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## Research Article

### “Sisikapin, Aabutin”: Hassles and Drives of Working Students in a State University

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#### ABSTRACT

While previous research highlights the general struggle of working students, a specific gap exists in understanding how institutional support can effectively mitigate role strain within the Philippine state university system. This explored the lived experiences of working students at President Ramon Magsaysay State University, San Marcelino Campus, San Marcelino Zambales. Using a phenomenological qualitative design, it identified both “hassles” (challenges) and “drives” (inspirations). Data were gathered from ten participants through in-depth interviews using an instrument validated by one faculty expert in educational management. Findings revealed that despite facing Time Management and Role Conflicts, students developed a greater sense of resilience and purpose. This study identifies ways the university can provide targeted support to meet students’ diverse needs and foster their persistence.

**Keywords:** *Academic resilience, Dual- role conflict, Working students, Work study balance*

## Introduction

The most common challenges for students of many universities today is working during school time to earn enough money for their education (Sonja et al., 2024). This proves that many young people in this nation had to work hard for them to get their daily needs, they are working while earning a degree. This aligns with the study of Joo et al. (2008), as working

students are prone to have financial problems that’s which is why they apply for jobs to earn money for their education, potentially affecting their academic focus. When a person is worried about survival, it might be difficult to concentrate in class, as they are concerned about basic needs like food and funding for educational expenses. This is aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals 1 (SDG 1), which emphasizes

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escaping the cycle of poverty through education (United Nations, 2025)

This was also connected to "Inclusive Education", where holding a job is recognized as a factor requiring school adjustment and support (UNESCO, 2020). In the study of Kasworm (2026), most working students see themselves as employees more than students, resulting in identity conflict. The feeling of being a stranger in school can make students feel distant from classmates, affecting their overall academic performance. While these global perspectives underscore the psychological and identity-based shifts in student workers, the unique socioeconomic landscape of the Philippines creates specific local pressures that necessitate closer examination.

In the Philippines, the government passed RA 10931 otherwise known as *Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act* (2024), to help with tuition. However this law doesn't cover other student expenses, such as transportation, food and books so students have to work while studying. According to the study of Frigillano et al. (2020), Filipino working students are proven to be tough and capable of handling good academic performance through their resourcefulness and students effective time management. Filipino working students have the determination and the perseverance qualities that helped them to get through every challenges. However in the study of Payusan et al. (2022) it is inevitable for working students to experience less time in studying because they have to balance it with their work -load schedule, if they don't have effective time management there was a possibility of drop in their grades when they have not been given enough time to study.

Workload is one of the challenges of working students, handling too much responsibilities will lead them to suffer. In the study of Pedroso et al. (2022), it stated that work-school balance could make students exhausted and stressed and this will lead to poor academic performance. When working students is exhausted both physically and emotionally, they have tend to have less concentration and less energy in school activities. Also in the study of Sudweste et al. (2024) working student mothers are struggling to handle parenting functions

while having their work as well as their school work- load, the study proved that working student mothers are very much dedicated to not miss either of them, mothers have the discipline to handle these, to comply with the demands of their work, and the demands on school while taking care of their child. In the study of Monalisa et al. (2024) it says that most of the students have experience conflict when there is a sudden demand of school activities that may interrupt their work hours.

The experiences of working students at President Ramon Magsaysay State University may lead the university to craft effective policies for working students. Exploring their challenges and inspirations, represent determination and perseverance of today's Filipino working students. This study will shed the light on the voice of the students who are working while achieving their dreams.

### Theoretical Framework

In analyzing all of the challenges of managing dual-role as a working students, it is useful to use the Role Strain Theory. This theory states that there is difficulty in achieve multiple demands and fulfilling role obligations (Goode, 1960), on the part of working students as they feel the pressure to meet the multiple demands of both the school and their work environment. In the study of Hramiak (2017) found that most of the working students have experience role conflict in their academic performance, their work demands and personal lives other than being a student and employee. The intensity of this role conflict can have an impact to working student psychological well-being and their academic performance at school.

