

ROLE OF TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIP IN WORK-STUDY BALANCE OF PART-TIME WORKING UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

By

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Abstract

Many of the undergraduate students in India are combining part-time work with full-time study, driven by financial need, the rise of gig and platform jobs, and the pursuit of early work experience. The effect on academic life depends on how well students manage these competing demands. This research paper examines the teacher-student relationship as a resource that can support the work-study balance of part-time working undergraduates. This paper reviews evidence on student employment and teacher-student interaction, drawing on student involvement theory, academic integration theory, work-study conflict models, the job demands-resources framework, and self-determination theory. This paper adopts a survey research design. Data were collected from 50 part-time working undergraduate students in Tirunelveli District of Tamil Nadu. The Participants were selected through the snowball sampling technique. The collected data were analysed using appropriate statistical techniques to examine the research objective. The findings indicate that TSR supports students in three ways: it reduces work-study conflict by promoting academic clarity and instructional flexibility, enhances academic engagement, and offers emotional and informational support to buffer stress. The paper examines how teacher-student relationships assist part-time working students in balancing their academic and employment responsibilities.

Keywords: *teacher-student relationship, work-study balance, & working undergraduates.*

Introduction

Part-time employment has become an established feature of undergraduate life. Rising living costs, the expansion

of higher education, and the growth of flexible gig and platform work (NITI Aayog, 2022) mean that many Indian students now earn while they learn.

The studies on student employment show that its effects are not uniformly harmful or beneficial. Outcomes depend on the hours worked, the nature of the job, and the student's circumstances (Riggert et al., 2006). Moderate work can provide structure and motivation (Dundes & Marx, 2006), but excessive or poorly timed work can crowd out the time and energy needed for study (Astin, 1984). The central issue for working undergraduates is therefore how well they balance the two roles.

Work-study balance depends on how far the demands of work and study can be managed together. When they cannot, students experience work-school conflict, which is linked to weaker academic performance and less favorable attitudes towards study (Butler, 2007; Markel & Frone, 1998). Most efforts to understand this problem have focused on the student, such as time management or hours worked, or on the job itself. The academic environment in which working students study has received far less attention, and the teacher is its most visible part.

Teachers shape students' academic experience every day. They decide how

clearly expectations are communicated, how assessments are scheduled, how flexible deadlines and attendance rules are, and how approachable they are when a student is struggling. Research consistently shows that positive teacher-student relationships are associated with higher engagement, motivation, and achievement (Cornelius-White, 2007; Roorda et al., 2011). In higher education, respectful and encouraging faculty interaction strengthens students' academic self-concept and motivation (Komarraju et al., 2010).

This study addresses that gap by examining the role of the teacher-student relationship in the work-study balance of part-time working undergraduate students in Tirunelveli district. It aims to show whether supportive relationships with teachers help students manage competing demands. The findings may help teachers, institutions, and policymakers design practices that make it easier for students to earn and learn at the same time.

Rationale of the Study

A significant number of undergraduate students in India engage in part-time

employment, primarily due to financial necessity, and often face challenges in balancing work and academic responsibilities. The teacher-student relationship may serve as a critical support mechanism in this context. Teachers influence the clarity of academic expectations, the flexibility of deadlines, and the degree to which students feel comfortable seeking assistance. For working students, these factors can substantially affect their academic experience. However, the impact of the teacher-student relationship on the coping strategies of working students is rarely addressed in existing discussions. This study investigates the influence of the teacher-student relationship on the work-study balance among part-time undergraduate students in Tirunelveli district. The findings aim to inform teachers about the specific needs of working students and to assist colleges in developing mentoring programs and flexible academic support, enabling students to pursue their education without sacrificing their income.

Objectives of the Study

A research objective is a statement of purpose in which the investigator

plans to conduct a study in the field of reference (Creswell, 2011).

The Objectives of the study are:

1. To find out the significant difference between the teacher-student relationship in work-study balance with regard to gender among part-time working students.
2. To find out the significant difference between the teacher-student relationship in work-study balance with regard to age among part-time working students
3. To find out the significant difference between the teacher-student relationships in work-study balance with regard to the purpose of part-time work among part-time working students.

Hypotheses

According to James E, Greighton, A hypothesis is a tentative supposition or provisional guess that seems to explain the situation under observation (Singh & Bajpai, 2008).

The hypotheses of the study are:

1. There is no significant difference between the teacher-student relationship in work-study balance

with regard to gender among part-time working students.

2. There is no significant difference between the teacher-student relationship in work-study balance with regard to age among part-time working students
3. There is no significant difference between the teacher-student relationship in work-study balance with regard to the purpose of the part-time work among part-time working students.

Methodology

The methodology serves as the blueprint of the research, guiding the researcher in collecting and analysing data in a logical and ethical manner (Creswell, 2014).

