

Working and Studying at the Same Time

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Abstract

Working and studying at the same time can be seen as a common trend over the past few decades. Despite the load of work that school provides, students have to deal with numerous issues at work. There have been various research studies relating to this topic, mostly in Western countries, but there has been little research undertaken at The University of Cambodia. As a matter of fact, most of the students at The University of Cambodia also work. Hence, this 10-week intensive research study aims to explore the reasons, benefits, and difficulties that UC students have encountered throughout their working and studying lives. To undertake this research, 100 UC students were randomly selected to participate in this study, but only those who had jobs were considered to be eligible. After being selected, they were given a questionnaire to complete. The study found that their ultimate reason was to be financially independent. In their answers to the questionnaire, they also related that experience in the real working environment was the main benefit that they had gained from their work. In terms of obstacles, students tended to encounter exhaustion and stress more than those who did not work. All in all, understanding the reasons, benefits, and difficulties of those students is very crucial for students to think carefully before deciding to work while studying, and for teachers to understand their difficulties, and for family and friends to help them cope with the stress and exhaustion.

I. Introduction

1. Background of the study

Working and studying while in college can be rewarding and tiring at the same time. The number of college students who work and study during college has dramatically increased over the years. According to a new

research study from Georgetown University's Center on Education and the Workforce, more than 70% of college students have worked and studied at the same time for over 25 years. Additionally, the same source also reports that their average working hours are 30 hours per week (Rapacon, & CNBC.com, S. T., 2015). Similarly, research from the National Center for Education Statistics showed that 79% of college students worked while studying. Students must be able to have great time management skills to survive the hectic schedule and maintain a good social life. As a matter of fact, the idea of whether working and studying at the same time provides more advantages than disadvantages varies, based on the perspectives of each individual. Some people might view working while studying as negative while some view it as positive. Nonetheless, as long as a student commits to do it in a right way, anything is possible.

For students who choose to work while studying, there are various reasons that lead them to undertake this commitment, such as financial issues, experiences, networking, and many other reasons. Over time, students need more and more financial support to cover their expenses for living and studying since the price of every single thing keeps increasing. Based on findings from the survey in the 2008 National Survey of Student Engagement, working while studying can provide positive impacts on students' engagement with school work (The Benefits of Working While Enrolled in College, n.d.). Some significant benefits that work provides to college students are relatable working experience, time management skills, freedom from debt, and better academic performance (Caldwell, 2017). Working in a particular place also provides opportunity to students to expand their social network. However, when college students devote their time too much to outside work, it can distract them from studying, make them feel lost along the way, and make their academic performance worse (Lucier, 2012).

In Cambodia, most college students also work while enrolling in college. It can be seen that most of them tend to change shifts to evening or weekend after completing the foundation year so that they can work. A Cambodian graduate reported that "Working in the roles related to my studies has given me valuable experience before I graduate, but I do not have time for my family as I have to spend the weekdays at work and weekends for my assignments" (Work and Study, 2017). Another news article in the Phnom Penh Post discussed this issue as well and one student among 4 interviewees stated that "My job helps me to have a better understanding of how our

society works. The disadvantage, though, is that I have to work long hours and I don't have enough time left for my studies" (P. 2013, June 30). Hence, in order to be able to undertake these two tasks simultaneously, it requires hard work and effort to complete great work and achieve good grades.

In response to the increase of working while studying among college students, this ten-week intensive research study on "Working and Studying at the same time" was conducted by a group of three students in their afternoon shift at The University of Cambodia (UC). The ultimate purpose was to identify the possible reasons, to evaluate the positive impacts on UC students' academic performance, and to find out the main obstacles that UC students have faced when they work and study at the same time. Although the research topic is not new, the scope of this topic is new because it focuses on 100 UC students who have jobs.

2. Problem statement

Due to the fact that the trend of working and studying at the same time among college students keeps increasing, it is important to do a research study among 100 UC students to find out real reasons that push students to work and study at the same time. More importantly, it is necessary to learn about the positive impacts of their efforts and the negative impacts that distract them along the way. After learning all these factors, it will help us to develop good strategies in maintaining better lives when working and studying simultaneously.

