



Lived Experiences of the School of Education Part-Time Third-Year Students

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Abstract:

Several studies and reports had highlighted the significant challenges faced by students who juggled work and school responsibilities. Many students struggled to balance the demands of their academic workload with the need to earn an income, often leading to increased stress, reduced academic performance, and a lack of personal time. This issue underscored the need for better support systems and flexible scheduling options to help students manage both commitments effectively. Recognizing this common issue, researchers aimed to explore and understand the circumstances of part-time students at Mandaue City College School of Education, specifically focusing on third-year students. Through qualitative phenomenological analysis, the researchers identified a central theme and several sub-themes reflecting the students' experiences of working while attending school. The study highlighted five major themes: Motivation, Challenges, Strategies, and Positive and Negative Effects. A vital discovery was the underlying motivation that propelled students to undertake part-time work while pursuing their education. Students pursued part-time work to achieve financial independence and self-sufficiency, recognizing the long-term benefits of practical experience alongside academics. Financial constraints fueled this pursuit, emphasizing the need for additional income. However, students faced challenges like time management difficulties and potential compromised academic performance. Despite these obstacles, they exhibited resilience by devising effective strategies like task prioritization and refined time management techniques. The study illuminated the multifaceted nature of balancing work and school, shedding light on both its positive and negative results. While students derived satisfaction from their part-time employment and valued the autonomy it bestowed, they acknowledged the requisite dedication, discipline, and adept time management skills essential for success in both domains. In light of these findings, the research advocated for a comprehensive strategy to support part-time working students, including a time management program and school administrator support, to improve their experiences and navigate the complex interplay between work and education.

Keywords: lived experiences, part-time student, time management, enhancement program, phenomenological study, and thematic analysis.

Introduction:

With the prevalence of student employment in the Philippines, many students shared their lived experiences in balancing work, education, and personal responsibilities. When the COVID-19 pandemic hits, there were lot of significant changes, particularly in the shift to online classes that posed new challenges for part-time students. Education is essential for everyone, and the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the need for more research on part-time students' experiences. This study delved into the lived experiences of third-year part-time students at Mandaue City College, focusing on those enrolled in the School of Education. Mandaue City College adopted online classes to cope with the pandemic, which had significantly affected working students due to fixed online class schedules. The study aimed to understand the challenges, coping mechanisms, and potential solutions for these students amidst the transition to fixed online schedules. The research was restricted to Mandaue City College third-year students to fully understand their lived realities of being a part-time student with a fixed online schedule. The domain of inquiry revolved around the experiences of third-year part-time students in Mandaue City College's School of Education. Through a series of queries, the study aimed to uncover the status of these experiences, identify challenges faced during online classes, explore coping strategies employed by students, and propose enhancement programs to improve time-management skills. By focusing on this specific group within the institution, the study sought to provide insights that can benefit working students, regular students, future researchers, administrators, and the wider community.





Atheoretical Stance:

To avoid biases, the study was not anchored to any theory. It was difficult but not impossible to separate oneself from knowledge bias. It was the researcher's intention not to identify a theory in this part to suspend beforehand assumptions to avoid inductive data contamination and justify the emergence of themes from the phenomenon, which is the essence of qualitative research studies. The study also suspended all assumptions considered present because the study in nature did not predict its outcome. Unexamined belief was disregarded due to life experiences as the future results of the study. In addition, the review of related literature and studies was suspended since the intention was to get a first-hand result without the aid of previous dissertations and articles. The research is qualitative by nature and employed the descriptive Husserlian phenomenology to establish secure philosophical and scientific knowledge. The tradition of inquiry aimed to find the significance of third-year students' experiences throughout the deployment of online classrooms. It was said to be qualitative since it was, by all means, associated with the lived experiences of the part-time students in Mandaue City College 3 School of Education third-year students S.Y 2021-2022. The researcher used a phenomenological study. Themes, therefore, were created towards the end of the research process (Goddard & Melville cited by Kızıloğlu in 2021).

Research Method:

The study employed phenomenological methodology to explore the experiences of third-year part-time students at Mandaue City College, School of Education. Eleven informants, all working students, were purposively selected for interviews conducted either in person or online. Informants met specific criteria, including current semester enrolment and a minimum of 8 hours of work per week. Ethical guidelines were strictly adhered to, encompassing informed consent, confidentiality assurance, and participant well-being. Thematic analysis revealed recurring themes, forming the basis for proposing an enhancement program to address student challenges. Ethical considerations remained paramount throughout the study, with measures taken to protect participant anonymity and confidentiality. Consent was obtained from informants, and risks were assessed and managed. No incentives were provided to ensure voluntary participation, and steps were taken to prevent conflicts of interest.