The Sample consists of undergraduate students enrolled in arts & science colleges in Tirunelveli District, Tamil Nadu, who are engaged in part-time employment during their course of study. Snowball sampling Technique was used to ensure representation

across different college types and academic disciplines. A total of 50 students were selected for the study, which included approximately equal representation from arts and science colleges. The self-made tool, the Work-Study Balance Scale, was developed by I.Nandhini Suruthi and S.Lenin (2026) and was used to collect data. The WSBS has 21 items distributed across four dimensions; each statement was rated on a five-point scale with options: Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree.

Data Analysis

The investigator used a t-test for two groups of gender and an f-test for more than three groups of age and mode of part-time work. The collected data have been analyzed, and the results are given in the following table.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference between the teacher-student relationship in work-study balance with regard to gender among part-time working students

Table 1. Significant difference between the teacher-student relationship in work-study balance with regard to gender among part-time working students.

Variables	Gender	N	Mean	z-value	p-value
Teacher-Student Relationships	Male	16	22.81	-0.899	0.369 ^{NS}
	Female	34	26.76		
Work-Study Balance	Male	16	25.19	-0.104	0.917 ^{NS}
	Female	34	25.65		

S – Significant at 5% level

NS – Not Significant at 5% level

Table 1. shows that the p-value (0.917) is higher than 0.05; hence, the null hypothesis is accepted. This indicates no significant difference between the teacher-student relationship in work-study balance with regard to gender among part-time working students.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference between the teacher-student relationship in work-study balance with regard to age among part-time working students

Table 2. Significant difference between the teacher-student relationship in work-study balance with regard to age among part-time working students

Variables	Age	N	Mean	Df	z-value	p-value
Teacher-Student Relationships	18	8	20.56	3	2.775	0.428 ^{NS}
	19	7	21.43			
	20	21	25.81			
	21	14	29.89			
Work-Study Balance	18	8	25.75	3	0.336	0.953 ^{NS}
	19	7	22.57			
	20	21	25.93			
	21	14	26.18			

S – Significant at 5% level

NS – Not Significant at 5% level

Table 2. shows that the p-value (0.953) is greater than 0.05; hence, the null hypothesis is accepted. This indicates no significant difference in the teacher-student relationship regarding work-study balance with regard to age among part-time working students.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference between the teacher-student relationship in work-study balance with regard to the purpose of part-time work among part-time working students.

Table 3. Significant difference between the teacher-student relationships in work-study balance with regard to the purpose of part-time work among part-time working students.

Variables	Purpose of part-time work	N	Mean	Df	z-value	p-value
Teacher-Student Relationships	Family Need	17	32.18	2	8.413	0.015 ^S
	Self Need	31	23.16			
	Others	2	5.00			
Work-Study Balance	Family Need	17	26.59	2	5.699	0.58 ^{NS}
	Self Need	31	26.45			
	Others	2	1.50			

S – Significant at 5% level

NS – Not Significant at 5% level

Table 3. shows that the p-value (0.58) for work-study balance is greater than the 0.05 level; hence, the null hypothesis is accepted. This indicates no significant difference in the purpose of part-time work among part-time working students in work-study balance. However, for the dimension of teacher-student relationships, the p-value (0.015) is less than 0.05;

therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. This indicates that there is a significant difference in the teacher-student relationship of part-time working students with regard to the purpose of part-time work.

Findings

Based on the above findings, the investigator concludes that there is no

significant difference between the gender and age of part-time working students regarding teacher-student relationships and work-study balance. There is a significant difference in the teacher-student relationship of part-time working students with regard to the purpose of part-time work.

Recommendations

The recommendations of the study are:

1. Implement faculty development programs focusing on effective communication, mentoring and interpersonal skills to help in the workplace.
2. Encourage positive teacher-student interaction beyond academic instruction.
3. Provide individual guidance and support to students to understand their academic and personal challenges.
4. Organise workshops and activities to enhance teacher-student relationships and promote personal and professional growth.

Conclusion

A supportive teacher-student relationship, defined by approachability, flexibility, academic guidance, and empathy for students' work commitments, enables students to manage dual roles, enhances motivation, and reduces the risk of disengagement or dropout. Balancing work and study requires effective time management, reasonable work hours, and institutional support, such as flexible schedules, counseling, and mentoring. Poor balance can result in fatigue, stress, irregular attendance, and diminished academic performance. In contrast, effective management of work and study allows part-time employment to foster financial independence, responsibility, and practical skills. Higher education institutions and instructors should acknowledge the diverse motivations for students' part-time employment and implement inclusive, student-centered practices that encourage positive teacher-student interactions and support both academic and employment outcomes.

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