

IMPACT OF PART-TIME EMPLOYMENT ON ANXIETY LEVEL OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the relationship between Part-Time Employment and anxiety levels among university students, with a particular emphasis on gender differences. A total of 80 participants, aged 19 to 25, from the University of Karachi, were recruited through convenience sampling. Anxiety levels were assessed using Beck's Anxiety Inventory (BAI), and the number of hours worked per week was recorded. The results indicated a significant difference in anxiety levels between female ($M = 27.73$, $SD = 6.24$) and male students ($M = 22.50$, $SD = 6.56$), with females reporting higher levels of anxiety. A strong positive correlation ($r = 0.9985$) was found between the number of hours worked and anxiety levels, suggesting that increased work hours are associated with elevated anxiety. These findings support existing literature highlighting the compounded stressors faced by female students, such as societal expectations, caregiving roles, and academic pressures. The study emphasizes the need for targeted interventions, such as flexible work policies and stress management programs, to help students manage their academic and work responsibilities. Limitations of the study include the use of convenience sampling, self-reported data, and the correlational design, which prevent causal conclusions. Future research should utilize longitudinal designs, larger and more diverse samples, and control for additional variables influencing anxiety levels.

I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, part-time employment has become increasingly common among university students due to rising educational costs, financial insecurity, and the desire to gain early work experience. While employment during studies may offer financial independence and skill development, it also introduces additional responsibilities that can place considerable strain on students' mental health. University life itself is characterized by academic pressure, social adjustment, and identity development, making students particularly vulnerable to psychological distress. Among the most frequently reported mental health concerns in higher education is anxiety, which has been shown to negatively affect academic performance, interpersonal relationships, and overall wellbeing. Empirical evidence suggests that balancing academic demands with employment obligations can intensify stress and anxiety among students. Cheng and Yi (2018) reported that students engaged in part-time work experience higher anxiety due to time constraints and increased workload.

Similarly, Aydın and Sürer (2018) found that part-time employment exacerbates academic stress, leading to elevated anxiety levels. These findings indicate that although part-time work may be economically beneficial, it can have adverse psychological consequences when combined with academic responsibilities. Gender differences further complicate the relationship between part-time employment and anxiety. Several studies have

demonstrated that female students report higher anxiety levels than male students when engaged in part-time work (Baker & Rowe, 2020; Butler & Grossman, 2019). This disparity has been attributed to societal expectations, caregiving roles, workplace discrimination, and greater emotional labor experienced by women. Sarid and Wertheim (2020) argue that female students are more susceptible to role strain as they attempt to fulfill multiple roles simultaneously, including student, employee, and family caregiver.

Theoretical frameworks provide additional insight into this phenomenon. Role Strain Theory posits that stress arises when individuals struggle to meet conflicting role demands, such as academic and work responsibilities. The Transactional Model of Stress and Coping emphasizes that anxiety depends not only on external demands but also on individuals' perceptions of their ability to cope. Additionally, Conservation of Resources Theory suggests that stress occurs when essential resources such as time, energy, and emotional capacity are depleted. For working students, prolonged work hours may drain these resources, increasing vulnerability to anxiety. Despite growing research in this area, limited empirical work has focused on university students in Pakistan, particularly examining gender differences in anxiety related to part-time employment. Therefore, the present study aims to investigate the relationship between part-time employment and anxiety among university students, with a specific focus on gender differences. It is hypothesized that increased working hours will be associated with higher anxiety levels and that female students will report significantly greater anxiety than male students.

II. METHOD

Building on the findings of previous studies, it is hypothesized that there is a significant relationship between anxiety levels of university students and part time employment and that as number of hours' increase, so does the anxiety levels. Furthermore, female students are more likely to report elevated anxiety levels due to the compounded pressures of societal expectations, academic demands, and additional caregiving responsibilities. Addressing these challenges through research-based interventions is crucial for improving the mental health and overall success of university students.

Participants

The sample consisted of 80 university students aged between 19 and 25 years, recruited from various academic departments at the University of Karachi through convenience sampling. The sample included an equal number of male and female participants to allow for gender-based comparisons. All participants were enrolled in undergraduate programs and engaged in part-time employment alongside their studies. A correlational research design was employed to examine the relationship between anxiety levels and part-time employment among university students. This design was selected to assess the strength and direction of the association between the number of working hours and anxiety, as well as to explore gender differences in anxiety levels.

