A Qualitative Investigation of Time Management Interventions for Working Students in the Philippines to Balance Academics and Work

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A B S T R A C T

Time management has been the problem of students most especially for those who work at the same time, where they are loaded with responsibilities needed to be accomplished both in school and in their workplace. This descriptive-qualitative research study aims to describe the time management interventions of working students to balance academics and work. Six (6) working students from a public state university were selected though purposeful sampling. To gather data, a semi-structured written interview guide was utilized and administered through online platform. Likewise, thematic approach was used for data analysis. This study reveals two (2) significant theme such as (1) internal efforts and (2) external environment adaptations and four (4) meaningful categories emerged such as (1) development of organized approaches and (2) reduction of potential barriers. In addition, they also adapt from their external environment, wherein they (3) promote workplace flexibility and lastly (4) practice effective designation. Thus, the demand in both school and workplace made way for the working students to have time management interventions in their workplace to successfully accomplish their tasks and to avoid procrastination.

Keywords: Time Management, Interventions, Working Student

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, people are busier than ever, and time serves as a valuable resource for individuals to accomplish their daily tasks (Bhattacharya, Sarker, and Durud, 2022). Every person's time is necessary in their lives to create their work, and it can be manipulated to boost output or expand service offerings by requiring people to work harder, longer, or in accordance with the needs of demand (Rubery, Ward, Grimshaw, and Beynon, 2005). On the other hand, time is essential for our present and future plans, as well as for how we behave in the present moment, wherein it acts as a compass for whether to continue the things people do or not (Sainz & Ferrrero, 2019). It makes people decide to strategically divide it to focus on the things which are more important to finish first and not (Desmyter and De Raedt, 2012). As a result, time management of working students is seen as a crucial element for working effectively on their tasks and responsibilities (Ugidos, 2019). In addition, working students can benefit a lot from effective time management interventions (Trentepohl, Waldeyer, Fleischer, Roelle, Leutner, and Wirth, 2022).

Furthermore, the restoration of face-to-face classes once again challenged the ability of the working students to manage their time wisely (Stoain, Farcasiu, and Dragomir, 2022). The switch back to full time face-to-face classes led working students to experience new difficulties (Gallardo-Lolandes Alcas-Zapata, Flores, Ocaña-Fernandez, 2020). On the other hand, if a working student does not know how to calculate his time, he will experience a series of negative conditions (Requinto and Muico, 2022).

Students who are also working have obligations and obstacles in different aspects of their lives that are needed to balance by using interventions (Chansaengsee, 2017). Working students may feel overburdened by the demands of balancing these aspects that are important to succeed and fulfill their duties (Winston, Plessis, and Solomon, 2022). Working students are not forced to get work while studying. As a result, working students frequently had to balance their dual responsibilities, and the pandemic pushed them to work (Payusan, Arrofo, Cadilla, and Gaco, 2022). In contrast, working students must understand how to manage the time provided to them in order to work competently (Miranda, Sumalinog, Flores, Mabret, Layos, & Tamon, 2020). Also, to perform better at their job, every working student should look into their time management carefully to avoid neglection of responsibilities (Antipolo, 2021).

Moreover, to perform well and respond to the demands of the working environment, working students must be able to efficiently manage the time that is given to them (Stoain, Farcasiu,and Dragomir, 2022). Besides, they are bombarded with new work responsibilities every day that may lead them to not know how to manage their time well and become incompetent (Barinua & Deinma, 2022). To describe the time management interventions of working students to balance academics and work, this study utilized Self-Regulation Theory, which suggest that individuals who practice self-discipline are better equipped to control their thoughts and behavior, leading to the achievement of desired outcomes in both work and school, despite having limited time (Williams, 2022). Likewise, Social Support Theory, supports this study to understand how negative effects of stressful situations in the workplace can be mitigated. (Butler, 2017).

METHODS

Research Design

The research study employed a descriptive-qualitative research design. This method aims to systematically obtain detailed information from the perspective of respondents in order to grasp a deeper understanding of a topic (Wick & Gumbenger 2020) on the time management interventions of working students.

