

An Investigation into the Relationship between Academic Study and Holding a Part-Time Job

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ABSTRACT

This research examined the relationship between academic study and having a part-time job for Keele University students. It was conducted to find out whether having a part-time job affects the grades received by students of Keele University in their end of module assessments. This study measures the amount of hours of part-time job and to see whether it negatively affects assessment results. It was hypothesised that students having a part-time job whilst studying at university level can adversely affect the academic performance; affects the grades that a student attains in their end of term module assessments. Twenty undergraduate students from Keele University were recruited for this study. Two of the participants (1 male, 1 female) were selected randomly for interview purposes. The result shows that students who hold a part-time job whilst studying at university does not influence their academic study progression or end of module assessment. It can be concluded that studying while having a part-time job does not have a great impact on students' academic performance or module results. This study shows that by prioritising their coursework and managing their time properly should allow enough time for their university related responsibilities, hence, having a part-time job does not contribute to negative impact on their studies.

Keywords: part-time job, assessment, university, time-management

INTRODUCTION

This research study was interested in examining the correlation between academic study and having a part-time job for Keele University students. The aim of the project was to investigate whether having a part-time job affects the grades received by students of Keele University in their end of module assessments. This study was carried out to measure the amount of hours of part-time job and to see whether it negatively affect assessment results. Typically, University students with a part-time job feel that their end of module assessment grades is worse than full-time students. There are many factors that can contribute to this issue. For example, lack of time-management skills in dividing time between academic study and work, and concentration problem during lecture and tutorial; due to fatigue from working a part-time job. In this research, it was hypothesised that students holding a part-time job that work more than 11 hours in a week will feel their academic studies are adversely affected. It is believed that final year students (level III or IV) will feel their part –time job affect their study progression more than students in level one or two.

In reflection, I have chosen research question on “An investigation into the relationship between academic study and holding a part-time job” because I consider myself as working part-time as I am in duty bound with the British Army (UOTC/ part of Territorial Army), and I feel that my end of module assessment grades for Year II (2012-13, Semester I) have gone down since I got the Officer Cadet (2012-13) training at the beginning of previous academic

year. My UOTC training required me to attend every Wednesday (15:00 – 21:30) for 6.5 hours in a week and alternate Weekends for 43 hours in an alternate week (Friday 5 hours, Saturday 24 hours & Sunday 14 hours). Therefore, my Officer Cadet training required me to attend 6.5 hours in a week (Wednesday) and an alternate 49.5 hours (43 hours during Weekends + 6.5 hours for Wednesday) for the following week. The training (2012-2013) lasted for 9 training weekends (alternately) during term time (October – March). I noticed that my academic progression has been getting worse when comparing with my previous academic year (2011-12).

I believe that this is a case of time-management, as it is not easy to handle academic work and part-time job at the same time. Of particular interest and complexity to this issue, the level of study of a student, whether they are in undergraduate or postgraduate level is also one of the factors in which whether a part-time job can affect their end of module grades. Most students who hold a part-time job work during anti-social hours, and since they work night shifts it can impacts on their psychological well-being; for example, less time to socialise and mess up sleeping pattern. Thus, students who were required to work anti-social hours in their part-time job would not only have less time spend for reading, studying and preparation for next class, but also have less time for doing their assignment. I personally believed that the amount of hours a student works a week is a deciding factor in whether their part-time job affects their end of term module assessment grades

This research study hypothesised that students having a part-time job whilst studying at university level can adversely affect the academic performance; affects the grades that a student attains in their end of term module assessments. I personally believe that male students' grades will be more affected than female students', and that final year students (level III or IV) will feel their part-time job affect more than students in level two, and level two students will feel their part-time job affects more than students in level one. It is believed that as the level of the study increases, the workload level from the university also increases. Furthermore, I believe that postgraduate students will not feel their study progression is affected when having a part-time job. This is possibly because of their maturity in handling of time management between study and part-time job. Postgraduate students may also have less commitment with the university as they have a considerably less packed timetable in which

