

Analysis of The Motives For Working While Studying: A Case Study of Five Students At Megarezky University

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Abstract.

This study analyzes the motives that encourage university students to work while studying, the strategies they employ to manage academic and employment responsibilities, and the perceived effects of working on their academic performance. The study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design involving five students at Megarezky University, Makassar, selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation, while data credibility was strengthened through source and methodological triangulation. The findings indicate that students' decisions to work while studying were primarily motivated by financial needs, the desire to reduce the economic burden on parents, the pursuit of financial independence, the productive use of available time, and the acquisition of work experience. To manage their dual responsibilities, students selected relatively flexible employment, established priorities, arranged work and study schedules, completed academic assignments according to planned schedules, and reduced non-essential activities. Working while studying generated both positive and negative consequences. Positive effects included additional income, greater financial independence, practical experience, and the development of responsibility. However, several students experienced fatigue, reduced study time, difficulty concentrating, declining academic performance, repeated courses, and delayed graduation. The study concludes that working while studying should be understood as a complex process shaped by students' financial circumstances, employment conditions, time-management strategies, and academic commitments.

Keywords: working students; student motivation; time management; academic performance and higher education.

I. INTRODUCTION

Higher education plays an important role in developing human resources and preparing individuals to participate in an increasingly competitive social and economic environment[1],[2]. University education provides students with opportunities to develop intellectual capacity, professional competence, social skills, and future career prospects[3]. However, participation in higher education also involves various financial requirements, including tuition fees, accommodation, transportation, learning materials, food, and other daily expenses. These conditions create different experiences for students depending on their socioeconomic backgrounds and family resources. For some students, continuing higher education requires not only academic commitment but also the ability to generate additional income through employment[4].

One increasingly visible phenomenon in higher education is the practice of working while studying. Students who engage in employment simultaneously occupy two major social roles: they are expected to fulfill academic responsibilities as students while also meeting occupational responsibilities as workers[5]. The combination of these roles creates a particular social situation because students must allocate limited time, energy, and attention between two institutional environments[6],[7]. The phenomenon is not necessarily associated with one particular type of student or occupation[8]. Students may work in formal or informal employment, part-time or relatively flexible occupations, depending on their economic circumstances, skills, social networks, and opportunities available in their surrounding environment[9].

The decision to work while studying is closely associated with the motives underlying individual action[10]. Motive can be understood as an internal drive, desire, or reason that directs individuals toward particular forms of behavior[11]. In the context of student employment, working is not simply an economic activity but may represent a response to financial necessity, family responsibility, personal aspirations, independence, or the desire to obtain practical experience[12]. Previous studies that students may work to obtain income, support their education, assist their parents, achieve economic independence, and acquire experience that cannot always be obtained through classroom learning[13],[14]. Therefore, examining students' motives is important for understanding why they choose to combine two demanding activities simultaneously.

Financial considerations represent one of the most prominent motives identified in the literature and in the present research context. Students may require additional income to pay tuition, accommodation, food, transportation, learning materials, and other living expenses. For students who live away from their families, the financial burden may become more complex because they must independently manage everyday expenditures in addition to academic costs[12]. In such circumstances, employment can function as a mechanism through which students maintain their participation in higher education while reducing dependence on family financial support. In addition to economic motives, working while studying may also be associated with the pursuit of independence and personal development. Students may perceive employment as an opportunity to become financially and emotionally independent from their parents. Work may also provide opportunities to develop communication skills, responsibility, discipline, interpersonal relationships, and practical knowledge. The study identifies independence and experience as important motives among the students studied[15]. Consequently, employment may have a dual meaning for students: it can operate as a strategy for meeting immediate economic needs while simultaneously functioning as a process of personal and social development.

