

INVESTIGATING THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN PART-TIME WORK, ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT, AND ENGLISH PROFICIENCY

AMONG EFL STUDENT'S : A NARRATIVE INQUIRY

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Abstract

This study examines the impact of part-time employment on academic engagement and English language proficiency among English education students. In the modern era, many university students engage in non-academic activities, including employment, which can affect their academic skills and academic performance. Previous research shows that students' main motivations for working part-time include financial and experiential factors, which are often related to basic needs and self-development. However, balancing work and study can be stressful and negatively impact mental health, further affecting academic performance.

This study explores the experiences of English education students, who work part-time as teachers while also acting as students. In this study, the researcher used the narrative inquiry research method. Participants taken in this study are 2 students of English education, Islamic University of Malang. Data collection from this study was taken from in-depth interviews with participants. The interview results showed that despite initially having low English proficiency, both experienced significant improvements in speaking, writing, and reading skills after teaching. Through analysing the experiences of working students, this study found that although many felt stressed, some students were able to maintain or even improve their academic grades thanks to work experience. Good self-management, including motivation, organisation and self-control, is crucial for success in both roles. The findings provide insights for educational institutions to improve support for working students and design curricula that are more responsive to the challenges they face. In addition, this study explores the strategies students use to balance academic and work commitments, which is an important area for further study.

Keywords: *Part-time Job, Academic Engagement, English Language*

INTRODUCTION

In today's era, students are engaged in activities beyond their academic pursuits, including work or entrepreneurial efforts outside the university's scope. A significant number of students engage in multitasking, such as studying and working simultaneously. This has become common, especially among students who work part-time while pursuing their education. This phenomenon has garnered considerable interest among academics and educators due to its potential impact on various aspects of students' lives, including self-management skills and language proficiency.

According to research by Azis & Gita (2021), there are two main motivations for becoming part-time working students: financial factors and experiential factors. Research conducted by Bea

and colleagues (2023) revealed that the personal and social obligations of working students contribute to both the difficulties and satisfactions in their jobs. Students choose to engage in work because they often have obligations to meet their daily basic needs. Examples may arise when students face economic difficulties or lack parental or familial support. Furthermore, according to Meilan & Mariani (2023), studying while working is not solely to fulfill personal basic needs but also to enhance self-quality and experience in working, increase competitiveness, and plan for future careers.

The effort to balance the demands of academic studies with part-time work presents a unique challenge for students, requiring adept management of time, resources, and responsibilities. In time management, students are trained to efficiently organize, direct, and monitor time to achieve predetermined goals, ranging from scheduling activities, setting priorities, estimating activity times, to evaluating the implementation of planned activities, so that every available time can be utilized productively (Macan, 1994). Some interesting conclusions from Subramaniam et al. (2020) suggest that there are individuals who are able to manage their time and balance work and family, with most academics having lower levels of stress. There are also individuals who experience stress from this situation and are unable to focus on work and academics simultaneously. Therefore, exploring the implications of this balancing act is crucial for understanding its impact on students' well-being and overall academic performance.

A student who works often goes to bed due to fatigue and the numerous tasks that need to be completed. Sometimes, students feel frustrated with the amount of work they have to do, but they have no choice because they have to work and do all the tasks afterward. Campus life provides students with the opportunity to develop their identities and figure out what they want for their futures (Eastgate et al., 2022). Sometimes, a working student chooses to work overtime on assignments because they have to work. Gopalan (2019) reported that students experiencing difficulties between work and school ultimately choose to drop out of their university, opting not to receive their bachelor's degrees.

In the study by Summer et al. (2023), it was found that work has four main impacts on students' lives: it limits flexibility in students' schedules, makes them vulnerable in emergencies, requires students to make difficult financial calculations, and can disrupt students' social lives and mental health. Therefore, psychological support is also considered important (Balacuit et al., 2022).

Furthermore, in the context of English education students, English proficiency is not only a fundamental requirement but also a skill that is continuously honed through academic coursework and real-world application. Muluk (2017) states that some students who study while working part-time take longer to complete their studies compared to those who do not have part-time jobs. However, in the study by Azis & Gita (2021), part-time working students are still able to achieve good grade point averages (GPAs) or even achieve better academic performance due to the experiences they gain while being part-time students, which cannot be obtained just by being regular academics. Assessment indications of GPA depict that cognition relates to thinking processes, understanding, and problem-solving; affectivity relates to acceptance, response, evaluation, and value-based attributes; psychomotor relates to perception, readiness to act, mechanisms, skills, and adaptive abilities (Bloom et al., 1956). Rijavec et al. (2017) state that students with and without part-time jobs are equally satisfied with their lives, experience similar developments and high flows in various activities, and have relatively low fatigue. They also have the same academic performance. Part-time work, besides providing learning opportunities based on valuable experiences, can also influence students' English language skills through various channels, such as communication with coworkers and clients, exposure to diverse linguistic contexts, and the need for effective written and verbal communication skills. As Latifa, Yunus, and Karimullah (2020) assert, students' speaking abilities are largely determined by vocabulary mastery, frequency of practice, and a supportive environment.

Students who study while working must be able to manage self-management where they must be able to manage their activities. According to (Gie, 2000), self-management is an effort to push oneself forward and become better, manage all personality elements, and control self-abilities. Furthermore, Gie states that self-management for individuals includes at least 4 forms of actions which include: 1) self-motivation; 2) self-organization; 3) self-control; 4) self-development. Therefore, the management that must be done by students who work and study is to arrange activity schedules to be able to carry out their activities well. Thus, students can carry out all their activities in a balanced manner or not be biased. Setting a schedule also means that students will not prioritize one thing between work and academics.