Informants

The informants of this study were (6) working students who were identified using purposeful sampling with the following inclusion criteria: a) a second-year students taking up education at any public university; b) enrolled in the academic year 2022-2023; c) a working student, during the conduct of this study; and d) work at least five (5) hours a day.

Instrument

The instrument used in the study was a duly-validated researcher-made written interview guide that was duly-validated by three (3) experts in qualitative research. This instrument was pilot-tested among three (3) non-participants of this study. The interview guide questions were open-ended quests that revolved around the time management interventions of working students in an electronic format through Google Forms.

Data Collection

The questionnaire was distributed online through Facebook Messenger and Email. After 3thirty (30) days, the responses of the informants were downloaded and copied by the researchers, and combined into a single file for analysis. Also, no one other than the researchers has access to the information provided by the informants. Thus, confidentiality was maintained and pseudonyms were used for privacy. In coordination with the Office of Student Affairs (OSA), working students were identified. A letter of consent was also sent to the chosen informants to formally ask for their participation in the study.

Data Analysis

The gathered data was interpreted using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic approach. It provides a theoretically flexible approach to analyzing qualitative data (Morgan, 2022). It entails a thorough analysis of the informants' answers and discovering patterns in the data to extract themes. (Dovetail, 2023). After which, the researchers encapsulated all the data to answer the research questions through the themes were formulated

Table 1. Informants of the Study

Informant	Enrolled in S.Y. 2023- 2024	Taking up education at any public university	Working student	Works at least 5 to 11 hours per day
Nely	✔	✔	✔	✔
Jones	✔	✔	✔	✔
Lorna	✔	✔	✔	✔
Tina	✔	✔	✔	✔
Kent	✔	✔	✔	✔
Gale	✔	✔	✔	✔

RESULTS

As working students need to balance their academics and work, they to devise strategies to help address their responsibilities. Thus, this study aims to describe the time management interventions of working students from a public state university. Two (2) significant themes emerged namely (1) internal efforts and (2) external environment adaptations.

Internal Efforts

The informants have distinct grounds for the time management interventions to balance academics and work. They are driven to work while being a student because of efforts executed within themselves. Internal efforts are relevant to personal adjustments brought as those are by internal efforts, namely (1) the development of organized approaches and (2) the reduction of potential barriers.

Development of Organized Approaches

As the Development of Organized Approaches is important in executing time management among working students, these include (1) effective prioritization, (2) task categorization, and (3) time allocation.

- *Effective Prioritization*

Developing an organized approach to your studies is an opportunity to learn how to work more efficiently (Ermac, 2018). Working students are highly aware of the strong demands on their time, which might result in conflicts with their priorities if not handled well (Gallardo-Lolandes et. al., 2020). With that, the informants unveiled how effective prioritization as an intervention in their workplace helps them balance their work and studies.

Nely: *"I list down the things that I have to do and need to be done already. Those whose deadline is near must be prioritized, those which are not, will be for the meantime set aside."*

In addition, Jones supported the effectiveness of prioritization in his experiences;

In addition, other participants supported that the ambiance and recreational activities also impacted them in visiting the plaza.

Jones: *"I don't get much time to study during my working hours, so I prioritize my tasks wisely. Most of the time, I do tasks that are expected to be completed in a shorter time before going to my workplace."*

- *Task Categorization*

Similarly, time management is one of the struggles and challenges that working students encounter. Thus, categorizing their tasks helped make it more convenient for them to get their schoolwork done even if they are in the workplace (Tu & Soman, 2014). Tina shared her ways on how she categorized her tasks.

Tina: *"In my free time in the workplace, I rigorously forced myself to try my best to finish certain tasks within the precise period that I set. I categorized my work from urgent to not urgent and started to accomplish it according to its rank."*

Nely has the same way of categorizing her tasks.

Nely: *"Those whose deadline is near must be prioritized, those which are not, will be for the meantime set aside."*

On the other hand, Lorna has different ways to categorize her tasks by doing the tasks that consume her time a little bit.

