

## Balancing Academics with Work- Challenges and Stress Involved: A Micro Study

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### Abstract:

*"He who learns and does not share knowledge is an independent fool. He who hordes knowledge and preserves it within social boundaries of a caste or a race, is a co-dependent fool."*

At some point or the other in our life, all of us have experienced a lot of pressure. This pressure led to stress, conflicts within oneself and disharmony in relationships – both: the professional and personal.

Various empirical studies have examined the nature and impact of part-time work amongst students (Ford et al 1995; Taylor 1998; Smith and Taylor 1999; Metcalf 2001; Curtis and Shani 2002; Hunt, Lincoln and Walker 2004; Carney et al 2005). Interest in the issue of combining work with study is not therefore particularly new. Research into the experience of part-time higher education students has explored their ability to cope with and "juggle" competing demands on their time (Blaxter and Tight 1994a; 1994b). Hill and McGregor (1998), Kember (1999) and Kember and Leung (2004) have investigated the importance of the support systems available to students engaging in part time jobs.

Various factors, which are often modifiable, are the cause of such uninvited experiences. With guidance and prudent judgment, to discern right choices from wrong, priorities from unimportant tasks and by organizing day to day activities, such pressures leading to stress can be minimized to a great degree, with positive results. A particular concern is that mature female students may have multiple roles and responsibilities that carry considerable emotional, practical and financial burdens (Edwards 1993).

This Project is a study done on young adults (18-22 ages) who are pursuing work along with studies. The ideology behind doing both together, variables that effect an individual's life, their pros and cons, success rate and challenges faced, etc. are dealt with, in this study.

It is said that *'to work hard on something you don't love is called stress and to work hard on something you love is called passion.'*

Do students put in a lot of effort to study and work out of sheer passion/ eagerness to learn more or do they do so only to fulfill their obligations as a responsible son/ daughter. Does this make them any superior from students who do not or cannot pursue both? Does fulfilling both enable a pupil to enhance their personality, character and way of living? – are few such topics that are discussed in this project.

*'Health is wealth'* so goes the old saying. This study provides some guidelines to follow in order to balance both work life and student life. Some important stress bursting exercises are also explained in the study. This being the crucial period of an individual's life, because it is in this phase the individual's character and personality takes its shape, preparing him/her for their life in this competitive world, this study also has few do's and don'ts that enables an individual to spend their time in the best productive manner.

However the basic essence or a lesson that one can take with them after reading this report is that pursuing the course and area of work one loves brings them success. It makes their labor free of stress/ pressure and time would appear to have gained wings of success. The present paper attempts to study how young people in the modern world manage part time careers along with their academics which is often stressful.

Key Words: Academics, Work Life Study Balance, Stress and Pressure.

### 1. Introduction:

Academic education has transformed with the rise of civilization, when knowledge transmission from one generation to another or even person to person was becoming complicated, communities evolved their own education systems.

Some work to earn, while other work to learn. For some it's an on job experience that matters while for others its bread winning that matters. Then there are some who need to fund their own academic fees whereas others want good job

experience years on their resume as soon as they are out of college. Whatever be the reason, necessity is the mother of invention, in this case the combination of work with academics.

Every person's perspective on this combination is different based on their life experience and needs. Even students are wondering whether they should or should not work, whether part time work is good or full time work and part time study is a better option to be pursued. Some claim a student should study hard till graduation, others believe a part time job along with studying has greater benefits in the long run. Let us dwell on these two sides and learn from the observations of various viewpoints these two concepts.

Teenagers usually take up jobs during high school years and college years. They learn to manage time, money, obey given instructions adapt to the routines and rules of a work place and how to work with others.

They are able to acquire valuable skills and find wisdom from adults in the work place. They can also get good recommendations and testimonials from their elders and bosses at work. They also stand a better chance to get higher wages when they are completed with their academics.

A student's work life alone helps them to set their priorities right and learn to utilize their time in a calculated manner. They cannot stand on the roadside with others and keep chatting for hours. Some working adolescents have reportedly said they find great satisfaction by staying on their jobs while pursuing studies. They are able to enjoy outings with their friends while can they pay for their food and travel without burdening their parents.

Psychologists say that early working life causes the youth to deny themselves of a proper 'youthful life' which is free from adult pursuits, stress and responsibility. They miss out on exploring life and contemplating before committing to others. This experience embitters some for a lifetime. Social background also causes hazards to the academic career if the student is pressurized to work and fend for oneself.

Working students face a lot of challenges with lot of work to do on both sides- the working side and the studying side. The major challenges are: balancing time, minimizing effect of work on studies and vice-versa, balancing physical health, fatigue and mental stress. Finding a solution to all these related effects and problems which arise everyday can be acutely challenging.