Findings and Discussion:

When the verbatim transcripts were read and evaluated numerous times, the critical statements and their meanings underlined five (5) themes that characterized working students' experiences. The findings of the study were:

Theme 1: MOTIVATION

Working students with balance issues found motivation in their studies and work, as it drove them to continue striving for their future. Motivation was crucial in all aspects of life, enabling them to plan for the future.

Sub-theme 1: Sense of Familism

Family was the source of other informants' perseverance. The working students had their family as the most significant factor that motivated them to remain and continue their studies and work. They put so much importance on their family that they did everything for their sake.

(I05): "Nag work ko kay kanang para sad makatabang sa financial sa among family kay daghan sad mig utang, gamay ra og sweldo akong papa..." (I work to help with my family's finances because we have a lot of debts to pay and my father's earning is not enough...)

(I10): "Ilang income igo ra sa pang adlaw-adlaw maong gusto ko tabangan sila sa other expenses." (My parents' income is only enough for our daily needs that is why I want to help them with other expenses.)

According to Robinson, cited by Abhayaratna et al. (2018), the ultimate reason that leads the students to work is to earn money to support their families and keep themselves in school. A study by Deros & Ryan cited by Neyt et al. (2019) also shows that the number of college students involved in jobs has increased in recent years to supplement their families' income.

Sub-theme 2: Independence

Students often struggled with juggling work and study, gaining independence from a young age. They took risks, assumed responsibility, and develop self-awareness. This independence led to self-achievement and satisfaction, as they strove to prove their ability to manage and succeed simultaneously.

(I04): "...my only point sa akong pag working kay para ma provide akong kaugalingon through financially. Para dili nako mangayo sa akong mama para palit load. I am independent enough since pagkabata nako." (...my only point why I work is to provide myself financially. So that I will not ask for my mother to give me money to buy load. I am independent enough since young.)





(I06): "...usa sa rason nganong nag trabaho ko kay since pag elementary nako, naandan na nako nga ako ang nag sustain ug nag support sa akong mga needs without the support of my parents." (...one of the reasons that I work is because I am used to this since elementary, I am used to sustain and support my needs without the support of my parents.)

According to Frone, cited by Asbari et al. (2020), some students begin working at 15. Work and education are essential aspects of adolescent life. Smith and Green, cited by Athamneh and Benjamin (2021), also implied that these students work hard to pay for their education and family's needs. In addition, being independent is a crucial step on the road to adulthood. In a broad sense, motivation is the trait that motivates us to do or not do something, according to Gredler, Broussard, and Garrison, cited by Gopalan (2017).

Theme 2: CHALLENGES

Informants faced demanding situations as working students, often overlooked due to physical and time conflicts, and expressed difficulties while studying and working simultaneously.

Sub-theme 1: Physical Well-Being

Research informants often experienced physical factors, including demanding jobs, which could lead to health issues, restlessness, and burnout, negatively affecting their studies and work performance.

(I03): "... ang usa kay exhaustion, especially daghan og buluhaton og grabi na kakapoy di jud malikayan nga kapuyon. Makabati najud kag grabing kakapoy to the point ganahan najud mo give up, it's either sa study or sa work..." (...one is exhaustion, especially if there a lot of things to do. There are times that is very tiring to the point that I want to just give up, it is either my study or work...)

(I05): "Ang mga challenges nga akong na face while ga work and then ga eskwela is kuan, kanang mao na sya ig buntag, inig online class kay duka na kays tanan. Niya kanang makatug nakos klase nya usahay sa kakapoy kay ma late ug submit akong mga assignments." (The challenges that I face while working and studying at the same time is that in every morning classes I felt so sleepy. I slept during class. Sometimes, due to tiredness I have late submissions of my assignments.)

Boudreau et al. and cited by dos Santos Boni et al. (2018) stated that students who experience burnout most frequently experience many pressures, such as extended work or practicum hours, poor grades, uncertainty about their future, an imbalanced personal and professional life, and decreased support from family and friends. Reyes in Li et al. (2018) also emphasized that sleep loss may not cause long-term medical problems but can adversely affect physical and intellectual performance and mood.

Sub-theme 2: Time Conflict

The research informants expressed their dilemma on the overlapping of their time. They experienced situations where they did not know what to do between school and work tasks that stressed them out and pressured them.