With this background, investigating the impact of part-time work on self-management and English proficiency among English education students has significant implications for both academic institutions and the broader community. Workloads not only reduce study time but also make students feel too tired to concentrate on studying (Ali, E., 2017). By gaining insights into the dynamics of this phenomenon, educators can adjust support mechanisms and curriculum enhancements to better equip students in facing challenges and maximizing the benefits of their dual roles as learners and employees.

METHODS

This study uses narrative inquiry method as its research design. The aim is to investigate the interaction between part-time work, academic involvement and English language skills. Narrative inquiry is an approach in qualitative research that aims to analyze and understand stories experienced and told (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). This approach emphasizes interpretation and meaning in individual participant stories.

This research will narrate the stories and then identify them based on emerging themes or categories. Thus, qualitative data analysis can be in the form of a description of the description of the story and the themes that emerge from the story (Creswell, 2012). Interview questions will be taken into account to capture important points about this research.

The sample of this study was taken from students of English education, Universitas Islam Malang. The total number of participants is 2 students. In this study, English education students who work part-time while studying were taken. Part-time jobs intended in this study are students who have jobs as teachers or tutors who teach English.

This research was conducted using a narrative inquiry design with in-depth interviews of experiential stories. This is a qualitative research method first introduced (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990), then further developed (Clandinin and Huber, 2010). The research is conducted by directly and relevantly narrating the lives of individuals, collecting results from interviews with predetermined topics and research questions. The data were analyzed in this study using six procedures adapted from Braun and (Clarke's, 2006) thematic analysis.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section explores the experiences of students working part-time as English teachers or tutors while studying. Initially, participants felt their English skills were lacking, especially in speaking and vocabulary. However, teaching helped improve their confidence, speaking ability, and vocabulary. Despite the positive impact on their skills, participants faced challenges, particularly in time management. Balancing coursework, teaching, and extracurricular activities led to sleep deprivation and stress. They managed these challenges due to personal motivations, such as gaining experience and financial needs. To balance their responsibilities, participants set clear goals and relied on effective time management strategies, such as creating structured schedules and using reminders. These approaches helped them stay organized and focused, allowing them to manage both their academic and work commitments.

Based on the interview results, the participants shared similar backgrounds regarding their English skills. As highlighted by Azis & Gita (2021), students take on part-time jobs for two main reasons: financial need and gaining experience. Students often work due to economic challenges, as Bea et al. (2023) mention, while some also seek experience to prepare for future careers. Working while studying has a significant effect on students' English skills, boosting confidence, vocabulary, and overall language proficiency.

However, balancing work and studies presents several challenges. First, time management becomes difficult as students juggle academics, teaching responsibilities, and other activities. The inability to manage time effectively can lead to sleep deprivation and high stress levels, as shown by Subramaniam et al. (2020). In addition, organizing schedules becomes challenging when trying to align teaching hours with classes. Despite these challenges, participants were able to graduate on time, demonstrating that part-time work does not always hinder academic progress, as noted by Azis & Gita (2021).

The stress of balancing work and study can affect mental health, as noted by Summer et al. (2023). Students often face stress that can negatively impact their physical and mental well-being, with some experiencing health issues due to insufficient rest and time management difficulties. Balacuit et al. (2022) emphasize the importance of psychological support for students facing these challenges.

Despite these obstacles, the students remain committed to both their studies and work, motivated by economic needs and the desire for practical experience. This commitment allows them to gain valuable skills that enhance their academic and professional development. Economic necessity and hands-on teaching experience are key factors in their perseverance.

In conclusion, while part-time work brings challenges like time management, stress, and mental health issues, it also offers significant benefits, including improved language skills and practical experience. Effective time management and commitment to their goals helped the participants overcome these challenges, illustrating the importance of support systems and balancing work and study responsibilities. Studies by Bea et al. (2023) and Sakdiyeh et al. (2023) confirm the positive impact of part-time work on academic achievement, while acknowledging that students must manage their responsibilities carefully.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

In this study, participants shared their experiences as students working while studying, specifically as English teachers or private tutors. They highlighted both the positive and negative impacts of balancing work and study. Initially, participants struggled with English language skills, particularly in speaking and vocabulary, which affected their academic performance. However, after teaching, their English skills, including confidence and academic abilities, improved significantly. Despite these improvements, they faced challenges such as intense time management demands, lack of sleep, and stress, as they balanced coursework, teaching preparation, and campus responsibilities.

Participants were motivated by economic necessity and the desire for professional experience. They needed income to support themselves while studying but also valued the opportunity to gain teaching experience and improve their skills. They viewed teaching as a way to deepen subject knowledge and prepare for a future career in education.

The success of students working while studying relies on clear goal-setting, effective time management, and creating structured schedules. Setting specific goals helps students stay focused and motivated, while managing time through planning and prioritizing tasks ensures efficiency. Organizing a schedule helps students stay on track and balance work and study.

In conclusion, working as an English teacher or tutor provides valuable experiences and skill development but also poses challenges that affect well-being. Effective time management and resilience are key to overcoming these challenges, and institutional support is necessary to help students balance academic demands and work commitments. Studying while working offers unique challenges and learning opportunities that can benefit students' personal and professional growth.

Suggestions for improvement include incorporating student teaching experiences into lessons and providing time management and stress coping training for students. Lecturers should also make mental health support more accessible. Students working while studying are encouraged to create clear time plans and build support networks with peers to share challenges. Universities should provide resources like career centers to help students with career planning. For future research, long-term studies should be conducted to examine the impact of working while studying on students' careers and mental health, considering factors such as family support and the type of work involved.

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