

School and Work Balance: The Experiences of Working Students in the Covid19 Pandemic

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Abstract: *This study is a qualitative research about the experiences of working students in balancing their school and work responsibilities during the CoVid-19 pandemic. Even way back before, a lot of students are already earning and pursuing their education at the same time for financial support and to obtain advanced professional experiences. The said pandemic affected the livelihood of many and has become the cause of the increasing number of working students. The Purposive Sampling Technique was used in selecting the 10 working students as respondents of the study. The answered interview questions are analyzed through the Code and Theme method of analysis. The results collected from the respondents revealed that the advantages and disadvantages of being a working student during the CoVid19 Pandemic are: (a) able to study and work while at home, (b) earn money, (c) health risk and, (d) struggle in balancing priorities. Furthermore, the difficulties and challenges encountered in balancing school and work are (a) lack of time and (b) mental health risk. The study recommended techniques and practices that would benefit working students on an efficient school and work path.*

Keywords—Working Students, School and Work Balance, CoVid19 Pandemic, Qualitative Study

1. INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the most important assets a person can obtain. It is not only because it helps us gain knowledge, interpret things correctly, and trains us to be good citizens. But also, education is the foundation to improve one's life as this is part of the process to pursue our preferred professions or specialties. That is why there are a lot of students who chose to study and work at the same time, for them to continue their studies, get into college or masters, help their families, and save money.

Even way back before the pandemic, a lot of students are already earning and pursuing their education at the same time. These can vary from doing part-time jobs, freelancing, and starting their businesses. A research concluded that the common reasons why students take part-time jobs are the intention to fulfill their educational needs and to look for advanced experiences [1]. Not everyone has the privilege to easily attend school and afford to buy school necessities. Family income may not be enough that's why they decided to work while studying to help their families. And for some, they may enjoy the challenge as they gain professional life skills that can be used in the future.

The CoVid19 pandemic affected the livelihood of many resulting in the shutdown of businesses [2], and an increase in unemployment. On the other hand, it also opened a lot of opportunities for students to earn money. Some took online jobs and even pursued online selling and businesses. As the pandemic forced everyone to work and learn from home to ensure safety, it is easier to manage one's time compared before as you are only in the comfort of your home, thus the number of working students increases.

Balancing school and work responsibilities are what makes being a working student challenging. It can be hard to focus on your studies, find time for yourself, family, leisure, and it can also affect your health due to lack of sleep and attentiveness.

This study aims to gather an in-depth understanding from the experiences of working students and how they balance their school and work responsibilities in the midst of the CoVid19 pandemic. This study also aims to contribute to the field of literature and serve as a guide for future researchers.

2. RELATED WORKS

The global pandemic, CoVid19 was first faced in late December 2019 in Wuhan, China [3][4][5]. This became a life threat for everyone. As a result, schools, universities, and even offices are forced to close [6][7]. People are required to stay at home and avoid social contact because of the CoVid19 outbreak. Every sector of the economy was affected by this pandemic. At this point, the idea of work from home, online classes, webinars, etc. was implemented to continue education and work [8][9].

Students engaged in working part-time or sometimes full-time while attending school are becoming more and more a familiar occurrence everywhere [10][11]. Nowadays, a part-time job is currently in demand due to the global economic crisis [12]. And now that we are in the midst of the CoVid19 pandemic that had a huge impact on the livelihood of a lot of people. Not all families have enough earnings to send their children to school and support them. As a result, some students have to support themselves by becoming working students.

Some may use employment as a means of discovering career options, obtain work-based learning experiences, and earn extra or spending money [13][14].

Being a working student is hard as you need to balance both your school and work responsibilities. Students may end up employing minimum effort into both schools and work as they have difficulties in balancing the two. The concern is not the work, however, the time spent on it as working students are presumed to devote less time to school requirements and therefore can't also pay complete attentiveness to their classes as well [11]. Some factors that affect the balancing of school and work responsibilities are time, academic performance, and finances. Researchers found out that students control and manage their time either by dividing weeks into dedicated days for either academics or work or by dividing their days into segments dedicated to attending classes during one segment of the day and working during the other. While dividing their time is a necessity, the outcome is that many students face challenges such as having insufficient time to complete course assignments, increase stress, lack of sleep, and limited time to spend with family [15]. Some students choose to sacrifice their sleep in the struggle to balance work, school, and family demands [16][17].

A research finding from an analysis showed that most working students were satisfied with their school and work life balance. Working while studying can add more pressure, but it also creates benefits through building a support network or people who can help achieve both your personal and professional goals [18]. This can also affect potential results on future labor market outcomes favorably as students can have the opportunity to gain early and useful job experience to use their skills with their studies [19]. Skills like time management, organizational interaction, workplace behavior, timeliness, self-regulation, and future career success such as greater future salary, and higher-level employment [20]. Being a working student is like a double-edged sword. It can negatively affect the student's academic performance, while, on the other hand, it can offer long-term positive effects that can be used in the future as a professional. All in all, a working student tends to be marked at the same time by diversity and contradiction, and it is thus worth exploring further [21].

3. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study's main goal was to know and understand the experiences of working students in how they balance their school and work life amidst the CoVid19 pandemic. Specifically, the study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What does being a working student mean?

2. What are the advantages and disadvantages of being a working student during the CoVid19 pandemic?

3. What are the difficulties and challenges encountered by working students in balancing their school and work?

4. What coping mechanisms do they employ in balancing their school and work responsibilities?

5. What do the respondents recommend in order to balance their school and work life?

4. METHODOLOGY

As the study deals with determining and understanding experiences, opinions, behaviors, and other defined variables, the researcher of this study used a qualitative type study method of research. Specifically, this study aims to know and understand the experiences of working students in balancing their school and work life amidst the CoVid19 pandemic.

The researcher explained the data obtained. The method of explanations alluded to have five phrases or steps: (1) bracketing and phenomenological reduction, (2) the defining of units of significance, (3) the grouping of sense units in order to establish themes, (4) summarizing each interview, and (5) the extraction, in the form of a grounded theoretical structure, of general and particular themes from all interviews and a composite description [22].

The primary data gathering tool used in this study was the purposive sampling technique. This method of sampling technique is in which the researcher used her judgment in identifying sample participants to engage in the analysis. The respondents of the study are made up of 10 working students from the municipality of Meycauayan, Bulacan, Philippines.

In this study, selecting the participants was purposeful in the sense that they meet three important criteria for the study: first, working students; second working students from a province in Central Luzon, during the CoVid19 pandemic; and third, they have at least 2 months of experience in being a working student. Working Student 1 is a 16 year old grade 11 student with 3 months of work experience, working student 2 is a 21 year old 3rd year college with 5 months work experience, working student 3 is a 21 year old 2nd year college with 1 year and a month of work experience, working student 4 is a 20 year old 2nd year college with 1 year work experience, working student 5 is a 19 year old grade 12 student with 7 months work experience, working student 6 is an 18 year old grade 12 student with 7 years work experience, working student 7 is an 18 year old grade 12 student with 2 months work experience, working student

8 is a 17 year old grade 11 student with 5 months work experience, working student 9 is an 18 year old grade 12 student with 2 years and 10 months work experience, and lastly working student 10 is a 23 year old 4th year college student with 1 year work experience.

To gather the information for this study, the researcher composed 5 interview questions that are sent out in a form of a letter to schedule a personal interview with the respondents via google forms to ensure the health safety of all the participants involved in this study and cooperation of the

CoVid19 precautions. This letter signifies their agreement in the interview and these interview questions describe how working students balance their time in school and work.

The interview questions were:

1. For you, what does being a working student means?
2. As a working student during the CoVid19 pandemic, what are the advantages and disadvantages?
3. What are the difficulties and challenges you encountered in balancing school and work?
4. What coping mechanisms do you employ in balancing your school and work responsibilities?
5. As a working student, what do you recommend in order to balance school and work life?

The researcher used the code and theme method in analyzing the data. The theme has been used as a descriptor, attribute, concept, and element. It allows researchers to answer the questions by assembling a collection of repeated thoughts. It involves codes that have a lot of common ideas and has a high degree of generality and comparison that unifies thoughts on the topic of the study. Each theme may have some subthemes to get a perfect overview of the data and reveal a structure from the account of the participants [23].

The researcher gathered the answered interview questions and checked the common point and patterns of the respondents' answers.

5. RESULTS

I. Meaning of Working Student

A. Responsible

Being a working student means that you are responsible enough to integrate studying and working. Exactly just what working student 2 stated, "Being a working student means that I should be responsible enough to cater both of the

requirements that my work and studies ask of me." "It is having two commitments at the same time wherein you can't let the other commitment distract you from doing the second commitment" working student 4 added. According to working students 3,6 and 7, a working student is someone who is responsible, wise, focused, and knows how to manage their time and priorities. And for working students 1,5, and 9, it is someone who chose to sacrifice in order to help their families and finance their studies.

II. Advantages and Disadvantages of Working Students during the CoVid19 Pandemic

A. Study and Work while at Home

For working students 1-5, and 8, it is an advantage to study and work all in one place which is at their homes. In fact, working student 3 stated that "Advantage is that I get to be working at home while also studying at home." In addition to that, working student 2 indicated that "My work does not have fixed work hours. So, I think an advantage is that I get to choose my work time that would not be in conflict with my school schedule. Another benefit is that my work is purely online/work from home. I do not need to report to our physical office from time to time which is very challenging during this time of the pandemic." This was supported by working student 1 specifying, "Advantage is that you can handle your time in doing school and work requirements."