Meanwhile, the Self Determination Theory formulated by Ryan and Deci (2000), explains that humans persist in tasks when their psychological needs are satisfied. This nurtures the intrinsic motivation and the value-driven behaviors. The need to feel autonomous, competent so they can perform a task. This basic needs are inherent in students and this will provide the necessary component for them to become persistent in their given task (Mulaudzi, 2023). The focus of these theories are the mental state of working students, it connects with the internal motivations and drives

of working students that assist students persistence.

Finally in the study of Amparo (2025) it states that financial pressures and time management are one of the biggest factors contributing to working student academic resilience. Despite their tough working schedules, working students continue to possess a high degree of determination and perseverance in finishing their college degree by implementing distinct coping mechanisms in order to adapt to students lifestyle (Moskito et al., 2025). Moreover in the study of Colet et al. (2024), class and work are increasingly overlapping together, this call a need for institution to support working student needs so all of them can achieve academic success in their study.

**Procedures**

This study used a qualitative approach where the study used a phenomenological research design. Phenomenology involves describing the meaning of the concept or phenomenon for individuals (Tarnoki et al. 2019). The data were gathered through in-depth interview that explained the challenges, and inspirations of working students. The data gathered that thematically analyzed. Thematic analysis was used in processing and interpreting the data. The answer of all the participants were transcribed word-for-word. According to Braun et al. (2006), thematic analysis is a qualitative analysis method that will examines, analyzes and will create patterns or the themes within the data gathered in participants of the study. Data are conceptualized to develop themes which will served as the result of the study or the finding of the study, the results will carefully explained and discussed. The responses were categorized, clustered, and

interpret to form themes. All the identified themes will return and checked by the three of the participants to verify its accuracy to their answers.

The study was conducted at President Ramon Magsaysay State University San Marcelino Campus, San Marcelino Zambales. Ten (10) working students were selected as the participants of the study. All participants are regular students at PRMSU San Marcelino Campus, enrolled in different curriculum programs, all of legal age and, currently employed as part-time employee in Fast-Food Chains within the Municipality of San Marcelino, Zambales.

A series of In-depth Interviews was being held to gather data as regards the challenges and inspirations as working students. The interview consisted of two (2) central questions which were validated by one faculty experts in educational management to assure that these questions will address the objectives of the study. These was pilot tested among four (4) working students from Kolehiyo ng Subic who also worked as part-time crew in fast food chains, they were asked to answer the interview questions through Facebook Messenger.

The researchers underwent ethical procedures in gathering the data. It all started in seeking for permission to the Campus Director to conduct the study, after informed consent was sought to the participants before the actual in- depth interview was conducted. The research interviews were transcribed and codes such as WS was assigned to every participants to keep the identity confidential.

**Findings and Discussion**

As illustrated in Table 1, the challenges encountered by working students reveal three primary themes related to their daily struggles.

*Table 1. Challenges Faced by Working Students*

Themes	Sample Verbatim Statements	Description Statements	f(n = 10)
Time Management and Role Conflicts	“Yung paghahati ng oras... sa isang araw madalas hindi kasi sapat para pagsabayin ko yung trabaho tsaka pagpasok sa klase... sobrang hirap.” [WS7]	It highlights the struggle of working students in dividing their limited daily hours between intensive labor in their work and tom their academic responsibilities.	7

