

Balancing Employment and Education: A Study on Financial Outcomes and Academic Performance in Online Learning

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ABSTRACT

The emergence of online learning has provided students with flexible learning options, allowing them to balance their studies alongside part-time or full-time employment. This arrangement offers substantial financial benefits, such as reduced dependency on external financial aid, minimized student debt, and valuable opportunities gaining professional experience. However, balancing work and study also brings significant challenges, especially for students working extensive hours or managing numerous commitments. This study examined the financial and academic implications of working while studying within online learning environments. Drawing from survey results of students enrolled in work-study programmes, the research explored the relationship between employment intensity (part-time vs. full-time), academic achievement, financial well-being, and overall educational progress. Finding indicated that the majority of students perceived themselves as effectively managing their work-study balance, which a considerable proportion (41%) reporting minimal or no adverse impact on their academic performance. Nevertheless, a minority of students (6%) experienced significant negative effects on their academic outcomes, particularly those engaged in intensive full-time employment or managing heavy workloads. The study further highlights differentiated outcomes among various student demographics, such as undergraduate versus graduate students and those from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. Financially, working students benefited by reducing their reliance on external funding, thereby alleviating debt-related concerns. Nonetheless, excessive work commitments occasionally led to detrimental long-term academic consequences, including delayed graduations, lower academic grades, and missed opportunities for scholarships. The paper emphasizes the crucial role educational institutions can play in supporting working students by offering flexible scheduling, online tools, and tailored financial assistance. It also recommends that institutions encourage part-time employment related to students' fields of study or implement structured work-study programmes aligned with students' academic goals, thereby mitigating adverse academic impacts while enhancing professional experience. The study underscores the importance of maintaining an effective work-study balance to improve students' academic outcomes and financial security. Future research should investigate the types of employment that most effectively support academic performance and evaluate the efficacy of institutional support systems. Ultimately, this paper provides practical recommendations for both students and institutions to enhance the work-study balance, fostering improved financial and academic outcomes in online education. The emergence of online learning offers students flexible options to manage their studies alongside employment. This balance has financial advantages, such as reduced dependency on external financial assistance and opportunities for work experience. Nevertheless, significant challenges exist, particularly among students working extensive hours or managing heavy commitments. This study investigates the relationship between employment intensity (part-time vs full-time) and academic outcomes, financial well-being, and educational progress. It finds that while most students manage work-study balance effectively, a minority (6%) experiences significant academic drawbacks, mainly linked to intensive full-time employment. The paper also highlights differentiated outcomes

across various student groups (undergraduate vs. graduate, socio-economic status). Recommendations include institutional support tailored to the diverse needs of these groups.

Keywords: Online and distance learning, working-study, financial implication

INTRODUCTION

Background of Online Education and Work-Study Balance

In recent years, online education, as a learning method, has experienced considerable expansion, providing flexibility and accessibility to learners from diverse populations (*Online Education and Flexible Learning Options*, 2022). This educational method has gained particular significance due to technological improvements, allowing learners to achieve academic objectives without the constraints of a physical place. Concurrent with the growth of online education, a rising number of learners are managing their academic pursuits with professional commitments (Ali & Kandil, 2024). A large number of learners are employed part-time or full-time to fulfil their financial responsibilities, including educational expenses, living expenditures, or household commitments (Thi Huang, 2024).

Being employed while studying can offer both advantages and difficulties. On the one hand, employment throughout academic pursuits enables learners to generate revenue and acquire significant job experience. On the other hand, it can consume a lot of time and energy, which may affect grades and overall well-being (Thi Huang, 2024). Online education often offers flexible schedules, making it attractive for working students. Unfortunately, balancing work and studies can force learners to make difficult choices, potentially impacting both finances and academic success.

Relevance to Financial Impact

Nonetheless, the combination of studying and working can also cause long-term financial problems. Students who work over extended periods experience poor academic performance. Accordingly, they get delayed with their graduation or remain dropouts. This issue affects career advancements in the coming years, along with their salary rates (Timmerman & Volkov, 2020).

Educational institutions also come with financial aspects. Institutions must consider how they can support working students. The actions may involve offering flexible class schedules, more resources, or specific scholarships (Baum, 2023). With the appropriate support, students can succeed and graduate on time. The approach is to the advantage of the students and institutions, as it can improve student graduation and retention rates.

