

# Free essay on type of work undertaken

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## **Introduction**

For many students in university, combining paid employment and study has become the norm. Researchers in different fields report an increase in the number of university students working in various firms. This has highlighted the increasing worry in the global significance of this trend. Libby (2012) attributes this to the economic downturn being experienced all over the world. Furthermore, there is an increase in the number of mature students in tertiary institutions (Curtis & Nimmer, 1991).

According to Erhenberg and Sherman (2007), there is an annual 30 percent increase in the number of students engaging in paid employment. The same sentiment is echoed by other researchers who further state that the infection is spreading onto pre- university students (Hellen, 2007; Greenberger & Steinberg, 2009). Currently, the rate is at an all high of 50 percent. Engaging in paid employment has positive benefits in both the financial status of the student and on their academic performance. Therefore, students should be allowed to engage in paid employment with limitations.

The type of work undertaken by these students is mainly of part time basis. This type of work takes place during after school hours and weekends. This is quite common among undergraduates. However, in some instances, day classes are substituted with jobs. School work is done during late evenings and weekends. This type of employment is popular among mature and post graduate students. Usually, these young adults live by themselves and cater for their every need without assistance from family members.

## **Is working a necessity?**

The question on whether university students should engage in paid employment has led to the development of two schools of thought. The proponents insist that paid employment is acceptable citing its myriad of advantages. On the other hand, opponents rely on the overwhelming evidence on the negative effects of such practices. As such, their conclusion is that students should concentrate more on studying and not engaging in paid employment.

One strong evidence supporting paid employment among students is stated by Susan (2013). Basing her study on a national study, she concludes that parents should not pay school fees for children in post secondary institutions. Apparently, students who perform poorly in terms of academics come from families who pay their full tuition fees. She says “ it turns out that students whose educational costs are paid for entirely by their parents, engage in more leisure activities” (Susan, 2013, p. 1). The notion that study time has been replaced with paid employment seems to be wrong. The problem lies in how the money is distributed to those students. Therefore, parents should offer partial support to students on tertiary institutions. This will limit leisure time and regulate the time for studying.

In juggling between work, school, chores and studying, an employed student seems to acquire a lot of other beneficial skills. Cain and Rezida (2011) evaluate some of these benefits. One quite weighty and useful benefit is the acquisition of time management skills. In their study, they found out that employed students could manage their time better because they recognise that this is a limited resource. Nevertheless, unemployed students waited

until the last minute to perform duties. This was the case when it came to studying for examinations or even tackling term papers.

In some instances, earnings of paid employment during studying are used to substantiate for the rising costs of education (Libby, 2012). In developed countries, most of the working students either come from poor families or are international students. Nonetheless, it is not surprising to find students from rich families partaking in paid employment. Even with the government scholarships, some of these students would be unable to get by (Hellen, 2007). This would cause stress which would in turn affect academic performance.

It should also be noted that sometimes, the reason behind students seeking paid employment is not solely on financial need. Factors such as culture, family and upbringing play a decisive role in deciding work and study combination. Some students undertake paid employment because they enjoy the fact that they are employed. They believe that their parents and relatives will start looking at them from a different perspective. They also do not put too much effort in the work and thus tend to be less stressed by this fact. As such, their job does not under any circumstance interfere with their academic performance.

## **Impact of Paid Employment to Students Academic Performance**

Consistent with the findings of most researchers, Cain and Rezida (2011) excessive work load can affect the performance of students negatively.

However, it should be noted that students tend to participate in part time employment. A study done by Hellen (2007) reveals that it is impossible for

university students to find full time employment. Also, most of the students partook in one or two part time jobs. Therefore, the odds of having overload are quite low. The impacts on education and overall university experience are discussed below.

## **Academic Outcomes**

The experience of working has a significantly positive impact in the academic achievement for employed students (Curtis and Nimmer, 1991: Libby, 2012). The ratings on intellectual engagement with tutors, critical thinking skills were quite high for employed students as compared to their non employed counterparts. The same scenario was reported for practical application of skills and team work for practical subjects.

Work seems to enhance critical thinking skills owing to the fact that the brain is always at a stimulated skills. Most of the part time jobs require a lot of thinking and mental calculations. This is an immensely effective way of exercising the brain. As such, these students seem to have almost impeccable critical thinking skills and intellectual capabilities, this improves their academic performance.

Interaction with faculty members is improved for students who engage in paid employment. In their interaction with adults outside the school environment, their self confidence is improved. Working students also learn how to interact with other adults, and this is passed over in the relations with school faculty members. In this way, such students are freer with their lecturers and professors. Such a relationship enables them to ask for clarification in difficult concepts, and this in turn improves their academic performance.