Lorna: *"Most of the time, I do tasks that are expected to be completed in a shorter time before going to my workplace."*

- Time Allocation

Informants utilize their vacant time productively in the workplace to ensure that they can meet the demand of both their work and studies. Working students tend to practice effective study techniques and strategies even in their workplace to make sure that they spend most of their free time doing their schoolwork (Grave, 2011). Nely shared how the Pomodoro technique helps her to allocate her time wisely.

Nely: *"I also do things such as the Pomodoro Technique in doing things, that is, sometimes 30-min work and 20-min rest. Or 50-min work, 10-min rest. For 3 to 4 sessions. Doing so, I can force myself to focus knowing I have a time limit."*

Jones, on the other hand, allocates his free time by doing some things that can help his academic self.

Jones: *"I watched educational videos that were relevant to my course instead of doing other things. In that way, I can assure myself that I did not waste my time on something insignificant."*

Lorna shared the benefits of doing the tasks at a time according to her schedule.

Lorna: *"I do one task at a time. For me, it's pressuring me to do all the tasks in a lengthy time. That's why I should break down the tasks and assign a specific time for it."*

Tina also has the same way on Lorna's technique to allocate their time.

Tina: *"I established a specific time for each school task so that I get done with it before I jump into the next activity."*

Reduction of Possible Barriers

Reduction of possible barriers is important in executing time management among working students. It includes (1) eliminating distractions and (2) overcoming procrastination. These subthemes significantly impacted working students' ability to manage their time in their workplace.

- Eliminate Distractions

Nowadays, the internet and its social platforms have been the most influential tools for staying connected, and university students spend a lot of their time on social media both during the day and at night (Kolhar, Kazi, and Alameen, 2021). Informants admit that social media tends to cause distraction, and if not properly managed, it will disturb them in balancing work and studies. Jones shared his experience of not using social media during working hours to avoid wasting time.

Jones: *"I got used to not checking my social media account for entertainment purposes during working hours to not get distracted however I give myself at least an hour of entertainment only after work."*

Kent emphasized that he overcomes using social media while working by giving himself a specific time only to use it.

Kent: *"Over the past nine months, I have successfully overcome the habit of scrolling through social media during my free time. I always tell myself that if I let myself get distracted by it, it will be hard for me to chase the deadlines."*

- Overcome Procrastination

Procrastination has long been viewed as a self-handicapping behavior that leads to wasted time, increased stress, and poor academic performance (Zer, 2011; Wang & Englander, 2010). Informants revealed that the demands of time management made it difficult for them to postpone their schoolwork. Thus they come up with strategies to overcome procrastination. Gale gave conviction on how it is important to do the tasks after she was told to do them.

Gale: *"...I do my task right after I am told to avoid cramming and to get things that are difficult to accommodate."*

Nely on the other hand has a different technique to avoid procrastination by asking permission from her supervisor to work earlier so that she can have time at night doing her school tasks.

Nely: *"...I ask my supervisor if I can start my workday earlier. This way, I can finish my tasks ahead of schedule and have more time in the evening to focus on my studies."*

External Environment Adaptations

Despite the internal efforts that the working students have been practicing to properly manage their time, adjustment to the external environment is another intervention that is becoming more common among working students. External environment adaptations include (1) promoting workplace flexibility (2) practicing effective designation

Promoting Workplace Flexibility

For working students to promote workplace flexibility, they need to do (1) work arrangement, and (2) time negotiation.

- *Work Arrangement*

Flexible working arrangements are one of the most common ways to increase dedication and capabilities in the workplace. Working students expressed that it was also a necessary intervention in balancing both their studies and work (Onyekwelu, Monyei, and Muogbo, 2022). Tina shared that she can do his school work in her free time at work.

Tina: *"When I feel that I am unable to handle both my schoolwork and job for a day, I tend to request a temporary workload reduction in our workplace and make up for it on another day."*

Furthermore, Gale answered that she was practicing work arrangements with her supervisor too.