Previously, there are several studies carried out by other researchers that confirmed with my research hypothesis that term-time employment does have a detrimental effect on students' progression in their assessments. This study was carried out based on the findings of Claire Callender's 2008 paper on 'The impact of term-time employment on higher education students' academic attainment and achievement.' Based on her findings, it was found that students tend to: skip their lectures and tutorials, spend less time on studying, reading and preparing for assignment/ next class, make less use of educational facilities (e.g. library, school resources), and experience the pressure and exhaustion from school's workloads. Callender (2008) claimed that students coming from lower socio-economic status who hold a part-time job are more likely to work long hours in order to support their financial situation. In Callender's study, she also considered qualification on entry to Higher Education. However, in my study it only considered gender and age, but not on participants' qualifications.

Since Keele University is a small university, the percentage of students who hold a part-time job may be skewed. Therefore, the sample of this study is not large enough to be generalise and representative. In addition, this study does not consider the socio-economic status of the students.

METHODS

Participants

A total of twenty (11 males, 9 females) undergraduate students from Keele University were recruited for this study. Two of the participants (1 male, 1 female) were selected randomly for interview purposes. Participants were recruited from those who work part-time under Keele Student Union. Participants consist of local and international students. Some of them were native speakers of English and others spoke English as their second language. The mean age of the participants was 21.6 year (SD = 2.50). It appears to be that 10 of the participants were at the age of 20 years old.

A qualitative design, questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were conducted in this study. Both participants (Participant A & Participant B) were interviewed individually and the interviews lasted for exactly 15:28 and 13:41 minutes, respectively. The interviews were recorded and transcribed in verbatim. Prior to the study, participants were presented with an informed consent for materials to be used for educational and research purposes and they understand that their participation is voluntary. Moreover, participants were readily informed that they could withdraw from the study at any phase, without having to give any reasons. They were well aware that their data will be kept anonymous, and their personal data were guaranteed privacy.

Materials

The materials used for the study were consisting of audio recorder, consent form, debriefing form and questionnaire. Both consent form and debriefing form were being presented to all the participants to ensure they understand about the study and as part of ethics purposes. Both of speakers' statements after being transcribed were about 2000 words (4 pages). In addition, participants were presented with a questionnaire based on a Likert scale (10 questions and another 7 questions) as well as five open-ended questions. The rating scale ranged from 1 to 5 (from strongly disagree to strongly agree response).

Design

The study was conducted to some of Keele University students who hold a part-time job. It was predicted that participants who hold a part-time job while at University would feel their study progression is affected due to their part-time job.

Procedure

The study was carried out at Keele University. This research study used both questionnaires and interviews as for the research methods. Questionnaires were used in this study to enable to collect the most amounts of quantitative and qualitative data with the least interference to the participant. The reason why questionnaire was used in this study is because it is an efficient use of time, ensure anonymity of the respondent and the possibility of getting a high return rate and standardised questions. There are two types of questionnaires being asked: rating scale and open-ended questions. The questionnaires were mainly asking about issue of time-management, part-time job hinders the focus on academic study and positive side from having a part-time job (developing skills acquired). The questions between 1-10 required participants to response by giving ratings from 1-5 (*Strongly disagree – Strongly agree*), in which it was designed to measure the association between study and part-time job. The questions were designed in the form of the higher the mark means the more balance of a student's skills in handling both study and part-time job. This can be seen that the higher response would mean having a part-time job can contribute to positive impact on their study. However, there is an exception for question number 3 and 4 in which it was reversely

designed; the higher the mark would mean a student put a high priority on his/her part-time job over his/her study. This can be seen that the higher response would mean having a part-time job can negatively affect their assessment results. The second research method used was semi-structured interviews because “it is very flexible technique, suited to a wide range of research purposes” (Drever, 2003). The reasons for the use of interviews as part of the research methods is because it helped to gather high quality information, and allow the researcher to elaborate on certain points they wished to answer. Additionally, it also helps to gather factual information about people’s circumstances as this study was interested to look at people’s personal opinion of whether the participants believe their end of module assessment grades have been affected by their part-time job. According to Drever (2003), it is not easy to administer this study with the use of interviews because it is not easy to cover large sample of population, as it is time-consuming.