In most instances, this work is course related. This is especially so when it comes to the finalists and post graduate employed students. As Hellen (2007) observes, combining studying and a course related job goes a long way in improving the student's pragmatic perception on education. Such kind of employment will also help the student in deciding their career field. Furthermore, it builds on the practical skills for future work opportunities. Such a student is employable as compared to the one with lesser or no work skills. In this case, work is necessary.

In their exploratory study, Curtis and Nimmer (1991) found out that students who engaged in paid employment tended to have a better self esteem and sense of responsibility. This kind of confidence oozed out in their studies and such students outperformed their non working counterparts. This evidence was especially strong in students who came from poor backgrounds. Having a job enabled them to acquire almost everything material that the non working students have. In this way, they felt like they fitted in the school and they could concentrate on their studies much better.

In their research, Greenberger and Steinberg (2007) found out that students who engage in work while studying are motivated to complete school. These students work extremely hard so that they pass each and every test in order to proceed to the next stage of their post secondary education. This is compounded by the fact that most of them pay for part of their education (Helle, 2007). As a result, they dedicate the minimal free time they have for their studies. In this way, their academic performance is improved significantly.

Nonetheless, Applegate & Daly (2006) while reporting the findings of a

research carried out at the University of Canberra in light of student who work while still pursuing undergraduate degree, assert that working while still in the university has some negative effects on the academic performance of the students who engage in the activity. However, according to the researchers, the negative effects of taking part time jobs during the semester can only be accurately highlighted after they are conclusively compared to the positive effects of the part time jobs on the general development of the student. Also notable is the fact that that some studies, for instance the study by Noble & Dalziel (2000) found out that there was no significant correlation between academic performance and taking up part time jobs during the semester (as cited in Applegate & Daly, 2006).

### **Overall University Experience**

In their research, Curtis and Nimmer (1991) used six thousand students to find out the impact of work on overall college experience. The result was that the perception on university life was similar for students who work and those who do not. Seventy five percent of the students gave this response. The sense of fulfilment is acquired in both instances. In fact, students who combined working and studying tended to be more confident about their capability of securing employment positions in the future.

However, age was a factor in this case. The remaining twenty five percent complained that they felt they had missed on university life due to working. Mostly, these were the young freshmen who had just joined a tertiary institution. Even though this group felt obliged to work in order to meet some of their secondary needs, they would have preferred to spend that time in leisure and social activities. To them, social life in university was the epitome

of the whole experience. Engaging in work was taking up most of this time (Ehrenberg and Sherman, 2007)

## **Primary data**

In a bid to confirm the findings from the review of information from secondary sources regarding working while in college, there was a need to collect primary data. A questionnaire (included in the appendix section of this paper) was provided to thirty students randomly chosen from the school. Due to the sensitivity of information, personal details were avoided. The questionnaire contained five sections. First, it was important to inquire the course the student was enrolled in. Secondly, the age bracket was determined. Student's general feeling on participation in paid employment would give an insight into the answers of this research question.

## **The following table summarises the findings.**

Notably, only three of the 30 respondent students felt that paid employment was interfering with school work. The rest were very okay with working. Only six of them felt that employment was interfering with university life and that they would rather leave paid employment. The younger students seemed to be more affected by undertaking work while in school.

## **Conclusion**

Indubitably, taking part time jobs, is perceivably having no significant effect on the academic performance and university life of student; this findings were consistent with the assertions of most researchers whose ideas were reviewed. Foregone earnings are the main form of opportunity cost in education. Paid employment for students is one way of counteracting the



effects of this cost. The benefits accruing from paid employment are way beyond time and stress of undertaking work while studying. Not only does this improve employability of the student, it also improves their time management and intellectual skills. The academic achievement tends to improve with these skills at hand. When it comes to view of university life, remarkably few students complain on the lack of a social life. This is especially obvious in younger students. Generally, the other students have the same view with the rest of the non working student fraternity. In fact, the feeling is sufficient in working students who claim to have gained both theoretical and practical skill. As a point of departure, I believe that students engaging in paid employment have got more benefits than disadvantages. However, this should be done with caution to avoid burnout.

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Appendix

Questionnaire

- Which course are you enrolled in?
- Which age bracket do you fall in? Please indicate 18-21, 22-25, 26-29 or 30-32?
- Do you participate in any paid employment? Why?
- If yes, how many hours do you take working in a week?
- What time do you go to work?
- Is the work related to your course?
- How many hours do you spend in campus in a week?

- Do you feel that your work is interfering with your academics? If yes explain.
- Do you feel like your work is interfering with your university life? If yes explain.
- How do you balance your work and study schedules?
- If you could, would you rather or not engage in paid employment while in school? Why?