- a. Working can impact creativity. A rushed student cannot be creative enough when hard pressed for submission time and due dates. They have very little time to read, research and thoughtfully collect their ideas onto tangible forms.
- b. Balancing time devoted to study and to work becomes increasingly hard to manage when exams are drawing near and assignments are due. The pressure can make the student quite absent minded at work and cause some clumsy situations.
- c. Social life is definitely impacted and the student finds that one has to sacrifice recreation, parties, sports gatherings and such for the sake of both work and study.
- d. The sheer exhaustion from overload of study and work can cause lack of concentration to retain information and result in forgetfulness. This greatly impacts grades because at times mind goes black while writing exams.
- e. The desire to excel can cause the student to 'burn-out' in due time and the student maybe found sleeping in the class after burning the night oil. To find time for enough 'shut-eye' is a challenging too. National Sleep Foundation has recommended (2010) at least 8.5 hours of sleep for a student.

## 2. Literature Review

Over 30 years ago, when Kanter (1977) had mentioned that work and non-work were worlds that could not be categorized differently and apart, roles management had already become important and challenging for individuals, be it students or older people and organizations (Kreiner, Hollensbe, & Sheep, 2009). Today, with the growing demands of society and the involvement of individuals in multiple roles, such management is paramount so that the individual and the organization may live comfortably together in an environment of less stress, with fewer health problems, greater productivity and employees' commitment (Cappi & Araujo, 2015).

The participation of the individual in multiple roles is important in that it provides a foundation for self-esteem, competence and sources of social support, in addition to enabling the achievement of economic and social status (Mallinckrodt & Leong, 1992).

Over recent decades, significant changes have taken place over the professional and personal life of the individual. Changes in the family structure, increased participation of women in the workforce and technological change (Peeters, Montgomery, Bakker, & Schaufeli, 2005) have made the balance between work and home domains a key question for the contemporary worker. However, not only work and home are important dimensions to the dynamics of this individual. From the moment in which the companies are internationalizing, seeking competent and ever more skilled workers, the professionalization of these workers becomes necessary, through specialization courses such as masters and MBAs, making "study" an important domain to be investigated.

For this reason, in this research, we decided to perform an analysis as to how people negotiate the boundaries between work, home and study. With regards to work, home and study domains, there are some identified studies that analyze the simultaneous relationship between these domains, as well as the antecedents and consequents of the interrelationship between these roles. In general, these studies are focused on adult students, also referred to as non-traditional. This group of students is characterized mostly by age; however, other authors add additional criteria to characterize them, like the fact they are re-entering educational activities and being into full-time work (Kasworm, 2010)

## 3. Need for the Study

Regarding the work/study conflict or balance, in addition to there being little research, a great deal of the attention in this domain over the last decades has focused on documenting the conflicts between the demands of work and study, with the work/school conflict being a key term of this tension, which analyzes, for the most part, teenagers or university students (McNall & Michel, 2011), who are studying full-time and seek employment to satisfy some personal need.

Despite the lack of studies focusing on the work/study interface with non-traditional or adult students, according to Fairchild (2003), they comprise one of the fastest growing segments among students of higher education. According to Carney-Crompton and Tan (2002), even though it is an understudied group, for they have more commitments and responsibilities than traditional students, besides receiving less social support, they have more demands to be managed, leading to greater conflicts.

**3.1 Objectives of the study**

In view of the above limited research studies in this area, the present study attempts to respond the following research problem: "How workers cope with the demands between work, study and home?" In the face of the research problem, the objective is to examine the strategies and patterns of behaviour that individuals use to promote the balance between these three domains. As the investigation subject, the researchers opted to work with non-traditional students, who are adults aged 18 - 22 years.

The objectives of the study are:

1. To discuss and deduce the reason for a student taking up a part time work along with academic commitments.
2. To analyze whether academic cum work creates stress, relationship gaps, variation in his/her academic performance and personal hazards in a students' life.
3. To ascertain modern generation's stand towards part-time work of a student.
4. To know student's perspective of the challenges faced while studying and working.

**4. Methodology**

The sample was stratified into 5 groups of students engaged in part time jobs – 18 – 22 years. The Disproportionate Stratified Random Sampling method was employed since the samples drawn are not proportionately distributed according to the randomly selected population weight. The respondents were drawn from the city of Visakhapatnam.

A questionnaire consisting of 28 questions relating to four areas namely their satisfaction with their work, their success in academics, strategies they used to balance work study and home were standardized and used.

**5. Results and Discussion**

Results of both quantitative and qualitative analyses suggest that students doing jobs developed a stronger belief in their own ability in themselves, developed self confidence and an ability to assert themselves in situations.