Purpose of the Study

This study explored the financial implications of balancing study and working online. A survey of online effectiveness in learning examined the impact of working on studying on academic performance. The survey collected students' views regarding balancing study and work and the impact of balancing study and work on academic performance.

Based on the research of this data, the study aimed to provide a preview of the academic and financial outcomes of studying and working. Besides, it aimed to underscore the challenges and benefits that students face in their attempt to juggle jobs and distance education. The study also hoped to provide recommendations to the students and the institutions to improve financial and academic outcomes.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Equilibrium between Employment and Academic Pursuits in Tertiary Education

Study and work balance is frequently explored in higher learning research. More students are balancing work and study to fund their living costs and tuition (Lack  s, 2023). Studies indicate that more students are

working while studying, with others are working part-time or full-time (Ho & Huang, 2013). Distance learning has made studying and working simpler for students as it is easy. Students are able to study online whenever and wherever and access study materials and assignments at their own convenience.

According to Brauer and Foust (2020), studies also indicate that combining work and study can be beneficial but difficult for students. Combining work and study can provide students with beneficial working experience (Lice, 2018; Višnjić et al., 2024), economic stability (Višnjić et al., 2024), and improved time management (Summer et al., 2023), which are useful for future. However, some studies have also shown the disadvantages of overworking on studies. Students who work more than 20 hours a week have a higher chance of performing poorly in studies, which will cause them to achieve poor grades and graduate late (Summer et al., 2023).

Financial Impact on Learners

One reason why students choose to work while studying is the financial implications. Many students struggle to pay for their education, especially as tuition costs rise (Boateng, 2020). Working allows students to manage some of these costs by earning money to support tuition and living expenses, such as housing, food, and transportation.

While working during studies can be financially helpful, there are disadvantages. Working often leads to less time for studies, which can lead to lower grades and reduced study duration. Studies suggest that students working part-time manage their responsibilities better than those working full-time (Ruski & Widjaya, 2023). Besides, students who work fewer hours or have jobs related to their field of study might experience less negative impact on their grades. They continue to gain valuable experience while working (Zhang & Yang, 2020).

Furthermore, needing to work while studying can increase the chances of students relying on loans or other financial aid to cover the gap between their earnings and educational expenses (Joaquim et al., 2023). Their overall debt and long-term financial burden worsens their dependence on loans (Jawahrani, 2022).

Institutional Financial Impact

The impact of students working, particularly financially, while studying is felt by more than just the students themselves. Educational institutions are also affected. Institutions are challenged by the needs of these students and must adapt. For instance, extra resources, flexible schedules, and support services should be provided by educational institutions (Nguyen, 2022). Traditional classes are becoming difficult for many students to attend. Thus, education institutions now offer online courses, evening classes, or hybrid learning options (Waterhouse & Moller, 2024).

Working students might need extra academic support from institutions. Tutoring programmes, longer office hours, or online self-study resources can be provided (Waterhouse & Moller, 2024). The university may have to bear increased costs due to these support measures, which are crucial for student success (Waterhouse & Moller, 2024). However, student retention and timely graduation can be improved by institutions that address the needs of working students.

Special financial aid or work-study programmes that fit students' academic goals might be offered by universities that are aware of the financial difficulties faced by working students (Ren & Li, 2020). Student progress and overall well-being can be improved and the negative financial impact of studying is lessened by these measures. Institutions that support working students often see happier and more successful students, which can improve the institution's reputation and finances (Zyl et al., 2020).

Data Analysis

Overview of the Dataset

A survey of students about their online learning experiences, with a focus on balancing work and study, provided the data for this analysis. The survey asked about online learning materials, platform satisfaction, and

demographic information. The survey also explored whether students worked while studying and how their work influenced their academic progress.

A scale of 1 to 5 was used to measure responses. A 1 on the scale represented a very negative impact on academic progress, while a 5 indicated a positive or negligible negative impact. This data is relevant to understanding the financial and academic effects of working while learning online. The data provides direct feedback from students about how balancing work and study affects their academic progress. This information can be used to explore wider financial factors and the support systems institutions offer to working students.