B. Earn Money

Earning money is one of the advantages of being a working student. This was the response collected from working students 5,7, and 10. Working student 7 indicated that "The only advantage about it is earning something that you can save up in case of emergency or anything else."

C. Health Risk

Working students 5,7,9, and 10 responded that the disadvantage of being a working student during the pandemic is the health risk as they are more prone to being "exposed to virus" (Working student 10). Just like what working student 7 stated that "this can lead to many disadvantages such as risking your health most especially because of the pandemic."

D. Struggle in Balancing Priorities

Some of the participants answered that the struggle in balancing priorities is also one of the disadvantages while studying and working at the same time during the pandemic. Working student 3 said that "Online classes have the way to give tasks outside their schedule and it somehow affects my

works schedule.” This was also supported by Working student 8 that stated “It’s hard to do work and study at the same time especially during online classes.”

III. Difficulties and Challenges Encountered in Balancing School and Work

A. Lack of Time

“As a working student, Time is the second most important thing in the world. So, losing time because of oversleeping from exhaustion or working for too long over a difficult task from work or school is the most difficult challenge in being a working student” (Working student 3). For working students 4,5,9, and 10 managing their time has become one of the challenges as there are tendencies where school and work responsibilities stack up at the same time that “can take up most of your time, and the tendency of being tired” (Working student 7). And “It’s hard to manage what to prioritize first” (Working Student 8). However, working student 2 specified that “In balancing my school and work, I rarely had problems because I make sure that when I choose my work hours, my school requirements and synchronous classes are already done.”

B. Mental Health Risk

For working student 10, the risks in mental health are also one of the difficulties in balancing school and work. This was supported by working student 6 that stated the difficulties and challenges they encountered are “Stress, anxiety, and sacrificing what is fun to what is needed.”

IV. Coping Mechanism Employed in Balancing School and Work Responsibilities

A. Time Management

The answers of the participants revolve around them coping up by managing their time wisely and organizing their priorities by creating a proper schedule as indicated by working students 1,3,4,5,8,9, and 10. It was also specified by working student 1 that “I put up a schedule and maximize my time especially when I am free.” Working student 6 also stated that “Setting up a simple goal to pursue day by day and focusing on it until I’ve achieved it.” is how they managed to cope up in balancing their responsibilities.

V. Recommendation to Balance School and Work Life

A. Be Responsible

The participants’ recommended that in order to successfully balance school and work life, the working student must learn how to be responsible and know their priorities just like what working students 5 and 8 said. In fact, working student 1 responded that “Make sure to finish all your requirements and avoid the unnecessary things that cannot help you but distract

you instead.” In connection with the previous answer, working student 2 stated that “As a working student, I advise that you give your 100% both in school and at work. Make sure to manage your time wisely. Having a schedule is really essential for someone like me because I also have other responsibilities to tend to aside from school and work.” Additionally, working students 3,4, and 6 advised that health is important too that’s why creating a schedule can help in managing your time wisely. And lastly, working student 6 also indicated that “Don’t forget to take care of yourself, at least take a break for about day, relax and have fun.”

6. DISCUSSION

Being a working student requires hard work and discipline in balancing their studies and work responsibilities. According to the Labor Code Provisions on Young Workers Book III, Title III, Chapter II - Employment of Minors ART. 137. of Republic of the Philippines Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) that “(a) No child below fifteen (15) years of age shall be employed, except when he works directly under the sole responsibility of his parents or guardian, and his employment does not in any way interfere with his schooling,

(b) Any person between fifteen (15) and eighteen (18) years of age may be employed for such number of hours and such periods of the day as determined by the Secretary of Labor and Employment in appropriate regulations” [24]. In that case, a working student must be able to still take care of his or her studies even when working, and that this shouldn’t affect their studies negatively especially for minors.

Furthermore, the results showed that working students find advantages and disadvantages while studying and working amidst the CoVid19 Pandemic. Despite the challenges and struggles encountered, they have also been able to deal with these by managing their time wisely and organizing their priorities by creating a proper schedule.

7. CONCLUSION

Based on the gathered findings of the study, the researcher has drawn the following conclusions: (1) being a working student means that you are responsible enough to balance all your priorities, (2) the advantages of working students during the CoVid19 pandemic is that they can earn money even while studying and working at home, (3) on the other hand, mental health, health risk and struggles in balancing priorities due to lack of time are the issues encountered by working students,

(4) and lastly, working students overcome these difficulties by creating an organized schedule, time management, knowing their priorities, and self-discipline.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the foregoing implications and conclusions, the following recommendations were made: (1) organization and time management are very important and must be practiced,

(2) distractions should be avoided and instead focus on the priorities, (3) maximize the time by finishing the requirements as early as possible to lessen the load of works, (4) always give best efforts in both school and work, (5) don't let the work negatively affect school, (6) sleep and health are important and should be taken care of, (7) and lastly, don't forget to take breaks and have fun during free time to refresh.

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