Although employment can provide financial and developmental benefits, combining work and study also creates challenges[16]. Students are required to divide their time between lectures, assignments, examinations, academic discussions, employment schedules, and personal responsibilities. When working hours overlap with academic activities, students may face difficulties attending lectures, completing assignments, participating in campus activities, or preparing adequately for examinations. The study documents an initial observation at Megarezky University in which a working student reported having insufficient time to study and complete assignments, experiencing difficulty concentrating during lectures, and obtaining less satisfactory academic results. These observations demonstrate the practical tension that may emerge between academic and occupational responsibilities.

Time management is a critical dimension in the experience of students who combine academic study with employment[17]. Working students are required to allocate limited time among lectures, assignments, examinations, work schedules, rest, and social activities[18]. Effective time management involves establishing priorities, arranging daily schedules, completing academic tasks within available time, and adjusting work commitments to academic demands. Previous studies indicate that students who work while studying often develop specific strategies to maintain academic participation, particularly by organizing schedules, prioritizing academic responsibilities, and selecting employment with flexible working hours[19],[20]. Thus, time management can be understood as an important mechanism for negotiating the competing demands of education and employment.

Despite the growing body of research on working students, further investigation is needed to understand how different motives, time-management strategies, and academic consequences are interconnected within students' everyday experiences. Existing studies frequently examine these dimensions separately, while fewer qualitative studies explore how students interpret the relationship between their reasons for working, the ways they organize their dual responsibilities, and the consequences they experience in academic life. A qualitative examination can provide deeper insight into the meanings students attach to employment and the strategies they develop to negotiate the simultaneous demands of higher education and work.

The phenomenon is particularly relevant in the context of higher education institutions where students come from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds and have different levels of access to family financial support. In such contexts, employment can become an important strategy for maintaining educational participation while meeting everyday needs. At the same time, differences in occupation, working hours, workplace flexibility, and academic demands may produce different experiences among working students. Examining this phenomenon at Megarezky University in Makassar provides an opportunity to understand how students navigate the intersection of economic needs, employment, and higher education within a specific institutional and social context. Based on these considerations, this study aims to analyze the motives that encourage students to work while studying, examine how they manage academic and employment responsibilities, and explore the perceived consequences of working on their academic performance. The study focuses on five students at Megarezky University and employs a qualitative case-

study approach to obtain an in-depth understanding of their experiences. By connecting motivation, time management, and academic consequences, this study seeks to contribute to the sociological understanding of working students and provide empirical insights into the challenges associated with combining higher education and employment.

II. METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research approach with a case study design to obtain an in-depth understanding of the motives, experiences, and strategies of students who simultaneously undertake higher education and employment[21],[22]. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the study focuses on participants' perspectives, motivations, experiences, and interpretations within their natural social context[23]. The case study design enabled the researcher to examine the phenomenon of working while studying as a contextual and multidimensional social experience rather than as an isolated variable[24]. The study focused specifically on students at Megarezky University who were actively engaged in both academic activities and employment.

Research Setting

The research was conducted at Megarezky University, Makassar, South Sulawesi, Indonesia, located on Antang Raya, Manggala District, Makassar. The research setting was selected because working students were identified across different academic programs and employment contexts. The setting provided an appropriate context for examining how students negotiate academic responsibilities and employment demands within their everyday social environment.

Participants and Sampling

Participants were selected using purposive sampling, with selection based on predetermined characteristics relevant to the research objectives. The primary participants consisted of five active students who simultaneously worked while pursuing their university education. The selection criteria included: (1) being an active university student; (2) being at least in the second semester; (3) having an additional occupation; (4) simultaneously undertaking study and work; (5) having worked for approximately one year or more; and (6) being a student living away from the family. The five primary participants represented different employment contexts, including café work, construction work, laundry services, and homecare. The study also involved supporting informants to provide additional perspectives concerning the academic activities and experiences of working students.

