

# Balancing Work and Study: Academic Resilience Among Working Students in a State College

Jocelyn C. Amparo<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Rizal Memorial Colleges

Publication Date: 2025/07/18

**Abstract:** This study employed a phenomenological approach to explore the lived experiences of working students at a state college as they navigated their academic and job responsibilities. Twelve students from the Southern Philippines Agri-Business and Marine and Aquatic School of Technology (SPAMAST) participated in the study. The thematic analysis of their narratives revealed two primary challenges: time management struggles and financial pressure. Despite these obstacles, the students demonstrated impressive resilience, meticulously organizing their schedules, studying whenever they could, and frequently multitasking to stay on track. However, the demands of juggling work and school often resulted in elevated levels of stress, anxiety, and physical fatigue. In numerous instances, the time dedicated to their jobs adversely impacted their academic performance and limited their engagement with their studies. Their coping strategies, such as observing strict time management and scheduling and adopting opportunistic studying and multitasking, showcased a strong determination to succeed, even when faced with systemic barriers. To alleviate these challenges, the study recommends implementing more flexible learning options, such as hybrid classes and recorded lectures, alongside expanded financial aid programs. Ultimately, the findings highlight the necessity for institutional reforms that extend beyond relying solely on students' personal resilience, by establishing systems that truly support their endeavors, state colleges can facilitate a more manageable and less overwhelming work-study balance.

**Keywords:** *Balancing Work and Study, Academic Resilience, Working Students, State College.*

**How to Cite:** Jocelyn C. Amparo (2025) Balancing Work and Study: Academic Resilience Among Working Students in a State College. *International Journal of Innovative Science and Research Technology*, 10(7), 1152-1155. <https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/25jul752>

## I. INTRODUCTION

Students in state colleges who work while studying often encounter tough challenges as they try to manage both school and job responsibilities. Balancing tasks like attending classes, doing homework, and studying for exams with the demands of their jobs can take a serious toll—both physically and mentally. With limited time and financial resources, it becomes even more difficult for these students to perform well in either area. Their situation underscores the level of academic resilience needed to handle the pressures of being both a student and a worker. This study centers on the real-life experiences of these students and how they cope with such a demanding setup.

On a global scale, combining work with study has become a common reality for many students. As noted by Alarilla (2024), the World Bank's Global Findex database shows that a significant number of students around the world take on jobs to help pay for their education and daily needs. However, the challenge of maintaining this balance often contributes to

higher dropout rates, revealing the complex difficulties faced by working students across the globe.

Around the world, students choose to work while studying for a variety of reasons. In Malaysia, for example, Tumin et al. (2020), citing Metcalf (2003) and Watts and Pickering (2000), explained that rising education costs, reduced scholarship opportunities, and low household incomes are among the main factors pushing students to find part-time jobs. These financial pressures not only lead to a growing number of students working while in school but also encourage many to take out loans just to continue their education.

In the United States, Zhang, et.al (2019) noted that many full-time college students work alongside their studies due to financial needs, lifestyle maintenance, family obligations, a desire to gain work experience, and academic requirements such as internships. Whether full-time or part-time, working while in college has become a common scenario for American students. Similarly, in Asian countries like China, a considerable number of students are also engaged in part-time

employment, as reported by Nguyen et al. (2024), citing Tam Oi IB and Morrison (2005).

In the Philippines, the same pattern can be observed. Abenoja et al. (2019) emphasized that Filipino students often struggle to keep their jobs while maintaining good academic standing. Many feel pressured to meet work expectations to avoid losing their jobs, while also striving to avoid failing grades in school. Supporting this, Jadia, Rayton, and Limos-Galay (2023) observed that in San Jose City, many working students are involved in the agricultural sector, taking on tasks such as helping with farm work, family businesses, or household chores. Unfortunately, when the demands of both work and school become too overwhelming, some students are forced to drop out.

Meanwhile, Lopio (2022) emphasized that working scholars are resilient individuals who continue to pursue their academic goals despite the demanding realities of balancing work and studies. They are often seen as modern-day heroes, students who, while striving to earn a living, also remain committed to achieving academic success. Their determination is often rooted in financial necessity, especially when their families have limited means to support their education, highlighting the economic pressures that compel them to work while studying.

In Davao, Baja (2024), citing Pregoner et al. (2020), pointed to low family incomes as a key reason many students are forced to take on jobs while enrolled in school. However, the effort to manage both responsibilities can take a toll on their academic performance. The difficulty of maintaining focus on studies while meeting work demands has raised concerns within the Department of Education, especially regarding its potential impact on student retention and completion rates.

In our own state college, many students face financial hardships on a daily basis. Although labeled as state scholars, most of them come from economically challenged households. For these students, their biggest hurdle is meeting their basic needs while staying in school. Unfortunately, institutional support systems for working students are limited, and their unique struggles are often overlooked. This makes them particularly vulnerable to setbacks and, in some cases, dropping out.