3. Research questions

To conduct this research study, these 3 research questions provide the basis for further exploration:

1. What are the main possible reasons leading UC students to work and study at the same time?
2. To what extent can working have positive impacts on UC students?
3. What are the obstacles that UC students have faced when they work and study at the same time?

4. Research objectives

The main purpose of this research study is to further explore the reasons, benefits, and difficulties that UC students have encountered throughout their working and studying lives. In order to effectively explore each point, they are divided into 3 sub-areas:

- To identify the possible reasons leading UC students to work and study at the same time
- To evaluate the positive impacts that UC students have gained from working
- To find out the main obstacles that UC students have faced when they work and study at the same time

5. Limitations

The research study has been undertaken only with a subject base of 100 college students at The University of Cambodia which can be seen as limited. Selecting only 100 participants means that we want to make sure that we record all the responses correctly to produce a research study analysis that is as reliable as possible, considering this limitation.

II. Literature Review

1. Reasons

1.1. Finance

The ultimate reason that leads students to work is to earn money to support their families and keep themselves in schools (Robinson, 1999). “Debt reduction is also a common reason for working, suggesting that students are indeed concerned about the level of debt they are incurring” (Jewell, 2014). According to the Guardian, most students work at least part time because of money concerns, with 58% wanting to spend the money on socializing and 55% on food and household bills. A sensible 38% say that they are doing it for their future to avoid staying in debt (Gil, 2014).

1.2. Skills

Through their occupations, students can learn transferrable skills such as communication and teamwork and improve time management skills, all equally important when entering the labor market (Jewell, 2014). Especially, students believed that part-time jobs provide them the opportunity to broaden their social and personal skills, the important soft skills that we all should obtain (Bentley, & O’Neil, 1984). Hence, students tend to have experience in certain fields, which is beneficial for their personal growth in various ways. Last but not least, another research study from Newcastle University showed that students also gain time management skills while working. One student stated that “Having to deal with one job made me treat my studies as a job too, which helped me develop my own time management

and priorities” (The surprising benefits of working and studying during your Master’s, n.d.).

2. Positive impacts

2.1. Academic performance

For academic performance, students can learn about the real prospects of the real working environment which is a better way to learn more about life (Richardson, Evans, & Gbadamosi, n.d). Additionally, working and learning can provide better education when they expose themselves in the job-related fields (Carnevale, P.A., Smith, N. Melton, M. & Price, E.W, 2015). Specifically, students who work 20 hours or less per week tend to have a high chance of finishing college, and those who work on-campus deal with mostly academic tasks which are beneficial for their studies (BYU Employment Services, 2006).

2.2. Experience for future careers

Working in various fields during school days helps build up students’ backgrounds and experiences, which contribute to gaining a high salary (BYU Employment Services, 2006). Furthermore, 61% of working students believed that their current part-time jobs would help them to get better jobs in the future (Robinson, 1999). Similarly, another research also pointed out that degree-related work and unpaid work experience increase the likelihood of getting a graduate job (Jewell, S, 2014). Another research study also illustrated that “Through your job, you’ll become better acquainted with faculty, staff, and other students. Part-time work allows you to gain career-related experiences as you clarify goals, acquire skills and self-confidence, and build a network of contacts” (Benefits of Student Employment, n.d.).

3. Obstacles when studying and working at the same time

3.1. Poor academic performance

Loads of work and problems from the workplace can distract students from their study to some extent. According to a recent study, it is reported that students are willing to give up study time to accommodate term-time employment (Jewell, 2014). When students invest their time and energy on work, jobs would detract from studying and be harmful to their GPA (BYU Employment Services, 2006).

3.2. Stress

Working and studying at the same time are challenging tasks that require students to invest lots of time on both. Too much academic work and career

issues can make students stressed, which then makes it hard to carry on studying and working at the same time. The amount of stress varies from one student to another based on the different institutes and workplaces in which they study and work (Irfan & Azmi, 2014). Besides deadlines, limited finances, family issues and time, other additional responsibilities also stress college students out (Martinez, Ordu, Sala, & McFarlance, 2013).