Table 1. Profile of the five working-student cases

<i>Case</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Main job reported</i>	<i>Main motive</i>	<i>Reported academic condition</i>
P1	25	Café employee	Reduce family burden; cover living and academic costs; gain experience	Repeated courses and delayed graduation were reported.
P2	25	Construction worker	Use spare time productively and reduce dependence on parents	Flexible work allowed greater academic prioritization.
P3	27	Laundry work	Meet living expenses while studying away from family	Work and study were adjusted according to available calls/shifts.
P4	30	Homecare worker	Income for tuition/living needs and family support	Delayed graduation, reduced study engagement, and risk of dismissal were reported.
P5	21	Laundry work	Support living costs, tuition, and parents	Academic performance was reported as currently good, although fatigue was substantial.

Source: Compiled from the interview, observation, and informant-profile data; participant names are coded as P1-P5 to avoid inconsistencies in the source document.

Data Sources

The study used primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained directly from participants through interviews and observations concerning their motives for working, employment conditions, time-management practices, academic activities, and perceived consequences of working while studying. Secondary data were obtained from relevant documents, academic literature, and other supporting materials used to contextualize and strengthen the interpretation of the primary findings.

Data Collection

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. The interview process followed a semi-structured interview guide covering participants' employment status, type and duration of work, reasons for working while studying, income-related considerations, academic activities, time-management strategies, experiences of combining work and study, and perceived effects on academic performance. The documentation process was used to complement information obtained through interviews and observations.

Research Instrument

In accordance with the qualitative design, the researcher served as the primary research instrument, supported by an interview guide, observation guidelines, and documentation procedures. The researcher was responsible for determining the research focus, selecting participants, collecting data, assessing the quality of information, analyzing and interpreting the data, and formulating conclusions. The interview guide was organized around the central dimensions of the study, namely motives for working, employment characteristics, management of academic and work responsibilities, experiences while working and studying, and perceived academic consequences.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed through three interconnected stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. During data reduction, interview, observation, and documentary information was selected, organized, and condensed according to the research focus. The relevant information was subsequently displayed descriptively to identify recurring patterns and relationships among motives, time-management strategies, and academic consequences. Conclusions were developed progressively by interpreting the emerging patterns and repeatedly verifying them against the collected evidence.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings are presented and discussed according to the three analytical dimensions of the study: (1) motives for working while studying, (2) strategies for managing academic and employment responsibilities, and (3) academic consequences of combining study and work. This structure follows the research objectives and allows the empirical findings to be interpreted in relation to relevant theoretical and empirical literature. Because this is a qualitative case study, the findings are presented as patterns across the five participants rather than as statistically generalizable proportions.

3.1 Motives for Working While Studying

The findings indicate that students' decisions to work while studying were shaped by multiple and interconnected motives, rather than by a single reason. Across the five cases, the most prominent motives were financial necessity, reducing the economic burden on parents, achieving financial independence, making productive use of available time, and obtaining work experience. The participants were involved in different forms of employment, including café work, construction-related work, laundry services, and homecare. Despite differences in occupational circumstances, employment was generally understood as a means of sustaining everyday life while continuing higher education.

The financial motive emerged as the strongest underlying factor. Several participants described employment as necessary for meeting daily expenses such as food, accommodation, transportation, photocopying, and other educational needs. For students living away from their families, employment became particularly important because financial support from parents could not always cover their living and educational expenses. One participant working in a café explained that employment helped cover accommodation, food, printing, and other academic costs, while also enabling financial assistance to younger siblings. Another participant working on an irregular basis emphasized that, as a student living away from home, employment was necessary to maintain daily living expenses when parental transfers were delayed.

These findings demonstrate that employment functions not merely as a source of additional income, but as a mechanism for maintaining students' participation in higher education. The economic motive is therefore closely connected to educational continuity. For students with limited family financial resources, the ability to earn income can determine whether they are able to meet basic living expenses and continue

their studies. This interpretation is consistent with Ecton, Heinrich, and Carruthers, who found that some students work while enrolled because employment is closely connected to financing college and supporting themselves, although higher work intensity may be associated with weaker educational outcomes[25].