Themes	Sample Verbatim Statements	Description Statements	f(n = 10)
Physical and Emotional Exhaustion	"Isa sa kalaban naming bilang isang working student ay yung pagod at puyat... minsan hindi mo pwedeng dalhin sa work yung mga pinagdaanan mo sa buhay kasi kailangan masaya ka lagi, presentable ka dapat. [WS3]"	It describes the overwhelming fatigue from lack of enough sleep because of the 8 hours shift in their fast food job, and the emotional strain of maintaining a professional demeanor at work while carrying a heavy feeling of exhaustion at their personal lives.	5
Workload-Related Academic Challenges	"Yung work ko malaki talaga ang epekto sa academics ko kasi dati achiever ako, tapos ngayon parang to comply na lang, para makapasa na lang." [WS2]"	It reflects the decline in academic focus because of the demand in their work, students move from striving for excellence to merely just meeting minimum requirements at school.	4

**Time Management and Role Conflicts.**

Most of the working students indicated that the limited daily hours is not enough for them to finish their school activities and their workload. As one of the participant said "Bilang isang working student siguro ang kinakaharap ko, yung patong-patong na school activities, tapos yung pag manage ng time mo kasi syempre 8 hours kailangan mong punan yung para sa work lang tapos 8 hours ulit para sa academics naman, kaya naco-compromise na yung tulog" [WS1]. The struggle of working students as one of the participant said "Yung paghahati ng oras... sa isang araw madalas hindi kasi sapat para pagsabayin ko yung trabaho tsaka pagpasok sa klase... sobrang hirap." [WS7], the insufficiency of hours to balance work and class, directly exemplifies Role Strain Theory, where the difficulty in fulfilling multiple role obligations creates significant role strain (Goode, 1960). Nuvianto et al. (2021) stated that over 50% of students encounter difficulties balancing jobs and school due to lack of flexible schedules.

**Physical and Emotional Exhaustion.** The combined hours devoted to school and work, working students experience severe physical and emotional exhaustion. As one of the participants stated: "Ano, yung matinding puyat talaga. Kasi galling akong shift, tapos direktso pasok sa school, minsan habang nagle-lecture si Ma'am, napapapikit na ako sa klase niya pero yung kamay ko nagsusulat pa rin, sa sobrang

pagod" [WS8]. This is supported with the study of Alo et al. (2023) pointed out that insufficient sleep is one of the most common problems for working students, especially those work in stressful jobs like fast food companies or BPOs. While the present study focused on the status of working students at class sleeping in the class hours and continuing the writing even while sleeping is the results of lack of proper sleep of working students.

**Workload-related Academic Challenges.**

Working students have to balance school and work. Students have to compromise their school work quality. As one of the participant said " Yung sa time management ano madalas, actually lagi akong late tsaka yung ano sa pag cramming ng mga cativities, tapos mga task at projects na ipapasa tapos hindi ko naipapasa ng on-time. Minsan minamadali na lang tsaka minsan hindi na maayos" [WS5]. This finding is supported by the study of Toyon (2023), stated that work-related issues negatively impact the academic performance and life issues among working students. This particular finding confirms that "cramming" and "late submission" become one of the survival mechanisms, not a choice, but it is because of collision of academic and their work deadlines.

**Inspirations of Working Students**

As shown in Table 2, the motivations that drive students to persist in their dual-role positions are identified

Table 2. Inspirations of Working Students

Themes	Sample Verbatim Statements	Description Statements	f (n= 10)
Support Family	"Breadwinner na kasi ako, responsibilidad ko na yung sarili at yung pamilya ko na dapat ako ang bubuhay sa kanila" [WS5].	It describes that the working students deep sense of duty and accountability to help their family financially. And the responsibility of being the breadwinner of the family.	6
Fulfill Dreams	"Yung study ko, parang inspirasyon ko makapagtapos kaya tinutuloy ko siya kahit mahirap. Dahil sa panagarap ko kakayanin ko" [WS5].	It represents the personal aspirations to have a better and successful future and the vision of achieving their hardships today.	5
To Earn a Degree	"Syempre yung makapagtapos, makakuha ng Bachelor Degree at makatulong sa maga bayarin sa bahay din" [WS6].	It focuses on the academic milestone of having a degree to have a better future, secured job that will sustain and pay all of the bills.	8