Gale: *"For instance, as an early bird in our office, when I perceive that there are fewer tasks related to my school responsibilities, I compress my working hours during periods when I have more free time. This allows me to accumulate time that I can later request to shorten my duty hours at the workplace when I have a heavier workload for school."*

- *Time Negotiation*

The significance of time negotiation becomes increasingly important in the lives of working students. It has been proposed that workplace flexibility encourages long-term employment (Koreshi and Alpass, 2022). Working students who are employed for not less than 4 months, express that it has been an advantage on their part to negotiate with their employers whenever they encounter significant conflict in the schedule of work and studies.

Nely: *"Sometimes when school work is in demand I sincerely ask my employer to start my duty early in the workplace so that I can also go home early without compromising my responsibilities in our office."*

Kent: *"When I have exams to study, especially long quizzes which I consider very important, I honestly talk to my supervisor if I could have fewer hours of work so that I can dedicate more time to my study."*

Practicing Effective Designation

Practicing effective designation includes (1) delegating tasks and (2) seeking support.

- Delegate Tasks

Working students are under too much pressure to manage their time. To overcome this challenge, they rely on this give-and-take relationship with their coworkers in the workplace to deal with the struggle of balancing their time (Astudillo et al, 2019). The informants expressed that they collaborate with other employees to enhance their work-study balance and cope with the challenges.

Lorna: *"In the workplace, we practice that if someone has personal conflicts, especially in juggling personal responsibilities aside from our work, we share the tasks."*

Jones: *"I developed a healthy relationship with my coworkers, they have been supportive when I asked for favors related to computing and data encoding in the workplace*."

- Seek Support

In some instances, working students are aware of the limitations they have. There are times when they can't push through their limits, and during such challenging periods, they tend to seek support from other people in the workplace (Chen, Tseng, and Chu, 2023). Similarly, when their colleagues encounter conflicts with work or personal matters, working students reciprocate by providing assistance and support. This mutual support system helps create a supportive work environment where everyone can rely on each other in times of difficulty.

Lorna: *"There are times when I feel emotionally down, and I am grateful that there are people in the workplace with whom I can share my concerns and where their support helps me get through the day."*

Kent: *"My coworkers, who have been working longer than I have, don't hesitate to give me advice and suggestions that are effective in helping me better manage my time."*
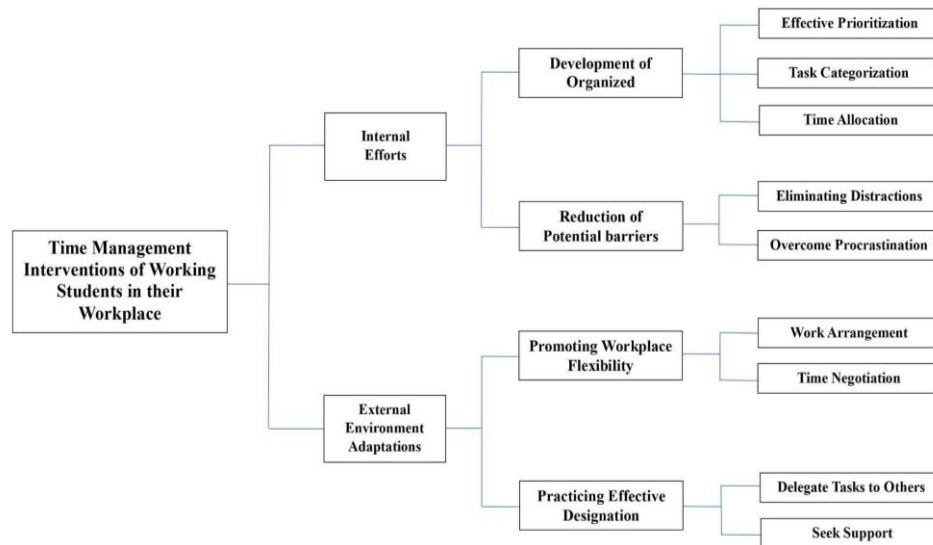

FIGURE 1. Demonstration of meaningful categories of the study

DISCUSSION

This study aimed to describe the time management interventions working students to balance their academics and work in a public university. Two (2) significant themes emerged which include internal efforts and external environment adaptations. Four (4) meaningful categories were also found which include the development of organized approaches, reduction of potential barriers, promote workplace flexibility, and practice of effective designation.