The findings also reveal a strong family-oriented dimension of student employment. Working was not always motivated by individual consumption or personal financial gain; several accounts emphasized the desire to reduce the financial burden on parents. Students perceived employment as a way of contributing to their own educational costs and, in some circumstances, assisting family members. This finding extends the understanding of student employment by demonstrating that economic motivation may be relational: the decision to work is connected to students' perceptions of responsibility toward their families as well as their own material needs.

A further motive was financial independence. Some participants expressed a desire not to depend entirely on their parents for everyday needs or tuition payments. Employment provided an opportunity to exercise greater control over personal financial resources and reduced dependence on family support. This motive indicates that working while studying can also be interpreted as a process of developing individual autonomy. The decision to work therefore combines an instrumental economic dimension with a developmental dimension in which students seek greater responsibility for their own lives.

Another motive identified in the findings was the productive use of available time. One participant explained that employment was undertaken partly because academic obligations had become relatively limited and available time could otherwise be spent without productive activity. Employment was consequently perceived as a way of converting otherwise unoccupied time into an activity that generated income and experience. This finding suggests that students do not necessarily perceive work exclusively as an additional burden; under certain circumstances, employment can be interpreted as a meaningful activity that structures everyday life.

The acquisition of work experience and practical skills constituted another important motive. Participants viewed employment as an opportunity to encounter workplace responsibilities directly and develop competencies that could be useful after graduation. This included learning to interact with others, adapting to workplace demands, becoming more responsible, and developing familiarity with occupational environments. The finding is consistent with the broader literature showing that students may work not only because of financial necessity but also because employment provides practical experience and skills that complement formal education[26],[27].

From a motivational perspective, these findings can be interpreted through a needs-based framework. Financial needs such as food, accommodation, transportation, and educational expenses represent immediate material requirements[28]. Once these needs become pressing, employment can become an instrumental strategy for securing the resources necessary to continue education. At the same time, motives such as independence, competence, and work experience indicate that employment may also address higher-level aspirations. The findings therefore suggest that students' motives operate simultaneously at different levels rather than following a single linear hierarchy. Overall, the first finding demonstrates that working while studying is embedded in students' socioeconomic and relational circumstances. Financial necessity provides the strongest immediate rationale, while independence, productive use of time, and work experience provide additional meanings. Employment is consequently understood by the participants as both a constraint and a resource: it creates additional responsibilities but also provides resources that support everyday life and educational continuity.

3.2 Strategies for Managing Academic and Employment Responsibilities

The second major finding concerns how students manage the competing demands of study and employment. The data indicate that students use several interconnected strategies, particularly selecting flexible employment, establishing priorities, scheduling activities, implementing planned activities, and evaluating their time use. The effectiveness of these strategies varies according to the flexibility and intensity of employment.

The first strategy involves selecting employment that permits academic participation. Participants whose jobs were irregular, based on calls, or relatively flexible had greater opportunities to adjust their work around lectures and academic requirements. By contrast, students with more fixed work schedules

experienced greater difficulty when academic and occupational obligations occurred simultaneously. The type of employment therefore becomes an important structural condition of time management rather than merely an individual preference.

The second strategy is priority setting. Participants generally recognized that academic responsibilities remained the primary purpose of their university participation. This was particularly apparent among students who were completing their final projects or thesis. The supporting academic informant also emphasized that students should select employment that does not excessively interfere with their academic obligations and should maintain study as their principal priority. The third strategy involves scheduling. Students attempted to coordinate lecture schedules, assignments, work activities, and personal needs according to the time available. However, the findings reveal that scheduling was not equally successful for all participants. One participant working in a café reported that the regularity of work made it difficult to allocate time between campus and employment, although the problem became more manageable when academic requirements were concentrated on the final thesis. This illustrates that time management is strongly conditioned by the structure of employment.

The fourth strategy is planned implementation and continuous evaluation. Students did not merely construct schedules but also adjusted their activities when circumstances changed. Evaluation allowed them to identify activities that consumed excessive time and reconsider how work and academic responsibilities should be arranged. The research findings therefore indicate that time management operates as an adaptive process rather than as a fixed schedule.

