another factor which solves their financial burdens while working during their university days.

Generally, students work because of an opportunity, especially if these jobs afford great flexibility in their work schedule. Students find it convenient to adjust their class schedule.

Some who used to work before they enter the university, have to maintain the lifestyle they were accustomed to, like balancing their employment and course work. Partly, this relieves their parents from economic burden and gives them extra income for a desirable lifestyle.

Though working students have a sense of accomplishment, it could not be denied that there are consequences they have to face^[1]. Observation shows that most of those enrolled in the evening classes are working students. Oftentimes, these students look haggard as they enter their classes, many are oftentimes absent, a few ask favor for excuses from not attending classes because of job-related travels, while some get low marks despite their academic potential. Some students, especially those coming from lower income families, need to work to provide for their educational needs. They are forced to reduce their course load, and eventually spend more years in the university than those who are regularly enrolled; may not have quality output in their academic performance though academically qualified; may undergo financial difficulties; while others may be in conflict with their immediate superiors who are not supportive of their studies; and may clash with professors who are not aware of the multiple roles these students are experiencing. Kept trying, these students have less time to focus on their studies, or at its worst, at risk.

Considering both options, working part time while studying outweighs the benefits of being a full time student, however, all these may lead to anxiety, as they have to make both ends meet.

Specifically, this study answered the following questions:

1.1 Statement of the Problem

1. What problems do working students encounter while working and studying at the same time?

2. How do they cope with the pressures between their work and studies?
3. What are the benefits of being a working student?

Methods and Procedures

The Research Instrument

Part 11: The instrument used was a semi-structured interview guide which included the following: Set 1—a checklist of the problems encountered while studying and working at the same time; Set B – their coping mechanisms; and Set C—the benefits they derived from their multi-tasking. The checklist for the three categories was taken from an instrument on a previously conducted study^[13] by Mounsey, *et al* and Legaspi, R.^[14]

The students ticked the item that corresponded to the difficulties they encountered while working and studying at the same time, their coping mechanism as they perform their dual role, and the benefits they derive after finishing their degree. These ticked items were then ranked to determine the reasons behind their difficulties, their means of coping for survival, and the benefits derived from their efforts.

Each of this category was followed by a guide question related to the items ticked.

The Procedure

This study followed a quantitative design. Quantitative method of research deals with numbers to determine the substance of the data^[15].

During the 3rd trimester of AY 2014-2015, working students enrolled among the selected higher subjects of the COE, CCS, and CAFS classes were identified as respondents.

The selected students were then given the questionnaire that corresponded to the difficulties derived from their multi-tasking.

Statistical Analysis

Frequency count and ranking were used for the ticked items in the questionnaire.

Data Analysis

Table 2: Problems Encountered by Working Students

Problems Encountered	Rank
• I spend less time with my family and friends.	1
• Although I prefer to study and work at the same time, I feel physically drained due to my divided concentration.	2
• I try to cope with my university requirements, but still, I don't get the best possible mark.	3
• I usually miss my classes because of my official function	4
• Due to work demand, I work more hours beyond my required schedule	5
• I usually get lower marks because I can't cope with university Requirements	6
• I spend more years in the university than those who are regularly enrolled.	7
• I could have gotten good marks because I am academically qualified.	8
• I deal gently with my immediate superiors at work who are not supportive of my university studies.	9
• My professors demand that I have to attend my classes regularly.	10

Table 2 shows that the top five problems commonly encountered by students while studying and working at the same time are as follows: “I spend less time with my family and friends” (rank 1); “Although I prefer to study and work at the same time, I feel physically drained due to my divided concentration” (rank 2); “I try to cope with my university requirements, but still, I don't get the best possible mark” (rank 3); “I usually miss my classes because of my official function” (rank 4); and “Due to work demand, I work more hours beyond my required schedule” (rank 5).

Family relationships may suffer due to imbalance at work and studies. Personal relationships with friends and family, the basic necessities in life, can suffer because of stress on spending less time with them. Rapport with managers can lead to relationship problems as managers may not be happy with the worker's undivided attention and quality performance. Classroom performance may also be at risk due to absenteeism and stress. Conflict between work and school may arise as one cannot serve two masters at the same time. By going to class and be unavailable during important work hours may upset the manager, or may be too tired to focus in the classroom, less prepared for the classroom activities, and eventually get failing marks.