This study, therefore, seeks to explore and shed light on the lived experiences of working students in state colleges. It aims to contribute meaningful insights into the academic resilience these students demonstrate as they manage their education amidst financial strain, emotional stress, and physical exhaustion. By highlighting their coping strategies and challenges, this research hopes to influence future policies that support access to higher education, especially for those from low-income backgrounds. Ultimately, the goal is to help bridge educational inequalities, foster a more inclusive academic

environment, and improve the chances of working students completing their college degrees.

## II. METHOD

To investigate the lived experiences and meanings that working students attributed to the challenges of balancing work and study, this study adopted a qualitative phenomenological research design. Phenomenology sought to uncover how participants experienced a particular phenomenon and the meanings they attached to it, aiming to capture unaltered, real-life accounts. The goal was to gain a deep understanding of the participants' lived experiences and perspectives.

This research conducted an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon. In exploring this, the study involved twelve (12) working students from Southern Philippines Agri-Business and Marine and Aquatic School of Technology (SPAMAST). The participants were at least third-year college students. To acquire varied perspectives, the participants were purposively selected from different courses in the college. Regarding the nature of purposive sampling, Nyimbili and Nyimbili (2024) posited that purposive sampling was found in any research paradigm and helped ensure that a quality sample was located without biases, thereby increasing the reliability and trustworthiness of the findings. As a non-probability method, it enabled researchers to select participants with specific characteristics relevant to the study, enhancing the quality and reliability of the collected data.

In-depth interviews served as the primary data collection method for this phenomenological study. These interviews facilitated deep, reflective conversations with fourteen working students enrolled in state colleges, each actively balancing significant work commitments with their academic studies. The use of well-structured, open-ended questions, coupled with active listening and thoughtful probing, enabled participants to share their lived experiences regarding the challenges of juggling coursework, employment schedules, and financial pressures. In support, Observational sessions in relevant campus contexts were conducted to further enrich the data by capturing non-verbal cues, emotional expressions, and behavioral responses that provided additional layers of meaning to the participants' verbal accounts.

In exploring the topic of coping with challenges in balancing study and work among working students, I recognized the significance of my role as the researcher. As the researcher, I systematically coded and categorized the data from these recordings, identifying themes related to time management, resilience, and support systems. Through a detailed analysis, I delved deeper into the complexities of how working students navigated the dual responsibilities of education and work. This approach provided a nuanced interpretation of their challenges and coping mechanisms, contributing valuable insights to understanding this multifaceted phenomenon.

Transcriptions of these conversations were thoroughly reviewed to identify recurring themes and insights related to time management, resilience, and coping mechanisms. This process involved categorizing responses to illuminate patterns and unique strategies employed by participants. By giving careful attention to the nuances of their narratives, I accurately represented the voices of working students. In my study, the analysis of data was grounded in the proven framework of Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis. This method was widely respected for its systematic and rigorous approach, which enabled the identification, coding, and categorization of patterns within qualitative data.

### III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter presents the findings of the study on the challenges and academic resilience of working students in a state college. It includes a detailed analysis of the collected data, outlining the procedures used to identify and categorize emergent themes from in-depth interviews with working student-participants. The discussion explores how these students navigate their dual roles, articulating their struggles in balancing work and study, as well as the coping strategies they employ to maintain academic performance despite financial pressures. Moreover, the insights provide a deeper understanding of the systemic barriers faced by working students, proposing actionable recommendations for educational institutions and policymakers to better support their academic success and well-being. The following are the themes in this study:

#### ➤ *Time Management Struggles*

The narrations of participants reveal that working students experience immense difficulty in effectively managing their time as they juggle academic demands with employment obligations. Participants consistently reported severe time constraints, with many describing exhausting routines that leave little room for adequate rest, often rushing directly from classes to work and then staying up late to complete assignments. Najwa et al. (2023), referencing Oktavia and Nugraha (2013), highlighted the way that balancing work and study simultaneously leads to time conflicts, which in turn disrupts academic involvement. This research reveals that the challenge of prioritizing various responsibilities results in considerable stress, causing some students to miss classes because of rigid work commitments. Students who also have extra responsibilities, such as being single parents, experience even more pressure in managing their time among work, studies, and family obligations.

#### ➤ *Financial Pressures*

Financial pressures force many college students to work while studying, creating a constant struggle to balance income needs with academic demands. In this study, the narrations of participants demonstrated that financial pressures create severe challenges for working students, forcing them to make difficult

sacrifices that compromise both their academic performance and personal wellbeing. Lopio's (2022) investigation into full-time working students revealed the harmful consequences of financial strain, including stress and lower academic achievement, echoing the participants' experiences of exhaustion and compromised education.