Detailed Impact of Employment Intensity on Financial and Academic Outcomes

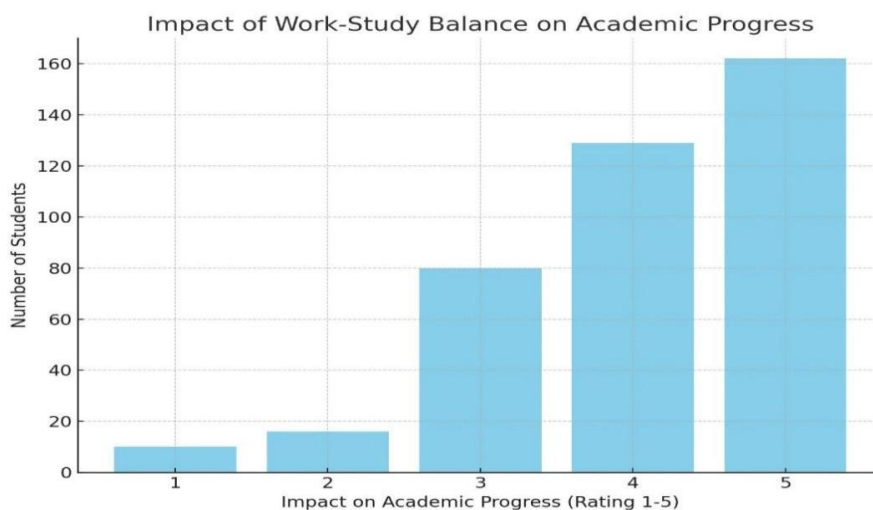
The survey indicated varying impacts based on employment intensity. Students engaged in part-time work generally reported manageable workloads and minimal academic disruptions, with many rating their work-study balance positively. However, a subgroup of students (6%) experiencing severe academic drawbacks predominantly consisted of those working full-time or extensive part-time hours exceeding 20 hours weekly.

Further qualitative data indicated these students frequently reported issues such as delayed graduation, lower grades, stress, burnout, and missed scholarship opportunities. For instance, respondents working full-time often cited significant difficulties in attending live classes, completing assignments timely, and maintaining high academic standards.

Comparative Financial Outcomes

Students engaged in part-time work typically reported better financial outcomes. They managed educational and living expenses effectively without heavily impacting academic performance. In contrast, students with full-time commitments noted short-term financial gains overshadowed by longer-term financial burdens due to prolonged studies, additional tuition fees, and delayed entry into professional careers.

Figure 1.0 Impact of Work-Study Balance on Academic Progress



This distribution revealed that most learners in this sample evaluated their work-study balance as having a small negative influence, with just a small minority expressing significant adverse effects.

Analysis by Student Groups

The preliminary analysis indicated noticeable differences in outcomes when differentiating among student groups.

- **Undergraduate vs. Graduate Students:** Undergraduate students are often unstable in terms of employment, with many not working or actively seeking employment, typically pursuing diplomas or degrees for better career opportunities. Consequently, undergraduate students frequently experience

more challenges in balancing employment with academic commitments. In contrast, postgraduate students are usually more stable in their careers, holding senior positions at their workplaces, and typically pursue further education for career enhancement or advancement to higher positions. This stability generally enables postgraduate students to manage their work-study balance more effectively, often aligning employment closely with their academic and professional goals. In contrast, undergraduate students often struggled more due to less experience in managing employment responsibilities, significantly affecting their academic performance.

- **Socio-economic Status:** Students from lower socio-economic backgrounds reported stronger financial pressure, compelling higher employment intensity. This intensified their academic challenges compared to students from higher-income backgrounds, who typically had more flexibility in managing study-work commitments.

Financial Considerations

Balancing employment and education involves a compromise between financial and academic requirements. For many learners, the short-term financial advantage of generating cash during their studies may surpass the prospective long-term detriments to academic performance. Working learners can diminish their dependence on loans, manage living expenses, and fulfil family responsibilities, which are significant factors, especially if they are from lower-income families.

According to the collected survey data, students working long hours may have less time to study. Thus, their academic performances are negatively affected. Several negative consequences may have been experienced by students who rated the impact of work on their studies poorly, such as:

- **Longer time to graduate:** Students with work obligations may take much longer to finish their degrees since they have less time to study. This problem can potentially lead to increased financial strain due to additional tuition fees and cost of living.
- **Lost opportunities for better grades and awards:** Students facing the challenges of work-study might miss obtaining academic awards or scholarships requiring continuing a high GPA. This problem may also strain finances due to the loss of scholarship opportunities or aid.

Such students (who ranked the impact of work-study positively with 4 and 5 ratings) probably had a good mix of work hours and studies that allowed them to live independently without affecting their grades. They might also have gotten benefits from flexible working hours or support that worked with their schedules.