**Null Hypothesis:**

**Null H<sub>0</sub>:** Students face no stress or challenge while pursuing work with academics.

**Alternate Hypothesis:**

**Hypothesis 1 (H1):** Students face both stress and challenge while pursuing work along with academics.

**Hypothesis 2 (H2):** Students find work with academics challenging.

**Hypothesis 3 (H3):** Students find work with academics stressful.

**Table 1**

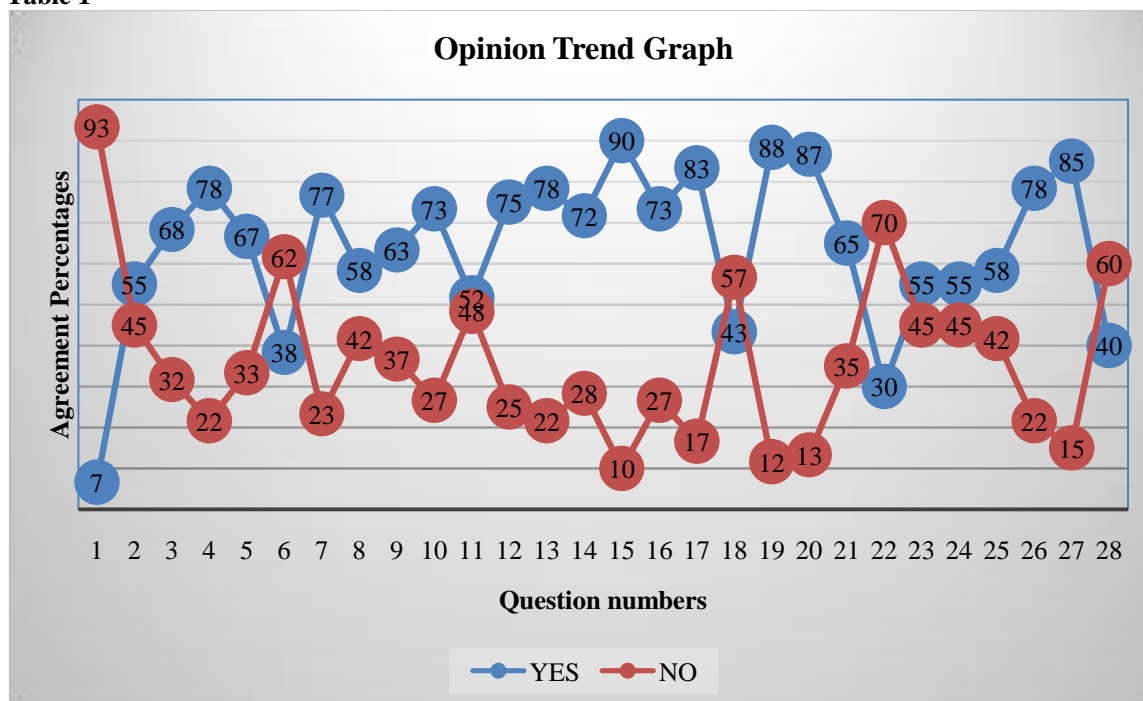


CHART 1: Completed Questionnaire Responses- Total responses and Percentages

SURVEY QUESTION NUMBER	CATEGORIES : THE 5 AGE-GROUPS										RESULTS OF THE 60 PEOPLE			
	18 YEARS		19 YEARS		20 YEARS		21 YEARS		22 YEARS		TOTAL		PERCENTAGE	
	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO
1	0	5	1	11	2	14	0	20	1	6	4	56	6.67	93.33
2	2	3	6	6	8	8	13	7	4	3	33	27	55.00	45.00
3	5	0	9	3	12	4	13	7	2	5	41	19	68.33	31.67
4	4	1	10	2	14	2	15	5	4	3	47	13	78.33	21.67
5	2	3	9	3	12	4	11	9	6	1	40	20	66.67	33.33
6	2	3	5	7	4	12	11	9	1	6	23	37	38.33	61.67
7	5	0	12	0	16	0	9	11	4	3	46	14	76.67	23.33
8	2	3	8	4	10	6	11	9	4	3	35	25	58.33	41.67
9	5	0	8	4	13	3	9	11	3	4	38	22	63.33	36.67
10	5	0	11	1	14	2	11	9	3	4	44	16	73.33	26.67
11	3	2	7	5	9	7	12	8	0	7	31	29	51.67	48.33
12	4	1	11	1	14	2	11	9	5	2	45	15	75.00	25.00
13	5	0	12	0	13	3	13	7	4	3	47	13	78.33	21.67
14	4	1	10	2	14	2	13	7	2	5	43	17	71.67	28.33
15	4	1	12	0	15	1	18	2	5	2	54	6	90.00	10.00
16	5	0	10	2	13	3	11	9	5	2	44	16	73.33	26.67
17	5	0	11	1	15	1	12	8	7	0	50	10	83.33	16.67
18	1	4	6	6	5	11	11	9	3	4	26	34	43.33	56.67
19	5	0	11	1	15	1	16	4	6	1	53	7	88.33	11.67
20	5	0	12	0	15	1	14	6	6	1	52	8	86.67	13.33
21	3	2	9	3	14	2	11	9	2	5	39	21	65.00	35.00
22	1	4	2	10	4	12	8	12	3	4	18	42	30.00	70.00
23	1	4	8	4	8	8	11	9	5	2	33	27	55.00	45.00
24	2	3	7	5	9	7	12	8	3	4	33	27	55.00	45.00
25	3	2	7	5	7	9	13	7	5	2	35	25	58.33	41.67
26	4	1	11	1	14	2	13	7	5	2	47	13	78.33	21.67
27	4	1	10	2	13	3	17	3	7	0	51	9	85.00	15.00
28	5	0	7	5	6	10	5	15	1	6	24	36	40.00	60.00