3.3. *Balancing Time*

Students are expected to manage their time well in order to deal with their hectic schedules. According to a research study, students have no time to read as their time available for reading has been reduced because of work-related responsibilities. Especially during the sales season, or any other special events, students have to work overtime, hence their assignments are delayed until the last moment (Richardson, Evans, & Gbadamosi, n.d). In relation to this, they have to be very good at time management and prioritize the most important tasks first in order to meet the deadline. However, they barely have time for themselves and families due to their conflicting roles (Martinez, Ordu, Sala, & McFarlance, 2013). In another case study, students spent an average of 59-71 hours per week on a combination of study, work and domestic responsibilities (Gayle & Lowe, 2007).

III. Research Methodology

1. Research design

As this research study is quantitative, a cross-sectional study design was used as it is useful in obtaining the overall picture of the whole study at a particular point of time. Thus, we only need to distribute the questionnaire to 100 UC students once. Moreover, it is not costly and convenient to conduct.

2. Data collection method and sample size

Due to the constraints of time and money, it is impossible to collect the data from the entire population of UC students in each shift. Therefore, we decided to take only 100 UC students from each shift to participate in our research study. The questionnaire was given to only UC students who are currently working or used to work. Those who do not have experience in working were not surveyed. Our group first asked each class to tell us who had jobs and then used the simple random sampling technique to choose participants among them. We did that for all the 10 classes that we attended.

3. Research instruments

Among the six research tools, the questionnaire was chosen as the research design for our research study because it is easy to reach out to the respondents; it takes only a short time, and does not cost much. As a quantitative research study, the questions were designed as all closed-ended questions. The format of the questionnaire was then divided into 4 main parts. The top of the page required personal information such as gender, age, and major. The next part was the reasons section that asks them about their kinds of jobs, the relation between work and jobs, possible reasons, their role models, and their motivations. Then, in the Positive Outcomes section, there were five questions related to the benefits, prioritization, positive impact on future career, academic performance and the remaining time that they have after spending their entire day working and studying. Last but not least, the Obstacles part contained four closed-ended questions in relation to the difficulties, class activities, exhaustion, and personal recommendations. This point is related to whether fellow college students should work and study at the same time. The very last open-ended question asked the participants to express their perspectives towards the reasons that students should work.

4. Ethical issues

Before respondents completed the questionnaire, there was a cover letter on the very top of the questionnaire. This guaranteed that their identities and responses would be kept confidential. Especially, their participation was definitely voluntary. Thus, we ensured that the entire participants' involvement would not cause them any difficulties.

5. Data analysis method

After gathering the questionnaires from the respondents, each of the questionnaires was numbered, so that it was easier to recognize and code. For closed-ended questions, our group used Microsoft Excel to create a code book by typing in each of the main categories. In Excel, we counted the number of kinds of jobs that the participants had and calculated their average age. To facilitate the process, all the recorded data in the codebook was transferred to SPSS. Furthermore, for the last open-ended question, each answer from the participant was typed and printed out to identify the similarities and to more easily group into different categories. Then, we did content analysis. After that, we analyzed each of the items by way of calculating for percentage.

IV. Findings

1. Personal information

Table 1 identifies that the percentage of female respondents is 56% (n=56) and males is 44% (n=44).

Table 1: Gender of participants

Variable	Frequency (percentage)
Gender	
Male	56% (n=56)
Female	44% (n=44)

Table 2 shows the basic data on variable age of the participating students. As illustrated in the table, the average age of the participants was 24.53 years old (M=24.53, SD=2.08). The youngest age was 19 years old while the oldest age was 42 years old.

Table 2: Age of respondents

No.	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
100	19	42	24.53	2.08

Among those working students, all were from different majors. The top two majors that made up most of the study population were from International Relations, which accounted for 18.1% (n=25) and the English Literature major which accounted for 17.4% (n=24). Finance and Banking also made up a significant portion of respondents.