(I04): "Mga challenges nga akong na come up during nag working student ko kuan lang nay mga panahon nga ma hectic akong time, daghan og mga activities din ang buhatonon sad sa trabaho at the same time magdoble..." (The challenges that I came up as a working student is that there are times that my schedule is hectic, there are a lot of activities to do and in work at the same time...)

(I07): "Dili ko kapass sa mga activities on time tungud sa akong trabaho. Maong being a working student dili siya sayun kailangan e balance akong kaugalingun by managing my time in terms sa akong pag trabaho ug pag eskwela." (I can't submit my activities on time due to my work. That's why being a working student is not easy, specially that you need to balance yourself by managing your time in terms of work and studies.)

According to the research by Ling, Heffernan, and Muncer cited by Adams and Blair (2019), there is a clear correlation between student performance and their capacity for good time management. Whether this is genuinely the case or whether this is just an example of self-serving bias. According to Krause and Coates, cited by Kahu and Nelson (2018), the cornerstone for students building effective study habits and success methods is their ability to manage their time successfully.

Theme 3: STRATEGIES

Informants developed coping mechanisms to manage their work and school responsibilities, allowing them to reduce workloads and prioritize self-care.

Sub-theme 1: Overcoming Adversities





The research informants shared strategies for improving their quality of life, such as time management, optimism, self-care, and strong faith.

(I06): "Apply time management like manage your time para ma balance nimu imo work ug studies. Be resourceful ayaw kauwaw mangutana sa imong mga classmate makig coordinate ug magpa baga to keep you updated sa mga activities ug mga discussions nga wa nimu na atenan." (Apply time management like manage your time to balance your work and studies. Be resourceful and do not be shy to ask questions with your classmates, coordinate and keep updated of the activities and discussions you did not attend.)

(I09): "Mo submit ko if free time niya magbuhat og activities sa work office. Kung naa bag-ong e hatag nga outputs ako dayong buhaton." (I work and submit my activities during free time at work. If there are new activities, I'll work on them as soon as possible.)

Furthermore, other informants shared strategies to manage their busy work and study schedules, including socializing, having fun, creating personal time, and promoting optimism.

(I02): "Uhm, I motivate myself, uhm para mopadayon gyud ba. Dili magpadala sa mga emotion og problema. Like makig interact ko with other people kay at the same time, uhm akong lingaw-lingawon kong self. Maghunahuna kog positive, di ko maghunahunag negative kana." (Uhm, I motivate myself to continue. I won't let my emotions and my problems prevail. Like I interact with other people because at the same time I want to make myself happy. I think of positive things, not the negative.)

(I10): "Usahay mag watch kog movies para malingaw, mag exercise pud nya humana, magbuhat nasad sa school works niya work related nasad." (Sometime I watched movies to have some fun, exercise, then do school works afterwards, then do work related stuff.)

Based on the study of Goldberger and Breznits cited by Schaufeli et al. (2017), coping strategies are actions taken by an individual to mitigate the adverse effects of the assessed stressor. Lazarus and Folkman's study cited by Bough et al. (2018) distinguishes two types of coping strategies: problem-focused and emotion-focused. Problem-focused coping confronts the problem and confronts it head-on. It is typically used when the individual views the situation as positive and manageable. Avoidance, minimization, selective attention, and favorable comparison are examples of emotional-focused coping behaviors. This coping strategy is most likely used when the individual perceives the situation as unavoidable and uncontrollable from the study of Carver et al. cited by Hargie (2021).

Sub-theme 2: Faith

Research indicated that research informants relied on support networks, positive attitudes towards seeking assistance, and coping techniques like religious beliefs to reduce work risks and psychological suffering, while also promoting problem-solving to mitigate negative emotional repercussions of difficult life circumstances.

(I06): "Mag pray ra ko every night ug e motivate nako ako self na kaya rani nako..." (I pray every night and motivate myself that I can do this...)

(I10): "Nag look forward ra ko sa bright side bisan gikapoy na og sa daghan nga problema nituo gihapon ko nga worth it tanan." (I look forward to the 32 bright side even if I am tired and there are problems I still believe that this will all be worth it.)

As Fowler's study cited by Slee (2021), faith is described as people's ultimate support when the things they depend around them seem to collapse. Faith enables us to find purpose in the world and everyone's life, and it is all about committing what exists and lives in a way that has a sense of commitment.

Theme 4: POSITIVE EFFECTS

This covered the positive impact they had acquired while working and studying simultaneously. Their experiences through their endeavor were loaded with hardships and difficulties, but they found something that moulded them as a person and made them a big part of their journey.