The findings are consistent with recent research emphasizing planning, prioritization, and control of working hours as important mechanisms for maintaining academic engagement among working students[20]. A recent Indonesian study specifically identified planning, priority setting, time control, use of available time, reduction of working hours, and selection of flexible employment as strategies used by working students to balance academic and occupational responsibilities[29]. Similarly, a 2026 study of working students emphasizes the importance of time management in balancing academic and part-time employment responsibilities.

An important finding is that time management cannot be explained exclusively as an individual skill. The participants' experiences demonstrate that the institutional and occupational environment also shapes their ability to manage time. A student may possess strong intentions to prioritize academic work but still experience conflict when an employer requires attendance at the same time as a lecture. The supporting lecturer reported that working students generally remained active in academic activities, but schedule changes or extended lecture hours could result in students leaving or failing to attend because they needed to report to work.

This finding indicates that work–study balance is a process of role negotiation. Students continuously negotiate expectations from the university, workplace, family, and themselves. When employment is flexible, students have greater opportunities to preserve academic participation. When employment is rigid or economically indispensable, the occupational role can compete more strongly with the student role. Thus, successful time management depends on the interaction between individual planning and the structural conditions surrounding employment.

The study reports that approximately 90% of participants were able to divide their time effectively; however, because the study involved only five primary student participants, this numerical percentage is not retained as an analytical result in this article. Instead, the qualitative evidence is interpreted through differences among the cases. This approach is methodologically more appropriate for a small qualitative case study and avoids presenting a descriptive proportion as though it were a population-level estimate.

3.3 Strategies for Managing Academic and Employment Responsibilities

The third finding demonstrates that working while studying produces both enabling and constraining consequences for students' academic lives. The positive consequences primarily involve financial capacity, independence, practical experience, and the ability to meet everyday needs. The negative consequences include fatigue, reduced study time, divided attention, difficulties in academic participation, repeated courses, declining academic performance, and delayed graduation.

The most immediate positive consequence is financial support. Employment enables students to obtain income while continuing their studies. For some participants, this income was sufficient to contribute to food, accommodation, transportation, and educational expenses. Employment therefore helped students maintain their university participation despite financial constraints. This finding is important because it demonstrates that the relationship between employment and education cannot be interpreted solely through academic performance: employment may simultaneously create the financial conditions that allow students to remain enrolled.

Employment also provides practical and personal benefits. Participants described opportunities to develop experience, responsibility, independence, and familiarity with the workplace. These experiences can complement classroom-based learning by exposing students to real-world social interactions and occupational expectations. Consequently, employment can contribute to forms of learning that are not directly measured through grades or cumulative GPA. However, the negative consequences become more visible when employment begins to compete with academic responsibilities. The findings indicate that fatigue and reduced study time are among the principal challenges. Working students may have less time to read, complete assignments, prepare for examinations, or participate fully in academic activities. Fatigue can also reduce concentration and limit the quality of academic engagement.

One of the clearest examples concerns academic performance. A participant reported that academic results declined after employment became a significant part of daily life and that several courses had to be repeated. The participant also perceived employment as producing a positive financial effect while simultaneously creating a negative effect on academic results. This account illustrates the central tension identified in the study: the same employment activity that provides financial support may also reduce the time and energy available for academic work. Another participant reported that working contributed to delayed academic completion, particularly in relation to the final thesis. The findings therefore suggest that the consequence of employment may not necessarily appear immediately as a decline in grades. In some cases, the more visible consequence is prolonged study duration because students have insufficient time to complete academic requirements[30]. This distinction is important because academic performance encompasses more than GPA; academic progression and timely completion are also relevant indicators.