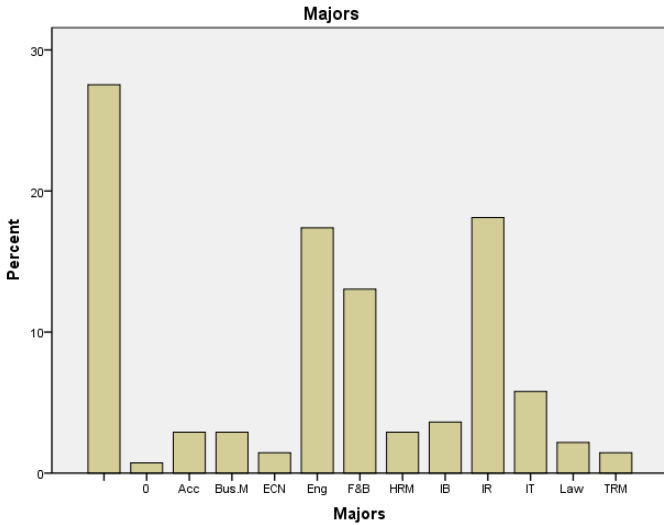


Figure 1: Percentage of UC students who work while studying based on major

2. Reasons

2.1. What kind of job do you do?

Figure 2 presents the percentage of the types of jobs that were taken by 100 UC students, which accounted for 70% full-time job (n=70), 25% part-time job (n=25), 4% freelance (n=4), and 1% business (n=1).

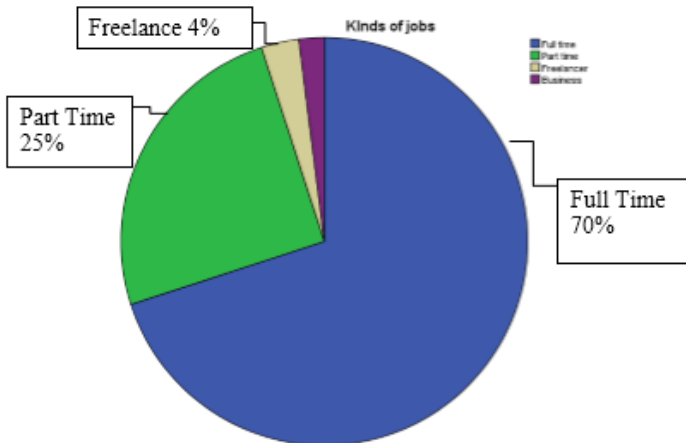


Figure 2: Kinds of Jobs

2.2. Is your job related to your major?

Figure 3 presents the answer of jobs related to majors based on the gender of the participants. Based on the bar chart, it shows that 44.64% (n=25) of the female participants and 54.54% (n=24) of the male participants said their jobs were related to their majors.

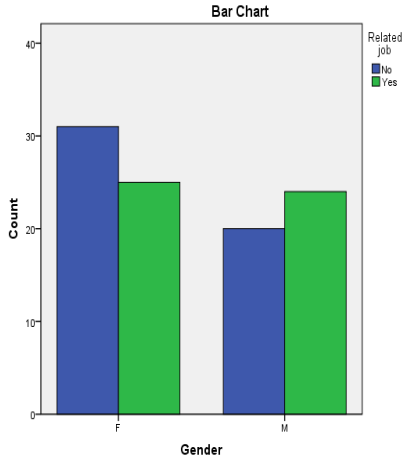


Figure 3: Jobs related to your major based on gender

2.3. Why do you choose to study and work at the same time?

Figure 4 illustrates the four main reasons that lead UC students to work while studying. Among them, improving skills and being financially independent were the two main reasons since they accounted for 40.3% (n=60) and 36.2% (n=54) respectively. Surprisingly, the ultimate reason was to improve skills.

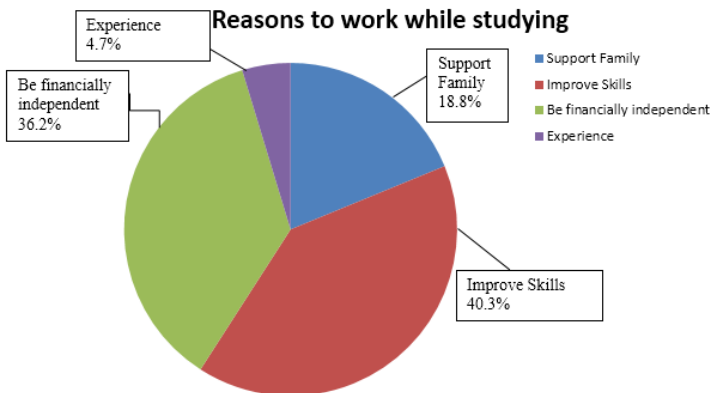


Figure 4: Reasons to work while studying

2.4. Who influences you to work while studying?

Table 3 presents the influence factors ranging from their own selves to sponsors. The most influence factors were from themselves, which equaled 49.3% (n=68) and the least influence factors were from the acquaintances, which was only 1.4% (n=2).