Table 3: Coping Mechanisms of Working Students

Coping Mechanisms	Rank
• I go out with my friends to unwind.	1
• I catch up with my family during holidays.	2
• I practice time management.	3
• I organize my daily routine.	4
• I do relaxation exercises.	5
• I meditate and pray.	6
• I engage in sports like playing football and other games.	7
• I try my best not to worry too much.	8
• I talk to others about my feelings and sentiments.	9
• I find time for leisure activities related to my interests.	10

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Too much stress makes one prone to illness. It can affect the immune system if one cannot find a way to balance work and studies. A common result to imbalance in work and illness is school requirement “at risk.” This can be supported by^[19] Dr. Sheldon Cohen of Carnegie Mellon University indicated in an April 2012 article by "The Healthy Mind Network." Findings showed that inflammation brought by stress contributes to many illnesses and diseases.

No man is an island as the saying goes. People need friends for a purpose, and much more with our families. They are our shoulders to lean on during troubled moments.

When work piles up, time management and dedication are the best sources of remedy. Focus and do things one day at a time.

Table 4: Benefits Derived from Working and Studying at the same Time

Benefits Derived	Rank
• Students work for financial security.	1
• My job is related to my present career goals.	2
• Working increases my awareness of time management.	3
• I gain the skill I can apply in my future career.	4
• Extra income gives me a desirable lifestyle.	5
• Student’s experience may be appealing to their future employers	6
• Students’ work are related to their future careers.	7
• People make a lot of friends at work.	8
• Employers believe the company will benefit from their employers’ finishing their degrees.	9
• Employers understand the lives of working students.	10

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A part-time job can help a student get a jump on their career track [20]. Studies

show that students who work 30 hours a week are a par, or even better academically, than those who don't. Working less number of hours a week should not affect their grades either.

Studies also show that students working part time in a university they are enrolled in persist in their studies. Their job makes them rob elbows with the faculty, staff, and other students, and even with the top ranking officials of the university; thus, increasing their network.

Part time students most often learned the art of perfect time-management skills necessary for academic success, and gain career-related experiences.

Conclusions

Findings

1. Generally, working students’ common problems include stress, as they have the difficulty balancing their work and studies. They miss their family and friends, they get low marks due to work demands and absenteeism caused by their official function.
2. Despite the demand between work and studies, students still catch up with their family and friends during weekends to unwind, learned the skill of time management by organizing their daily routine, and do relaxation-related activities.
3. As to benefits, financial security gives them a desirable lifestyle other than their need; their present job is related to their career goals; and the experience and skill learned are appealing to their future employers.

Conclusions

Significantly, higher education requires more effort for the students than the middle school level. These are the years one has to prepare for his lifetime career. They are more motivated, professors demand quality output for students to get good marks, projects are more difficult, and students are expected to

be more independent; thus, students experience stress, as they couple their studies with their work.

Students have to find a way to manage their skill both at work and in their academics to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Reducing their level of academic and work-related stress can be reduced by time management, stress management and relaxation activities.

Stress results to an imbalance of trying to struggle in coordinating these dual responsibilities. Meeting the demands both ways, one must cope with pressures coming from various directions.

Stress is normal in everyday life. It can either be helpful or beneficial. But since working students are responsible for bringing about their own stressors, they can do much to manage the stress by creating their own strategies to minimize it.

On the other hand, the benefits derived from the dual role of working and studying, seem to outweigh the problems and stress it takes. Working students’ financial needs are met, which may reduce the need for loans to pay their tuition fees. As they clarify their goals, students gain career-related experiences, acquire skills attractive for future employers, improve their confidence, and develop their personality. They also master time-management skills necessary for survival in their academic endeavor.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions, the following are the recommendations:

Guidance counselors be made aware of the needs, problems encountered, and coping mechanisms of working students. Their academic performance should be closely monitored through a focused group discussion to ensure their balance between their work and study. Regular session with these students be conducted to lessen the burdens they are undergoing.

Since most of these students attend classes in the evening, professors in the evening classes should be aware of the plight of these working students.

Higher authorities of the university may have alternative means to cater to the needs of these working students. Incentives may be given by the administration for working students who have excellent academic performance, as despite their dual workload, they can still afford to stand out of the crowd.

A more detailed research be conducted and more time should be required to identify the extent and impact of part time work to assist students in the universities and encourage employers to support the working student

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