Sub-theme 1: Commitment to Work and Studies

As the research informants maintained their status in their work and studies, they gained something that would help them pursue their goals.





(I01): "Well ang positive is kuan, mo encourage sila nya ma encourage sad ko. Total naa may nag gasto nako, padayon kog eskwela." (Well, the positive is that they will encourage me (to continue). As long as they are willing to support me financially, I will continue my studies.)

(I02): "Of course, maka earn tag extra money, uhm maka gain og work experiences then I learned how to manage my money and time." (Of course, working can give me extra money, uhm can gain work experiences and then I learned how to manage my money and time.)

Students are motivated to work for both financial reasons and experience, despite the challenges. Tymon and Tomlinson, cited in Clarke's (2018) study, support the view that working while studying introduces students to real-world challenges, aiding personal and career development. Researchers conclude that the combination of financial need and experience can enhance future career opportunities, reflecting qualities like hard work and determination that employers value. Ali, cited by Tasgin and Coskun (2018), believes that combining work and study is crucial for future success.

While some benefited from the work experiences and money, other informants benefited from learning resources and connections.

(I03): "Ang positive sa pag working while studying makagamit jud kog books para references sa library kay diri man gyud ko na assign sa library. Dako kaayo siya nga privilege sa akoo, dali ra maka approach sa instructors. Sa time nga naa koy mga ask about sa task, dali rasad ko makagamit sa technology or tools sa school." (The positive effect in working while studying is I can use books for references in the library since I am assigned in the library. It's a great privilege to me because I can easily approach the instructors. When I have something to ask about the task, and I can easily access the technology and tools in school.)

Further research revealed that the effects on students with varying academic backgrounds had varied significantly, with students who had performed worse on college entrance examinations suffering far more damage. Working on campus between one and ten hours per week had benefited high-ability students' critical thinking, but it had significantly negatively impacted low-ability students. According to the study of Richardson, Evans, and Gbadamosi (n.d.), students often lack time to read due to work commitments, underscoring the importance of access to learning resources and sufficient time for educational materials.

Watts and Pickering argue that working while studying has several positive outcomes in modern higher education. According to research by Pascarella and Padgett, as cited by Barnhardt et al. (2019), students working both on and off campus showed gains in critical thinking, moral reasoning, socially responsible leadership, and mental health. Working 20 hours or more per week positively influenced psychological health and leadership abilities, with minimal negative impact on cognitive outcomes. This suggests that work can enhance leadership and psychological well-being, even with a heavy workload.

Theme 5: NEGATIVE EFFECTS

This covered the negative emotions and experiences of the research informants that significantly impacted their work and study. The research informants showed psychological and emotional factors that affected their lives as employees and students.

Sub-theme 1: Psychological and Emotional

Research informants reported negative emotions and experiences while juggling work and study responsibilities. Numerous researchers had emphasized the adverse effects of simultaneous work and study, expressing concerns about its interference with meeting university requirements (Humphrey & O'Toole), engagement processes at university (Elias), and the resulting fatigue, time constraints, and limited recreation hours (Curtis & Williams, cited in Gelabert et al., 2017).

(I02): "Then, the negative effects kay stress and I have gamay ra og time, diba? Like ma trigger ta kay tungod sa ka busy nya dili naka maka enjoy sa imong self. As a working student ha, dili maka enjoy sa imong self." (The negative effects are it makes me stress and I have a less of time, right? Like, it triggers me because I am busy and you can't have some enjoyment. As a working student huh, you can't enjoy yourself.)

(I03): "Ang negative effects kay kapoy jud siya kay di makafocus usahay kay masuko ang mediate superior. Then mawala sad ang internet sa school. Mao na ang reason nga if tawgon ko sa teacher dili jud dayon ta makatubag. Hinay ang internet or data." (The negative effects is it is very tiring and I can't focus sometimes because the mediate superior gets mad and also the school has poor connection, the reason why if the instructor calls me during class, I can't hear it clearly because the internet is so slow.)

Being a working student involved balancing social life, family time, work, and school. Mitchell, as cited by McConville et al. (2017), suggests that effectively managing this pressure can significantly reduce stress levels. However, many students struggle to meet work and academic standards simultaneously, risking academic performance. Additionally, Greene & Maggs (2017) found that employed students spend less time studying as they work more.