Table 3: Influence factors

Variable	Frequency (Percentage)
Influences	
Myself	49.3% (n=68)
Family	26.8% (n=37)
Sponsor	12.3% (n=17)
Friend	4.3% (n=6)
Acquaintance	1.4% (n=2)

2.5. Do those reasons still motivate you to carry on working?

Figure 5 represents the number of participants that were still motivated to work while studying, which accounted for 88 people and only 22 of them found that they no longer have the motivation to carry on doing both things.

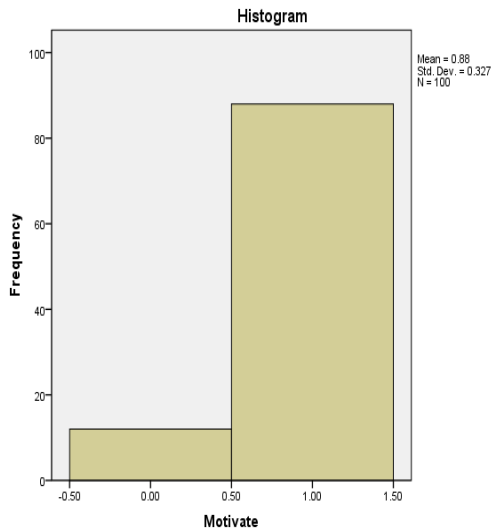


Figure 5: Motivation Count

3. Positive outcomes

3.1. What are the benefits that you gain from working while studying?

Through Figure 6, it can be seen that the benefit gained the most from working while studying was experience in real working environments (35.6%, n=78), and learning soft skills (22.4%, n=49).

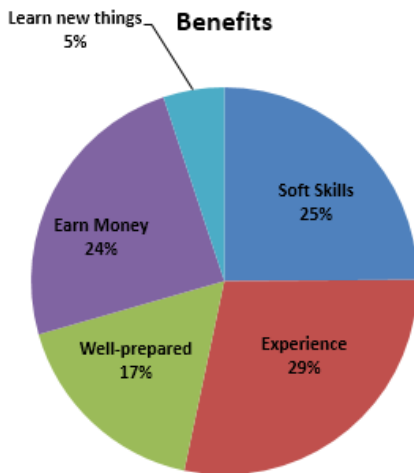


Figure 6: Benefits of students who work while studying

3.2. Between working and studying, which one do you prioritize?

Table 4 demonstrates the priorities that students rank when they work and study at the same time. Most of them prioritize both work and study, which accounted for 63% (n=63) of the total sample size.

3.3. Do you think your current job can help your future career?

Among the entire sample size, 77% (n=77) of them agreed that their current jobs would more or less help them in the future (Table 4).

Table 4: Frequency of prioritization, Current jobs that can help their future

Variables	Frequency (Percentage)
Priority	
Study	21% (n=21)
Work	16% (n=16)
Both	63% (n=63)
Current jobs can help their future	
Yes	77% (n=77)
No	23% (n=23)

3.4. Is your academic performance better when you work and study at the same time?

Figure 7 illustrates that males and females had different answers regarding the improvement of academic performance. The female respondents accounted for 27% (n=27) and male respondents accounted for 20% (n=20). These sample sizes agreed that their academic performance improved as they worked and studied at the same time.

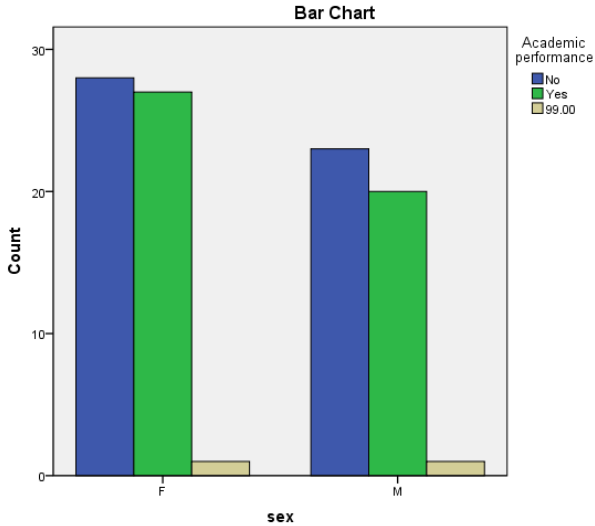


Figure 7: Better academic performance based on gender

3.5. How much time do you have left after spending your day working and studying?

Most of the respondents have 2-3 hours free time after completing work and study (see Table 5).