Impact on Academic Progress

The answers to the question, “*Did you work while studying at university, and how did it impact your studies?*” give an indication of how students think of the balance between work and study. The majority of respondents stated that the impact as positive or neutral. Thus, the responses indicate that many students successfully balanced work and study due to the benefit of the flexibility in online learning.

A few students gave negative comments (2 or 1). This response suggests that some would need to choose work over study due to economic needs. For such students, a sign of needing to earn may mean less study time, poor grades, and longer completion times. These problems can cause long-term financial effects. These students may also have increased levels of stress and burnout, which can affect their well-being and academic performance.

This result indicates that support programmes in learning institutions, such as advising, counselling, and accommodation of flexible class scheduling, are important for students to manage their finances and academic issues effectively. Institutions that offer work-study programmes, part-time jobs, or flexible learning options can lessen the negative impacts of working on students’ grades. Hence, better outcomes can be achieved for both the students and the institutions themselves.

DISCUSSION

Positive Financial Impacts

Working while studying offers various financial benefits for many students. An advantage is that it reduces the need for loans or other financial aid. By earning money, students can pay for tuition, living costs, and other educational expenses, lessening their reliance on student loans. Thus, the financial burden after graduation is reduced, as students will have less debt to repay.

A large number of students in the survey rated their work-study balance positively. Approximately 41% gave the highest rating (5) to the impact of working on their studies, suggesting that many students can work without significantly impacting their academic progress. Beyond reducing financial dependence, working during studies can also help students develop valuable skills, such as time management and professional growth.

Students who balance work and study often develop skills in prioritising tasks and managing their time effectively. Future careers and their studies can benefit from these skills. Furthermore, relevant practical experience in a student's field of study can be provided by some jobs. This experience increases their employability after graduation. Gaining practical experience while still studying is possible, especially for students in part-time jobs related to their career goals. This notion is particularly true in such situations.

Negative Financial Impacts

Potential negative impacts exist alongside the financial benefits of working while studying, particularly for students struggling to balance both responsibilities. The study revealed that a small percentage of students (2%) rated their work-study balance as very unfavourable (1), with another 4% rating it as moderately negative (2). Increased financial pressure, potentially due to the need to work long hours, may be experienced by these students. The pressure negatively impacts their academic performance.

Reduced study time, due to the time students spend working, potentially leads to lower grades or even failed classes. Long-term financial consequences can result from this issue, as poor academic performance can affect eligibility for scholarships, honours programmes, or other merit-based financial aid. Furthermore, students who fail classes may need to retake them. Retaking subjects extends their time in school and increases costs.

Students' graduation timelines can be prolonged by working too many hours. Increased tuition and related costs are a consequence of a longer time to graduate, which also delays students' entry into full-time employment. Their earning potential in their early careers can be affected by this delay, as valuable work experience and career advancement opportunities are missed during that time. The financial effects of delaying workforce entry can continue for years after graduation, impacting long-term income and career progression.

Institutional Financial Impact

The financial implications of supporting working students must also be considered by higher education institutions. As the survey data indicates, online education flexibility offers a way for institutions to assist students' work responsibilities. However, providing this flexibility is often costly for the organisation. Investments in technology platforms, online course development, and virtual learning environment creation to meet working student needs may be required. Flexible scheduling options, such as evening classes or part-time programmes to accommodate students' employment commitments, might also be necessary.

In addition to providing flexible course schedules, institutions can also invest in services that help working students achieve. Better access to online resources, tutoring classes, and advising can be part of this plan. These services provide working students with the tools and support needed to pursue their studies while fulfilling additional responsibilities. For instance, online courses or taped lectures enable learners to receive academic support at flexible hours around their work schedules. Thus, the potential for poor academic performance is reduced.

Education providers can help employees to balance between studying and working by offering financial support and building on employer relationships. Financial support policies that consider students' work may reduce pressures on finances. Such support reduces the possibility of students working long hours. Additionally, local employer-educational institution collaboration can lead to work-study programmes or internships aligning with students' education objectives to make them earn an income and get relevant experience. The programmes benefit students and increase the reputation of the institution in helping the students. At the same time, the institutions can attract prospective students and improve retention rates.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for Learners

The findings of the survey indicate that most students are able to balance work and study. Approximately 74% of the survey respondents indicated either 4 or 5 when asked to rate how much work affects performance. For the failing students, solutions need to be found to ensure that they both pass academically and are also financially stable.