TABLE 1: Completed Questionnaire Responses- Total responses and Percentages

**Factors positively impacting students' coping with work and study:**

There are many benefits students can get if they balance well their studies and work hours.

**a. Time Management:** With time crunch for students between work and study, they become better time managers. They are organized better and plan with priorities.

**b. Money:** The financial aspect is beneficial to them who can set it aside to use it for some items that they need on the professional front. They can also enjoy fun trips where parents can't afford.

**c. Finance Management:** They become good at budgeting and spend wisely their earned money.

**d. Network of Acquaintances:** Work atmosphere introduces a new acquaintances which sometimes prove very beneficial. Some become lifelong friends and some help one get better jobs and find better options even for day to day needs. Professional relationships also develop widely.

**e. Mood Control:** With less time on hand to kill and commitments to work and study, meeting of deadlines etc. all help a person to stay away from boredom.

**f. Skills Transfer:** whether a student pursues work at grocery or gas outlet or a fast food joint there are skills learnt that can be transferred onto any other career related job.

**6. Conclusions**

Although we have been open to the emergence of other dimensions, all the facts or strategies found in this study may be inserted into the four dimensions (behavioral, physical, communicative and temporal) presented by Kreiner et al (2009), highlighting the saturation found in that study and the transferability of the categories found for other substantive areas. Although some aspects of this study are similar to those identified by previous studies, most of which is specific to the empirical context of this research, and can be seen as a relevant to the domain of work study literature, especially when it comes to the work/home/study interface.

From results and discussions we are made aware that few of the students take up part- time employment while studying to fulfill family obligations and few do so to gain employment experience. Students do find both tasks challenging, yet some are able to cope with the new facades of life they encounter while some are not.

Most of the conclusions drawn are subjective in nature. The personality and traits of the individual play a major role on their adaptive principle. A striking fact noticed in the study was that 'with the increase in the age of an individual, the ability to cope with challenges or stress becomes a tough task for them.' Many responded saying tight schedules effect their family life, health and other relationships. In order to reduce such outcomes, it can be suggested that the student must pursue a hobby related work as that would keep the interest of the student alive and also gear him/her up for academic requirements. It may be challenging but definitely not stressful.

We observe that these strategies are specific to this study, because with the addition of a new domain in the life of the individual, the study, in conjunction with the high existing demands of work and home, the management of roles becomes more complicated, what makes them use additional strategies, allowing them to focus on priority demands and make better use of their time in the performance of those activities.

Finally, this paper reports non-traditional students as individuals who use personal strategies to achieve balance between work, home and study. Coping strategies were found that fit into the four dimensions of Kreiner et al. (2009) and that facilitate the management of boundaries. Finally, an understanding of these tactics can be critical so that individuals, families, organizations and universities can reach closer to having balance between work, home and study.

#### LIMITATIONS

One of the limitations of this study is due to the context in which it was done and the relatively smaller size of the sample. As the students interviewed are Indians, the findings cannot be generalized; non-traditional students from other countries may mention other tactics of boundaries management. In addition, as the interviews were held with master's students of a specific institution, of private capital, the tactics found may not report the strategies used by all non-traditional students to manage their demands.

#### FUTURE RESEARCH

As ideas for future research, studies could examine how individuals, in general, manage their personal demands within the work/home/study conflict, because the tactics mentioned report the concern of non-traditional students only with others. Second, investigations could be carried out in order to explore how the boundaries work tactics can be used in different types of work arrangements, as telecommuting and flexible time (Rau & Hyland, 2002) and in different educational arrangements, as distance education (Murtaza, Shah, & Ud Din, 2011) and courses as MBAs.

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