Table 5: Time availability

Variable	Frequency (Percentage)
Available Time	
1-2 hours	23% (n=23)
2-3 hours	36% (n=36)
3-4 hours	15% (n=15)
4- more hours	26% (n=26)

4. Obstacles

4.1. What are the obstacles that you have met?

The biggest obstacles that UC students faced were exhaustion and stress, which accounted for 31% (n= 65) and 22% (n=47) respectively (see Figure 8).

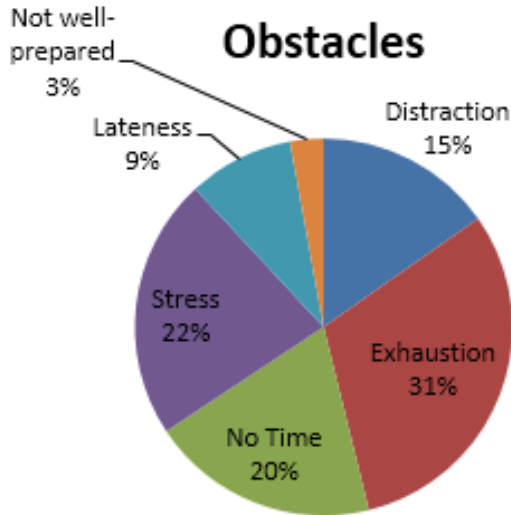


Figure 8: Obstacles that UC students encountered

4.2. What are the class activities that you miss?

As depicted by Table 6, most of UC students missed class activities a lot (35.82%, n=48). But there are 19.40% (n=26) of them who managed to never miss anything in the classroom activities.

Table 6 Class activities that UC students miss

Variable	Frequency (Percentage)
Class activities that UC students miss	
Attendance	35.82% (n=48)
Group Assignment	20.89% (n=28)
Class discussion	23.88% (n=32)
Never miss	19.40% (n=26)

4.3. Have you ever been so tired to the point that you want to quit?

Figure 9 shows because of the heavy work load, 32 female and 27 male students responded that they were too tired to the point that they wanted to quit sometimes.

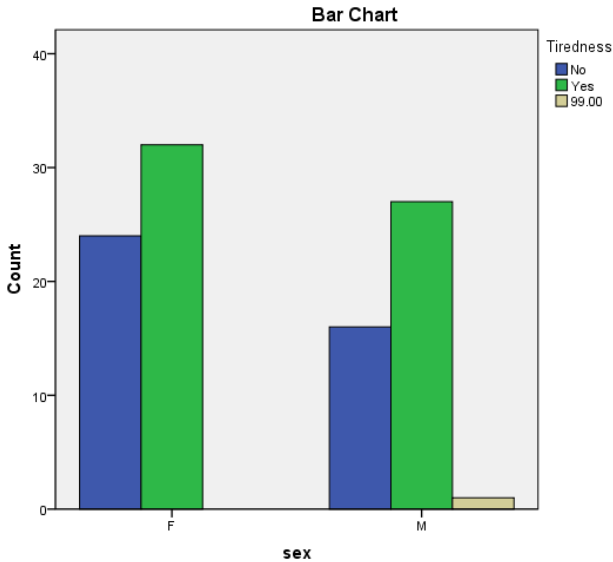


Figure 9: Tired and Quit based on Gender

4.4. Personally, do you recommend other college students to work and study at the same time?

Table 7 shows that both male (n=34) and female (n=34) students recommend fellow college students to work as well.

Table 7: Recommendations

Variable	Frequency
Recommendation	
Yes	34
No	34

4.5. Reasons of Recommendation to work while studying

As an open-ended question, UC students had provided various answers to this question. After being grouped into different themes, we can see that the most popular reasons that they recommend fellow UC students to work and

study at the same time were Experience, and Prepare themselves to be ready, which accounted for 28% and 20% respectively (see Figure 10).