According to Mathuews (2018), time management issues among students are typically caused by a lack of free time. (I06): "Ang negative effects is having failing grades like, mogamay imo grado tungod na left behind naka as well as dika kapass on time sa ipabuhat." (The negative effect is having failing grades like my grades are low because you will have left behind as well as you can't pass the task on time.)

Recent research revealed that students who attempted to balance work and study experienced significant psychological and physical strain, primarily due to stress. This stress negatively impacted their academic performance and led to emotional and physical exhaustion, as indicated by a survey of students.

(I10): "Stress kaayo niya usahay health issues, headaches tungod kay kuwang sa katug para mahuman ang activities ig gabie kay trabaho nasad buntag." (It is so stress, I have health issues like headaches because of lack of sleep just to finish the activities every night because I still have work the next day.)

Moderate levels of stress served as a motivational force and fostered creativity and resilience when facing challenges. However, excessive and prolonged stress, if left unresolved, resulted in physical and mental exhaustion, posing risks to overall health and well-being. Perceiving work-related pressures as threats triggered negative emotional reactions like anger or anxiety, leading to stress and subsequent behavioural and physical health issues.

Irfan and Azmi, as cited by Chantrea et al. (2017), discuss the complexities of balancing work and study, noting varying stress levels among students. Keinan and Tal, cited in Sakitri (2020), emphasized individual differences in stress management, suggesting that moderate stress can be beneficial but may also impact self-concept negatively. They argue that the effects of work on students depend on personal characteristics, highlighting the importance of understanding individual needs and stress levels in managing both responsibilities.

Denovan and Macaskill (2017) underscored the significance of coping strategies in mitigating stress and emotional upheaval, drawing on insights from Rosenbaum, White & Gervino, Frazier et al., and Jones & Bright. The study emphasized how individuals perceive, interpret, and manage stressful situations. It highlighted that individuals with a sense of control view high-demand situations as challenges rather than threats, influencing their choice of coping mechanisms. Those feeling in control tend to employ healthier coping strategies, experiencing fewer adverse emotional reactions and less tension amidst stressful circumstances.

Conclusion:

This study focused on working students' daily lives and challenges, revealing that financial support, independence, and self-improvement were key motivating factors. Students worked while studying for financial reasons, gaining valuable experiences and satisfaction. The research highlighted the need for more accessible studies on working students' experiences while studying. Working while studying helped students manage their time effectively, despite challenges due to a busy schedule. It fostered accountability, provided valuable experiences, and helped students improve their problem-solving abilities. It also taught them about the advantages and disadvantages of working, dealing with difficulties, and the challenges of making money.

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RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

The researcher used modified interview questions to gather insights into the lived experiences, challenges, strategies, and recommendations of working students. The instrument included four items with follow-up questions to provide an in-depth understanding of their experiences and their responses to the research guide question.

1. What are students lived experiences of working while studying?
 - a. What is your work?
 - b. Are you working full-time?
 - c. Why are you working?
 - d. What kind of motivation or who motivates you?
 - e. What is the reason why you are working as a part-time student? Who encourages you to work?
 - f. Did the pandemic help you to work full-time?
 - g. Is there a time that your studies were delayed due to your work?
 - h. As you now experience studying while working, what are the gaps and challenges you encounter?
 - i. As a working student, which do you prefer, online class or face-to-face class?
 - j. Why don't you want your family to support your studies?
 - k. Why did your family not support you in your studies?
2. What are the positive and negative effects of working while studying?
 - a. Why do you need to work, even though you can just focus on your studies?
 - b. Are you being forced to work?
 - c. Can your parents not provide to send you to school?
 - d. Why do you need to work? Since MCC is free tuition, are you financing yourself, or are you the breadwinner in the family?
 - e. As a working student, how did you cope with problems?
 - f. What are the positive outcomes that you are a working student?
 - g. What are the negative effects of being a working student? In grades?
 - h. What are the positive effects of being a working student?
 - i. What are the negative effects of being a working student?
3. What are the students' challenges while working and studying, and how do they overcome the problems?
 - a. How do you handle the challenges?
 - b. Is time management your first challenge?
 - c. For you, what are the biggest challenges that you encountered while studying at the same time working? Is there a difference in the time when you are not still working?
 - d. As a part-time student, what are your strategies used to overcome the challenges?
 - e. What are the most severe challenges you have encountered as a working student?
 - f. What is your strategy to overcome the such situation?
 - g. What are the worst challenges you have encountered as a working student?
 - h. What is your strategy in your situation?
4. What are the suggestions or recommendations for students who are working while studying?