**Support Family.** Family is one of the inspiration and driving factor for the persistence of working students, this pull them, to be more independent at an early stage in their lives, they see their work as a way to support their family financially. As one of the participant said: "Inspirasyon ko siguro yung ano gusto kong makapg build ng future para sa sarili ko. Para na din sa pamilya ko. Parang ngayon sa mga kapatid ko, nabibigay ko yung mga dating hindi ko naman nakukuha, naibibili ko sila ng mga bagay na hindi ko dati kayang bilhin" [WS1]. The findings is align with the study of Arsenal et al. (2025), stated that working students do it primarily to meet finances in terms financial needs to meet the survival needs in life, while the findings of these study indicates that support of providing for one's siblings at the younger stage of life is what pushes for persistence among working students.

**Fulfill Dreams.** To have a secure and successful job in the future pushes working students through days filled with their most challenging situations. As one of the participant said: "Yung pangarap ko na magkaroon ng stable na career, kasi alam ko na pag nakatapos ako hindi na to basta kung anong trabaho, magkakaroon na ako ng profession" [WS10]. This finding is supported by the study of Hordsy et al. (2018) stated that lower-income student is having the pressure to excel driven by better employability and financial security in the future. To have a stable career in the

future is one of the driven factors anchor to students to continue striving regardless of severe role strain.

**To Earn a Degree.** Having a Degree becomes the reward for all of the challenges endured throughout the period of the means. As one the participant said: "Inspirasyon ko lang talaga ay maka-graduate, saying kasi yung pagkakataon, lalo na at free tution na tayo rito, gusto ko lang din mapatunayan sa sarili ko na kahit working ako kaya kong makasabay sa mga regular students" [WS9]. This aligns with Self-Determination Theory, as the intrinsic need for competence and autonomous achievement drives their persistence (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Palomares et al. (2024) found that financial status influences the motivation to graduate.

**Conclusion**

Working students at President Ramon Mag-saysay State University face major challenges that are centered on issues of time management and role conflicts, physical and emotional exhaustion and workload-related academic challenges. From the findings of the study, most of the working students are needed to forego some of their physiological needs such as sleep in order to effectively manage their 16-hour daily routine for work and academics. The physical and mental exhaustion of working students has an effect on the quality of their school work. The working student tough workload

schedules can affect their school performance as the students change from the desire to achieve excellence to mere compliance with requirements.

Despite all of these challenges the inspirations of working students are deeply rooted in their commitment to support their family, to achieve their dreams, and to earn a degree. Most of the working students are breadwinners, finding the drive to persist in their dual-roles from a sense of responsibility to provide for their young siblings and to support the household bills. Furthermore, the vision of stable career and the desire to have a degree serve as a psychological drives anchor to working students preventing them from dropping out and fostering a high level of perseverance, determination and academic resilience.

### Recommendations

PRMSU may create policies that fit working student's lives, such as offering asynchronous learning. Specifically, the university could implement asynchronous learning through a dedicated Learning Management System (LMS) where lecture recordings and materials are accessible 24/7. This allows students to engage with their studies during their off-shift hours. To maintain academic standards, these modules should include rigorous periodic assessments and mandatory virtual consultation hours to ensure student comprehension and academic integrity.

Meanwhile every Colleges may start a "Working Students Registry" to check in on these students regularly, making sure they get the support they need before they hit a breaking point or total burn out. Also, Faculty are encouraged to use a more compassionate teaching style that acknowledges the fatigue students feel, grading should value the real-world skills they are gaining at work alongside their school performance, and Student Services Affairs offices may set up peer support groups and time-management workshops specifically for those living the 16-hour daily grind, helping them feel less alone and more motivated and informed.

Finally, Future researchers may look at the long-term career success of working students compared to those who do not work, helping

the university continue to refine how it honors their incredible perseverance as a working students in their generation.

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