Prior to presenting the questionnaire or conducting an interview, participants were fully debriefed on the purpose and nature of the study. It had been explained to them that the research was part of EDU-20020 coursework. Furthermore, the process of recruiting participants who hold a part-time job while being at university is easily managed. Some of them were approached while they were at work on campus and some of them were being approached through online method (Facebook) in order to collect the data (questionnaire).

Analytic Process

The themes for the interviews were mainly on *time-management between their academic study and having a part-time job, and attendance, developing skills acquired from a part-time job, reason for earnings, and part-time job hinders the focus of study.*

Initially, it involved in-depth reading of the interview scripts and listening to the audio clips of the interview a number of times for familiarisation, and identification of relevant information by taking notes and coding ideas; extracting the meaning behind the speech.

Second phase begins with the identification of initial codes from the completed data. The identified codes were significant as it helps to look for patterns and ideas from the data. After engaging with the data, organisation and categorisation of the data were put into groups of recurring and similar information. This is where all information have been successfully coded and organised across the data set.

In the third phase, all extracted data that has been coded were compared between interview Transcript A and Transcript B, and then were categorised into relevant main themes and sub-themes.

During phase four, this is when reviewing of the selected main themes involved. Themes and sub-themes underwent further refinement to ensure the clarity of descriptions has been made. The refinement process was done by rereading all the collated extracts for each theme, in order to ensure they appear in a coherent pattern. Upon successfully creating a coherent pattern, the identified list of themes was finally categorised into several main themes.

In stage five, this is when the themes were formed and defined; defining the meaning behind each theme and making an association with its sub-themes. The titles for the main themes that will be covered in this study are *time-management between their academic study and having a part-time job, and attendance, developing skills acquired from a part-time job, reason for earnings, and part-time job hinders the focus of study.* Thereafter, relevant quotations from each transcript were analysed according to a particular theme. Then, all analyses were compiled and edited.

RESULTS

Twenty sets of data from Keele University students (4 level I; 9 level II; 6 level III; 1 postgraduate level) who took part in this study were collected for the use of analysis. Raw data were presented in the form of tables and figures generated via MS Excel. Table 1 presents the mean and standard deviations for male and female students who hold a part-time job whilst studying at university level.

Table 1. The mean and standard deviations for male and female students at Keele University who have a part-time job

	Male	Female
No of Participants	11	9
Mean	21.45	21.78
Standard Deviation	2.31	2.70

Data Analysis

The Doughnut chart below shows the amount of working hours that students work in a week.

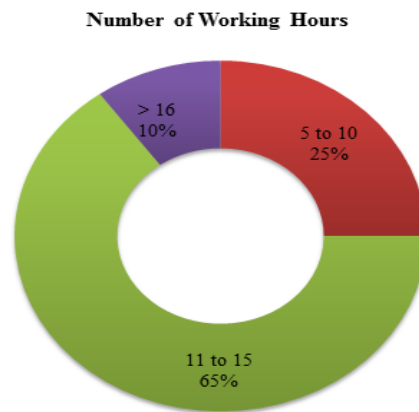


Figure 1. Represents number of working hours in a week

The result shows that majority of students work between 11 to 15 hours in a week for their part-time job. From the results, it can be demonstrated that Keele students preferred to work between the range of 11 to 15 hours.