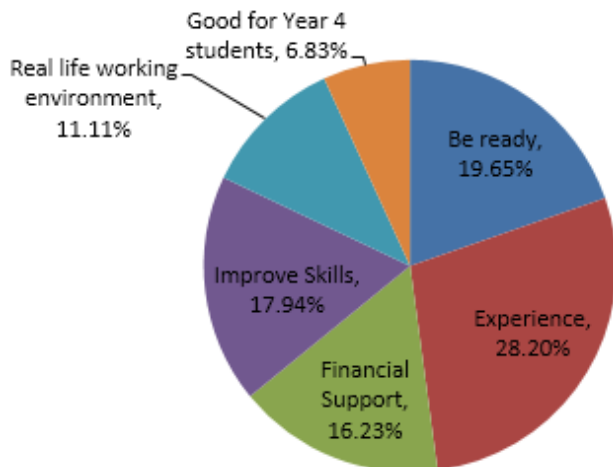


Figure 10: Reasons of Recommendation to work while studying

V. Discussion

The purpose of this research study was to explore the reasons, benefits, and difficulties that UC students have faced during their academic journey. Throughout the analysis, we can see that most of the students in UC work full time (70%). The male respondents have more jobs related to their majors than females.

The ultimate reason was to be financially independent which is similar to the findings that have been done in the Western countries: students earn money to support and keep themselves in school (Robinson, 1999). The benefit that had been gained the most from work while studying was Experience in real working environments (35.6%) which is similar to the previous research that: “Degree-related work and unpaid work experience increase the likelihood of getting a graduate job” (Jewell, 2014).

Additionally, our research findings illustrate that students encountered exhaustion and stress as the biggest obstacles, which are similar to other researchers’ findings as well: Deadlines, limited finances, family issues, time, and other additional responsibilities also stress college students out (Martinez, Ordu, Sala, & McFarlane, 2013).

VI. Conclusion and Recommendations

This research study illustrates that most of the students at UC worked while studying. The reasons that pushed them to work vary from one person to another, but the ultimate reason was to be financial independent so that they can make ends meet for their daily expenses. Working while studying provides both positive and negative impacts. The main benefit was to experience the real working environment and followed by many other benefits. However, through our findings, we can see that students tend to encounter exhaustion and stress more than those who did not work.

After learning the reasons, benefits, and obstacles that had been encountered by 100 UC students, further research should be done on the solution to help them cope with the heavy workloads, stress, distraction, and especially how to manage their time well in order to work and study well simultaneously. Research on how to prioritize work and study should also be conducted to help students. }

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2. Is your job related to your major?

- Yes No

3. Why do you choose to study and work at the same time? (You can choose more than 1)

- To support family To be financially independent
 To improve skills
Others _____

4. Who influences you to work while studying?

- Friend Family
 Acquaintance Myself
 Others _____

5. Do those reasons still motivate you to carry on working and studying?

- Yes No

Positive outcomes

1. What are the benefits that you gain from working while studying? (You can choose more than 1.)

- Learn soft skills Experience in real working environment
 Prepare myself before graduating Earn money
 Others _____

2. Between working and studying, which one do you prioritize?

- Working Studying Both

3. Do you think your current job can help your future career?

- Yes No

4. Is your academic performance better when you work and study at the same time?

- Yes No

5. How much time do you have left after spending your day working and studying?

1 - 2 hours

2 - 3 hours

3 - 4 hours

4 - more hours

Obstacles

1. What are the obstacles that you have met? (You can choose more than 1.)

Distraction (can't focus)

Exhaustion (too tired)

Have no time to spend on school work

Stress

Lateness

Others _____

2. What are the class activities that you miss? (You can choose more than 1.)

Attendant

Class discussion

Group assignment

Others _____

3. Have you ever been so tired to the point that you want to quit?

Yes

No

4. Personally, do you recommend other college students to work and study at the same time?

Yes

No

5. If you choose "Yes" in question 4, please tell us your reasons.

This is the end of the questionnaire.

Thank you so much.

Good luck!