Time management is a significant skill that people must learn to balance the different facets of their lives (Astudillo, Martos, Reese, Umpad, & Fuente, 2019). Spending it effectively has a significant impact, particularly on the lives of working students who have great responsibilities at school and in their workplace (Abenoja, Accion, Aguilar, Alcasid, Amoguis, Buraquit, Mama, Pacete, & Pame, 2019). Balancing both work and school is no easy life for working students, thus adopting a sensible approach in their workplace brought positive outcomes in coping with their tasks (Leverage Edu, 2022). This study revealed that internal efforts and external environment adaptations served as time management interventions for working students as they encounter different circumstances that hinder them to work more productively.

The finding of this study implied that working students were developing an organized approach to managing their time in their workplace. The informants organized their tasks every day to finish work on time. Similar to the study conducted by Kozicki, (2018) demands from their work and studies lead them to prioritize their tasks effectively and categorize them by setting a precise time in every task. In addition, effective time allocation helps working students to know when the tasks are due, therefore they tend to practice effective study techniques and strategies even in their workplace to make sure that they spend most of their free time doing their schoolwork (Murray, Davis, Shuler, Spencer, & Hinto, 2022).

For the informants, time management is not a skill that is usually taught, thus, developing an organized approach is an opportunity to work more efficiently. Moreover, organizing the tasks every day helps the person, especially the working student to finish work on time as well as prioritizing projects, and communicate the progress to the co-workers and supervisors (Keiling, 2023).

Furthermore, according to the findings of this study, some informants stated that one of their time management interventions is reducing potential barriers at work. In line with this, the study of Tahiliani, Verma, Agrawal, and Pandey (2022) revealed that the use of social media has made people less productive because they tend to focus more on their screens at the workplace. Therefore, working students do their best to eliminate the distractions brought by social media to use their free time at work effectively. Moreover, procrastination is a common problem for many students (Melgaard, Monir, Lasrado & Fagerstrom, 2022). It causes working students to have time management issues, rushing and missing deadlines of tasks if not being properly managed. The informants revealed that the workload can sometimes be overwhelming for them and can cause a delay in tasks that need to be fulfilled (Bozkus, 2020). Thus, expressed that one of their strategies to balance their work and study is to overcome procrastination. They do their tasks ahead of time to avoid cramming. Similarly, the study of Manea, Stan, and Labar (2022) revealed that doing the tasks after you are told to is necessary to complete them. Therefore, avoiding delays and working steadily on large tasks give them a big chance to produce their best work despite being fueled by their responsibilities in the workplace. This intervention aligns with the principles of Self-Regulation Theory, suggesting that individuals who practice self-discipline are better equipped to control their thoughts and behavior, leading to the achievement of desired outcomes in both work and school, despite having limited time (Williams, 2022).

In addition to the internal efforts that the informants make to manage their time, external environment adaptations are another intervention that helps them manage their time as working students. They emphasized that promoting workplace flexibility is crucial to balance their job with their studies. It includes the work arrangement and time negotiation that allow them to do their work based on personal preferences, as long as they fulfill their working hours. First, they seek time management interventions by requesting a work arrangement that corresponds to the nature of their tasks and personal circumstances. This may entail temporary task reduction and reassignment when external issues are resolved (Onyekwelu, Monyei, and Muogbo, 2022). Moreover, this work arrangement helps them strike a healthy balance between work and study commitments.

Consequently, time management intervention also suggests time negotiation. Study shows that working students have the option to start and end work earlier or later than the standard office hours. allows them to accommodate their circumstances and address concerns related to their studies while still being able to contribute productively in their workplace (Koreshi and Alpass, 2022).