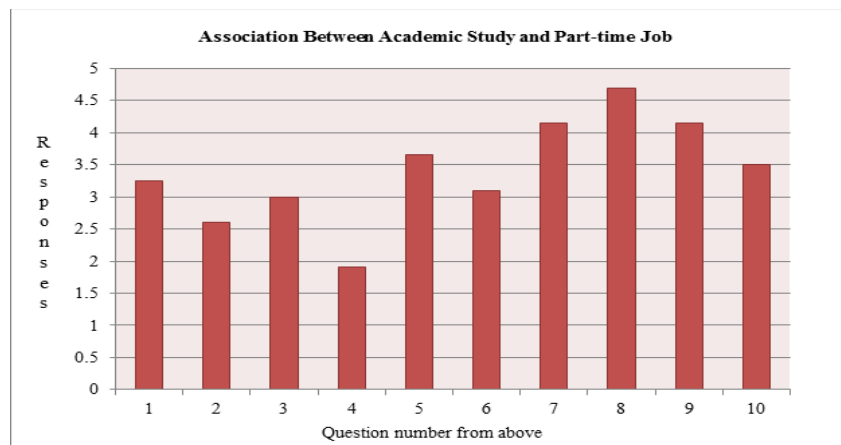


Figure 2. Response made from the questionnaires

The bar chart above shows the response made by all the participants who took part in the questionnaires. The questions can be identified from Appendix III. The questions number 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 were aimed to measure the time-management skills of a student in handling both study and a part-time job. Higher response will indicate by having a part-time job can contribute to positive impacts on a student's academic progression. Nevertheless, questions number 3 and 4 were intended to measure how by having a part-time job can negatively affects a student's academic study. From the bar chart, it can be interpreted that most of the students were able to submit assignments on time although they have a part-time job.

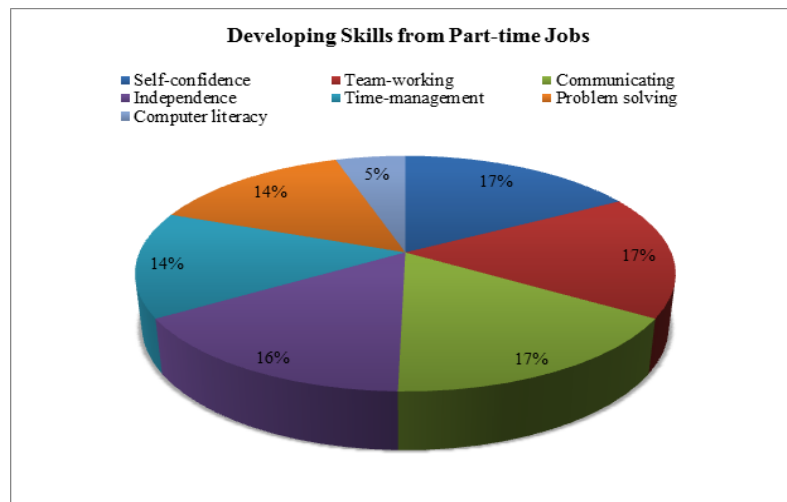


Figure 3. Development skills acquired from part-time job

The pie chart shows that students learnt essential development skills from having a part-time job. The finding shows that the three top skills that they benefit from having a part-time job are such as self-confidence skills, teamwork and communication skills. However, on average only 1.35 of score for computer literacy skills reported. This is mainly because most of the students do not deal with office work since most of them are dealing with people.

REPORT FINDINGS

Questionnaire Analysis

Only two participants think that having a part-time job has adversely affected their assessment results, where one of the participants stated “I find it very difficult. I have to put more effort in to fitting my studies, whereas my friends have more free time. It takes more discipline to study and work at the same time.” Both participants also felt that their part-time job hinders their focus during lecture and seminar. This may be a factor from psychological problems (e.g exhaustion, stress & etc). On the other hand, 10 participants strongly agree (response between 4 & 5) that having a part-time job can contribute to positive impact on their study progression. This is probably because they are better able to manage their time well, where most of them mentioned that the key to successful in coping with both study and having a part-time job is to plan their schedule in advance and stay organised

According to Curtis and Williams (2002), “many students have been working since part-time whilst studying since their GCSE days, and sometimes earlier.” This perspective is reinforced in this research’s pilot study, as two participants stated that they are unsure as to whether their grades have been affected as a result from their part-time job. This research have not taken into account how long the participants have held their part-time jobs for, but in light of

Curtis and Williams' findings, it would be beneficial to find out the length of time a student has held their part-time job because it is believed that students who have the experience of juggling between work and study are better at handling their university life.