Measures

Anxiety was measured using Beck's Anxiety Inventory (BAI), a widely used self-report instrument consisting of 21 items assessing common symptoms of anxiety. Participants rated each symptom on a scale reflecting the severity of anxiety experienced. The BAI has demonstrated strong reliability and validity in previous research. In addition to the BAI, participants reported the number of hours they worked per week in their part-time employment.

Procedure

Participants were recruited from different departments within the University of Karachi after obtaining informed consent. They were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. The Beck Anxiety Inventory was administered individually, and participants were asked to report their weekly working hours. After data collection, statistical analyses were conducted using Pearson's correlation coefficient to examine the relationship between anxiety levels and working hours. Independent samples t-tests were used to compare anxiety levels between male and female students.

III. RESULTS

Table I: Mean and Standard Deviation and T Test of gender difference in Anxiety level

Variables	M	SD	t(78)	p
Men	22.52	6.55	3.84	.001
Women	27.72	6.23		

The results revealed a significant gender difference in anxiety levels among university students engaged in part-time employment. Female students reported higher anxiety levels (M = 27.73, SD = 6.24) compared to male students (M = 22.50, SD = 6.56). An independent samples t-test indicated that this difference was statistically significant, $t(78) = 3.84$, $p = .001$, confirming that female students experienced greater anxiety than their male counterparts.

Table II: Correlation Coefficient between Anxiety Level and Number of Working Hours

Variables	1	2
1. Anxiety Level	--	.99*
2. Working Hours		--

* $p < .001$

Furthermore, Pearson’s correlation analysis revealed a very strong positive correlation between the number of working hours per week and anxiety levels, $r = 0.9985$, $p < .001$. This finding indicates that as working hours increased, anxiety levels also increased substantially. The strength of this correlation suggests that extended work commitments may be a major contributor to anxiety among university students. Together, these findings support the study’s hypotheses and highlight the significant role of part-time employment and gender in shaping anxiety experiences among students.

IV. DISCUSSION

The present study examined the relationship between part-time employment and anxiety among university students, with particular emphasis on gender differences. The findings demonstrate that increased working hours are strongly associated with higher anxiety levels, supporting previous research indicating that excessive work commitments interfere with students’ academic routines, sleep patterns, and coping resources (Darby, 2022; Güngör & Aydın, 2019). These results align with the Conservation of Resources Theory, which suggests that prolonged work demands deplete essential psychological resources, thereby increasing anxiety. Consistent with earlier studies, female students in this sample reported significantly higher anxiety levels than male students (Butler & Grossman, 2019; Baker & Rowe, 2020). This finding may be explained through Role Strain Theory, as female students often face additional societal expectations and caregiving responsibilities alongside academic and employment demands. The cumulative burden of these roles may intensify stress and emotional exhaustion, resulting in heightened anxiety.

The strong correlation observed between working hours and anxiety underscores the importance of workload management for student wellbeing. While part-time employment can alleviate financial stress, excessive working hours may negate these benefits by increasing psychological distress (Robotham & Julian, 2006). Universities and employers should therefore consider implementing flexible work schedules, mental health support services, and time-management interventions to support working students. Despite its contributions, the study has several limitations. The use of convenience sampling and a single-institution sample limits generalizability. Additionally, the correlational design precludes causal conclusions, and reliance on self-report measures may introduce response bias. Future research should employ longitudinal designs, larger and more diverse samples, and include additional variables such as academic stress, social support, and financial strain.

V. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the study provides strong evidence that part-time employment is significantly associated with increased anxiety among university students, particularly females. Addressing these challenges through targeted institutional and policy-level interventions is essential to promote student mental health and academic success. The findings of this study have important implications for universities, policymakers, and employers who engage university students in part-time work. The strong association between working hours and anxiety levels highlights the need for institutions to recognize part-time employment as a potential mental health risk factor, particularly for female students. Universities should consider developing targeted support services such as counseling, stress management programs, and time-management workshops specifically designed for working students. Additionally, academic institutions and employers can collaborate to promote flexible work schedules that allow students to balance academic demands with employment responsibilities more effectively. At a policy level, these findings emphasize the importance of integrating student mental health considerations into employment and educational policies to foster both academic success and psychological wellbeing among university students.

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