Choose Part-Time or Flexible Jobs: The most effective method for balancing studies and working is to opt for part-time jobs with flexible schedules. Those jobs that provide students with the option to work decreased hours during examinations or offer flexibility to pick shifts can lessen the effect on studies. Students need to search for jobs related to future careers, such as career jobs or field-related internships. Thus, students can grow professionally and earn while not compromising learning performance.

Effective Time Management: Working students need to be time-disciplined. Creating a disciplined weekly routine combining work schedules and dedicated study sessions can avoid letting students fall behind in class. Prioritisation of tasks, breaking assignments into smaller and more manageable pieces, and staying away from procrastination can ensure that academic and work commitments are managed well.

Explore Financial Aid: Students should find scholarships, grants, and other financial assistance to reduce having to work long hours. Different scholarships are available based on merit, course of study, or personal conditions, and students can reduce tuition and related expenses. Reducing the expense of working allows students to focus more on studies.

Realistic Work Hours: Students need to set realistic limits on work hours so that they do not burn out and sacrifice their academic performance. Past studies have shown that more than 20 working hours per week can negatively impact academic success. Part-time working and studying allows students to become self-sufficient while having enough time for studying.

Recommendations

Recommendations for Learners

- **Prioritize Part-time Employment:** Encourage students to select part-time work or jobs closely aligned with their academic fields to balance academic responsibilities effectively. Research clearly suggests full-time employment increases financial strain and prolongs academic tenure.
- **Utilize Institutional Resources:** Students should proactively engage with institutional support systems, including flexible online resources, financial counseling, and scholarship opportunities, to minimize the necessity of extensive working hours.

Recommendations for Institutions

- **Targeted Support Based on Employment Intensity:** Institutions should differentiate support structures for students based on their employment status (part-time vs. full-time), providing enhanced support for students working more intensive hours.
- **Tailored Assistance for Student Groups:** Institutions must recognize and address diverse student needs, offering specialized financial and academic support programs for undergraduate students,

graduate students, and students from varying socio-economic backgrounds. This includes dedicated counseling services, financial aid tailored to individual circumstances, and flexible academic scheduling arrangements.

CONCLUSION

This revised study underscores the nuanced impact of employment intensity and highlights the critical need for differentiated institutional support. By understanding the detailed academic and financial consequences experienced by specific student groups, institutions and students can better manage the balance between employment and online education, enhancing overall educational success and financial security.

Summary of Key Findings

Analysis of the data revealed information concerning the work-study balance among learners in online platforms. Most learners viewed the effect of work on their academic achievement as positive or neutral, and 41% gave a 5 rating to mean that they are capable of balancing work and study. There was also a small percentage of learners (6%) who reported unfavourable effects. They highlighted that longer working hours or managing many tasks may cause difficulties in academic success.

The findings stress the dual nature of balancing school and work. Work has economic benefits but also comes with challenges that might negatively affect studies. Students who work cut back on their use of loans or external financing can achieve better financial independence. Students who fail to balance studies and work might, however, face delays in graduation, increased tuition, and missed opportunities for scholarships or academic recognition. Thus, it is important to find a balance, as the relationship between short-term monetary needs and long-term academic success is clear.

Importance of Balance

Minimising negative financial impacts and maximising benefits depends on students finding the right balance between work and studies. Academic and financial success is more likely for students who work part-time or have flexible jobs or those who receive institutional support. Students can achieve this balance through effective time management, smart decision-making, and careful academic planning. Supporting working students throughout their academic journey can be done by institutions through resources such as online courses, flexible class schedules, and financial aid. The aim is to provide opportunities for financial independence while preventing work responsibilities from stressing students and hindering their academic progress.

Future Research

Several areas can be explored by future research to understand the challenges of balancing work and study. One would be the investigation of the impact of different types of employment, part-time, full-time, or job availability in the field of study of a student, on academic achievement and career progress. By determining at what level employment has a negative impact on study performance, future research could also investigate the impact of working hours on academic achievement.

Another area of research in the future is to examine the impact of institutional support on the success of working students. What financial aid, advising services, and academic services do to assist working students to overcome work-related pressures would inform institutions of education about the most effective methods for improving retention and graduation. Understanding how universities can help different groups, such as older students or students with family responsibilities, can potentially improve the academic performance of working students.

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