These findings are broadly consistent with longitudinal evidence from Tennessee. Ecton, Heinrich, and Carruthers found that working while enrolled was associated with fewer attempted credits and a lower likelihood of college completion, with stronger negative associations at higher levels of work intensity[25]. Among students who completed their degrees, working students also tended to take longer to graduate. The pattern is relevant to the present study because several participants experienced delayed academic progress rather than simply an immediate deterioration in academic grades. The findings also correspond with research conducted in Egypt, which reported a slightly negative relationship between working while studying and cumulative GPA, as well as a negative relationship with work-life balance[31]. However, the present qualitative findings should not be interpreted as demonstrating that employment inevitably causes poor academic performance. Recent Indonesian quantitative evidence has reported positive relationships among part-time employment, learning motivation, time management, and academic achievement, illustrating that the relationship can differ according to students' circumstances and the way employment is managed[32].

The apparent differences among studies can be explained partly by work intensity, employment flexibility, time-management capacity, motivation, and institutional context. A student who works occasionally and can adjust work around lectures faces different constraints from a student who works fixed or extended hours. Similarly, students with strong academic self-regulation may respond differently to employment demands than those whose work substantially consumes their available study time. The present findings support this contextual interpretation because the five participants did not experience identical academic consequences. The role of academic work flexibility is particularly important. Participants with more flexible work arrangements could adapt their schedules to academic requirements, whereas participants whose work was more demanding reported greater difficulty attending classes, completing academic tasks, or maintaining consistent study time. The findings therefore indicate that the consequences of student employment are mediated by the conditions under which work is performed rather than by the mere fact that a student is employed.

3.4 Integrated Interpretation of the Findings

Taken together, the three dimensions reveal a dynamic relationship between motivation, time management, and academic consequences. Financial necessity and family responsibility encourage students to enter employment; employment then creates additional demands on their time and energy; students respond through prioritization, scheduling, flexible employment, and activity adjustment; and the effectiveness of these strategies shapes the academic consequences they experience. This sequence is more informative than treating employment itself as either inherently beneficial or inherently detrimental. The findings can therefore be represented through three interconnected processes:

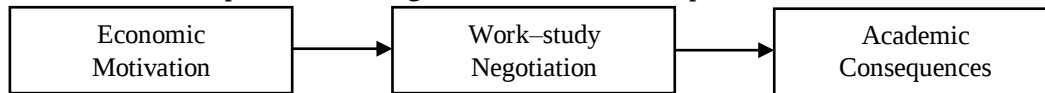


Fig. 1 . 3.4 Integrated Interpretation of the Findings

Economic motivation explains why students enter employment, while time-management strategies explain how they attempt to sustain two simultaneous roles[33]. Academic consequences emerge from the interaction between these factors and the structural conditions of employment[34]. This interpretation is consistent with recent scholarship emphasizing that working students' experiences depend not simply on whether they work, but on work intensity, time management, and the compatibility between employment and academic responsibilities[35].

Importantly, the findings do not support a generalized conclusion that working while studying necessarily reduces academic achievement[36]. Rather, the five cases demonstrate variation in outcomes. Employment may function as an educational support mechanism when it provides resources needed to remain enrolled, but it may become an academic constraint when work consumes excessive time, creates schedule conflicts, or produces substantial physical fatigue. This distinction is central to understanding working students sociologically because their decisions are embedded within economic circumstances, family relationships, institutional expectations, and individual aspirations.

IV. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that students' decisions to work while studying at Universitas Megarezky are primarily driven by economic needs, efforts to reduce parental financial burdens, the pursuit of independence, productive use of time, and the acquisition of work experience. Students manage their dual responsibilities through priority setting, scheduling, planning, implementation, and evaluation, while job flexibility plays an important role in maintaining academic commitments. Working while studying provides financial support, independence, responsibility, and practical experience, but may also create fatigue, reduced study time, divided attention, repeated courses, and delayed graduation. Therefore, the academic consequences of working while studying depend on the interaction between students' motivations, employment conditions, time-management strategies, and commitment to their academic responsibilities.

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