On the other hand, time management interventions involve practicing effective designation where they delegate tasks to others and seek support in the workplace. This practice reflects a positive approach to time management, as working students can distribute their workload and collaborate with other employees to enhance their work-study balance. This intervention aligns with the principles of Social Support Theory, which states that social support can mitigate the negative effects of stressful situations in the workplace. In the context of employed students, receiving diverse forms of support can have a positive impact on their performance both at work and in school (Butler 2017). In addition, this strategy helps them address the demand for both job-related and school-related activities in the workplace.

This study also emphasizes the importance of cultivating healthy relationships with co-workers to effectively navigate various work-related challenges (Chantrea, Chansophy, & Chantyta, 2023). Similarly, the study of Butarbutar, Lubis, Siregar, & Supitriyanni (2022) revealed that sharing responsibilities enables working students to devote adequate time and energy to their studies while at the same time minimizing their work stress. There is limited literature supporting the significance of working students' healthy collaboration at the workplace while studying which is a compelling phenomenon to create further research.

Additionally, working students were empowered to manage their time more efficiently and improve their overall productivity when they seek advice and emotional support from other people in the workplace. Most of them expressed that reaching out to more experienced co-workers helped them overcome obstacles, as these individuals provided significant insights and strategies regarding external conflicts outside their workplace. This is similar to the study of Chen, Tseng, and Chu (2023) which pointed out that seeking support and sharing concerns from trusted colleagues help alleviate stress and improve wellbeing in the workplace.

According to the study of Pregoner, Accion, Buraquit, and Amoguis (2020), creating strategies to maximize time for work and study is significant to the life of working students where it highlights the importance of effective time management to overcome difficulties and cope with the challenges they encounter at school and in their workplace. The common suggestion that emerged was the need for commitment and discipline among students who choose to work while studying. Strategic planning, goal setting, and effective organization were identified as significant factors in managing their time.

The personal adjustment strategies were similar to the internal efforts exerted to manage the demands for obligations in the school and the workplace. This includes developing organized approaches and reduction of potential barriers. However, the aforementioned study lacked an exploration of time management interventions related to adapting to the external environment. It did not address the specific questions of how work arrangements and task delegation in the workplace could be beneficial for working students.

Additionally, this research took place in a recent face-to-face setup of classes, wherein working students had to physically attend both their workplace and university. Indeed, it is undeniable that working students face a great challenge in balancing their school and work schedules. However, they benefit significantly as they practice strategies that help them function effectively as both students and employers. Therefore, these research findings support the hypothesis that working students employ time management interventions in their workplace during the transition back to face-to-face classes. It was also presumed that working students find it challenging to balance their time effectively between academics and work. This assumption aligns with the findings of this study, as delegating tasks and seeking support emerged as common interventions employed by working students.

This current study has its limitations that should be considered and may be addressed in future investigations. First, the qualitative findings were based on a limited number of informants from public state universities, potentially limiting the generalizability of the results. Secondly, the informants were

exclusively students from the College of Education, suggesting the need to extend the application of the study's results and implications to other departments and undergraduate programs to assess their broader applicability and relevance. It is recommended that future research should aim to include a larger and more diverse sample to obtain a broader perspective. Moreover, the findings of this research provide crucial information about the time management interventions employed by working students, which has been relatively understudied by previous researchers. Therefore, it is highly encouraged to conduct similar research on this topic or pursue further studies that can build upon and enhance the information provided. These future studies can contribute to a deeper understanding of the topic and help improve the effectiveness of time management interventions for working students to balance both academics and work.

CONCLUSION

Time management remains highly valuable for working students who strive to achieve a balance between their work and studies. It is apparent that simultaneous employment and study take tremendous effort, and establishing solutions to alleviate conflicts between school and work has a dramatic impact on the lives of working students. Therefore, recognizing the complexities of their dual roles and developing a comprehensive approach to managing time has a transformative effect on the lives of working students.

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