In response to question 11, most students took a part-time job as a reason to support their financial situation in order to pay rent and general living expenses. Others reported that they just want to fill up their free time as well as to take up some experience before full-time employment. Question 12 intended to assess how a student could handle with their time-management; strategies included: do work before shift starts, plan a timetable in advance, prioritising task and try to be disciplined. One of the participants commented, "*Effective time-management and prioritising workloads is the key to managing both study demands and job commitments.*"

Question 13 was asking about the advantages from having a part-time job, and most of the students acquired some of the skills as mentioned in Question 16; with the addition of learning *how to deal with people, how to manage money, learn to multi-task and putting priorities*. In Question 14, it was designed to investigate the views of people about students having a part-time job. 9 participants agreed that by having a part-time job it can help to develop the skills to be more independent, and one of them remarked, "*Students should have part-time jobs as it gives them the perspective needed in life as to what the basic working environment is. It allows for the development of basic interpersonal skills (e.g. independent) in a more formal environment that would not be developed solely at uni.*"

Interview Analysis

The themes for the interviews were mainly on *how students who work a part-time job deal with time-management between their academic study and having a part-time job, and developing skills acquired from a part-time job*. Both Participants A and Participants B took part in the interview (refer to Appendix VI).

Time-Management and Attendance

In the interview, Participant A (Bar staff) concluded that she worked about 10 hours in a week, whereas Participant B (steward) worked 5 hours more than Participant A. When asked about how they could deal with both of their time between work and study, Participant A (line 12) and Participant B (line 8) shared the same approaches that they both could still manage their time since they work from 21:00 – 04:00, and they always try to complete their coursework before their shift starts. In assessing their attendance for lecture and seminar, Participant A has skipped some of the lecture because of personal problem but not because of the part-time job. Nevertheless, Participant A (line 40) attended all seminars, as she believes that she learned more from seminar as compared to lecture. As for Participant B, it can be extracted from his script (line 40) saying "*slightly slack the next morning after a late night at work. Overall, I don't think I do about impact on marks.*" which basically means despite he finds it hard to attend morning classes, he still can get a satisfying mark on all his work and essays. He does not agree that working a part-time job has a huge impact on university grades.

Development Skills

Participant A (line 26) managed to pick up the communication skill, working as a team, as well as enhance her self-confidence. While, Participant B (line 52) agreed that the communication skill learnt would be beneficial for his future career.

Reason for Earnings

Money is the main reason for both participants. Participant A (line 32) uses money from her part-time job on personal items, whereas Participant B (line 34) uses them for tuition fees as well as general living expenses.

Part-Time Job Hinders the Focus of Study

Both participants strongly disagreed with that statement. Participant A (line 34) believes that being able to manage their own time properly is the key to stay focus, and she added that she still received the same grades as before she have the part-time job. On the one hand, Participant B (line 58) has no doubt that he would spend more time on study as compared to a part time job.

DISCUSSION

This research's hypothesis does not support the study of Claire Callender (2008). With referring to this study's hypothesis and results revealed, it can be explained that a student who hold a part-time job whilst studying at university does not influence their academic study progression or end of module assessment.

To evaluate the methodology of this research, there were both strength and limitation to it. The strengths of this research's methodology are: it provides a powerful test since this research is using questionnaires and interviews, it provides tight investigation control since it only focusing on students having a part-time job, and it is very practical to administer. However, the limitations to it are such that: the study is time-consuming to carry out, the study is less engaging for the participants, and the study is a bit biased to the participants as only two participants were selected randomly for the interview purposes. Overall, the sampling size of participants was too small to be generalised to the whole population of Keele University's students with a part-time job. In addition, the validity of this research can be nearly guaranteed by taking an equal ratio distribution between two sexes.

It is concluded that studying while having a part-time job does not have a great impact on students' academic performance or module results. This study shows that by prioritising their coursework and managing their time properly should allow enough time for their university related responsibilities, hence, having a part-time job does not contribute to negative impact on their studies.

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