#### ➤ *Observe Strict Time Management and Scheduling*

As coping strategy, the participant-working students employed strict time management and scheduling as a critical coping strategy to balance their academic and work responsibilities. Participants demonstrated meticulous planning, using tools like planners, color-coded calendars, and alarms to allocate time for classes, work, assignments, and minimal rest. Many followed rigid daily routines, often sacrificing sleep, leisure, and social activities to adhere to their schedules. Radhamani and Kalaivani (2021) emphasized that for students to achieve academic resilience, they must cultivate organized strategies to manage the dual pressures they face, which corresponds with the participants' utilization of planners and strict schedules to alleviate stress.

#### ➤ *Adopt Opportunistic Studying and Multitasking*

Working students often adopt opportunistic studying and multitasking as survival strategies, squeezing academic tasks into fleeting gaps between work and personal obligations. The study revealed that working students strategically employ opportunistic studying and multitasking as essential coping mechanisms to navigate their dual roles. Participants demonstrated remarkable adaptability by maximizing fragmented time, such as studying during jeepney commutes, utilizing brief breaks between classes, or solving math problems during lulls at work. Majka (2024) pointed out that purposeful planning and adaptable time management are crucial for navigating conflicts between work and study. This aligns with the way participants effectively leverage brief intervals, like commuting or work breaks, to engage in academic activities.

Building on findings of this study, key insights and recommendations were drawn to better support working students such as implementing flexible learning options and expanding financial support systems. The implementation of flexible learning options emerges as a critical recommendation to address the time management struggles faced by working students. Also, expanding financial support was viewed as essential aspect to alleviate the economic burdens that force working students to prioritize income over academics, enabling them to focus on educational success without sacrificing basic needs. Overall, this study carries significant implications for educational institutions, policymakers, and student support services in fostering academic resilience among working students in state college.

**REFERENCES**

- [1]. Abenoja, R., Accion, N., Aguilar, J., Alcasid, M., Amoguis, A., Buraquit, D., Mama, A, Pacete, J & Pame, J. (2019) The Experiences of Working While Studying: A Phenomenological Study of Senior High School Students. <file:///C:/Users/Admin/Downloads/The%20Lived%20Experiences%20of%20UIC%20SHS%20Working%20Students%20A%20Phenomenological%20Study.pdf>
- [2]. Alarilla, R.M. (2024) Inspiring Journeys of Resilience and Success of Working Students: Real Life Stories of overcoming Obstacles. *Southeast Asian Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies*. 4(1). <https://research.cmc.edu.ph/index.php/journals/article/download/146/119/563>
- [3]. Baja, R.A. (2024) Tears of Hope: The Plight of Working Students under TVL-Late Afternoon Program. *European Journal of Education Studies*.11. 5. DO - 10.46827/ejes.v11i5.5291
- [4]. Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101
- [5]. Lopio (2022) Working While Studying The Academic Challenges of Working Scholars. *International Journal of Novel Research and Development* Volume 7, Issue 6. [https://www.academia.edu/download/88111267/WORKING\\_WHILE\\_STUDYING.pdf](https://www.academia.edu/download/88111267/WORKING_WHILE_STUDYING.pdf)
- [6]. Majka, M. (2024) Balancing Work and Studies. <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/balancing-work-studies-marcin-majka-gxfbc/>
- [7]. Najwa, N., Eka, A., Riamanda I., Marty P. (2023) The Relationship between Resilience and Work-Study Conflict in Working Students. *IJIP : Indonesian Journal of Islamic Psychology*. DO - 10.18326/ijip.v5i2.176.
- [8]. Nguyen P-T, To H-T, Tran-Thien G-P, Duong-Vo T-L, Luu K, Nguyen-Thi N-H, Tran-Chi V-L. (2024) The relationship of well-being, academic self-efficacy, and academic major satisfaction among part-time job students: A cross-sectional study. *J Health Soc Sci*. 2024;9(2):214-234. Doi: 10.19204/2024/THRL4.
- [9]. Nyimbili F. and Nyimbili L. (2024) Types of Purposive Sampling Techniques with Their Examples and Application in Qualitative Research Studies, *British Journal of Multidisciplinary and Advanced Studies: English Language, Teaching, Literature, Linguistics & Communication*, 5(1)
- [10]. Radhamani and Kalaivani (2021). Academic Resilience among Students: A Review of Literature. *International Journal of Research and Review*.8(6):360-369 DOI:10.52403/ijrr.20210646.
- [11]. Tumin, T., Faizuddin, A., Mansir, F., Purnomo, H., Aisyah, N.(2020) Working Students in Higher Education: Challenges and Solutions. *AL-HAYAT Journal of Islamic Education* 4(1):79. DOI:10.35723/ajie.v4i1.108
- [12]. Zhang, G. Shao, C. and Johnston, C. (2019) Working Students and Their Academic Performance—A Decision Tree Analysis. *Journal of Higher Education Theory and Practice* Vol. 19(7). <https://articlegateway.com/index.php/JHETP/article/download/2538/2417/4760>