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The Relationship between Work Status and Grade Point Average

Lauren Kennington and Verdina Pilipovic²

There is a fine line between wanting to succeed and being able to succeed. There are certain factors that one has imaged when the visions of success come along. These images include the wide range of having a good job, being able to provide for individual wants and needs, as well as continuing to have a social life. Being a student is reflected on these visions of success by how well one's grade point average is maintained, along with his or her stress level of working and going to school, and even being able to sleep and still find time to use social media. We hypothesize that there is a negative relationship between the number of hours students work and their GPA. In order to test our hypothesis and understand more of how certain extraneous factors are combined with how individuals use their time, manage working and going to school, we conducted a study by using an online survey among current college students. We hoped that the results from our study could potentially help led us to understand how being a student and employee can have risk factors but can also have benefits. On the contrary, our results did not show a significant relationship between the number of hours worked and GPA. Even though we did not find a significant relationship between the number of hours worked and GPA, future research can repeat and improve our study in order to find out if there is a significant relationship between these two variables.

Keywords: GPA, working, stress, sleep, school, social media, success, factors, study

Success is a key contributor in a person's life. The additional roles that come with being successful include, having an education, time-management skills, and work ethic. According to Sparkman, Maudling, and Roberts (2012) the traditional predictors of student success, ACT/SAT and high school GPA, have been shown to account for only a modest amount of variance (25%) of a student's academic performance in college as reflected by his or her their GPA. Due to these past studies, many scholars have being trying to focus more on nontraditional predictors of college performance (Sparkman et al., 2012).

Being a student reflects on how the additional roles are incorporated. Academic background can reflect a student's performance. For instance, the type of environment a student grew up in and the school he or she attended in the past. According to Kouliavtsev (2013), there

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was a relationship between a students' educational background and their academic performance in college. Kouliavstev (2013) found that students who came from a public school tended to work more than students who attend a private school. This resulted in performing poorly academically. This information provides us with the idea of how a student's background can impact how a student performs academically as well as his or her current work status.

One burden of being a student is the financial responsibilities that a student has to uphold. Wenz and Yu (2010) conducted a study research to differentiate between students who work primarily to finance their education and those who work primarily for other reasons. One of the findings in their study showed that the students who worked for mainly financial reasons earned lower grades compared to students who worked for career goals. On the contrary, Wenz and Yu (2010) found that the students who worked for financial reasons received higher grades compared to the students who were motivated by their desire for the general work experience. With this financial burden there are consequences that a student has to forfeit in order to maintain a successful career path. Some of these consequences include, working while being in school, maintaining a grade point average, maintaining a social life, and even maintaining ones physical and mental health. According to Hovanitz and Thatcher (2012) frequent headache is associated with the report of a reduced ability to work and a decline in quality of work. Students need to be aware that their academic work environment can reflect on their psychosocial well-being.

Another burden associated with academic performance and being successful is the issue of maintaining a credible grade point average (GPA). The amount of pressure a student faces to maintain a credible GPA as well as be able to provide for his or her basic needs for survival can result in feeling burnt out. The feel of being burnt can involve a mixed amount of stress and anxiety levels. This can make a student feel overwhelmed and fatigued over time. Galbraith

(2012) found in his study about academic and work-related burnout that overtime the burnout generally does increase over an academic cycle. In addition, gender appeared to have a different impact on academic burnout and work-related burnout.

Last but not least, an emotional burden is associated with academic performance. A typical college student may not always be happy, and may struggle with the factors that are associated with maintaining a high GPA as well as working to compensate their needs.

According to Moro-Egido and Panades (2010) a high grade point average may be related to the level of a student's satisfaction stratification. They found that students who had a part time job while being in school stated to have less satisfaction with their college experience. Moro-Egido and Panades (2010) found that students who held a part-time job while studying were more likely to convey and show less satisfaction with their college experience. Also, their findings suggested a student's GPA and completing his or her degree was positively affected overall satisfaction. With that being said, a student's overall emotional capability is reflected on his or her overall satisfaction and performance.

Not only are these burdens reflected on a student's financial responsibility, physical and emotional well-being, being a commuter student or a residential student, they are also associated with employment and academic performance. Wenz and Yu (2010) mentioned that term-time employment counterbalances some of the additional costs with attending college which could provide additional money relating to on-the-job training, but it also could distract students from their studies, leading to lower levels of learning, longer time to degree, lower graduation probability, and a less attractive GPA to present to potential employers upon graduation. Overall, there is an increase in work hours relating to negative effects on GPA and in general, becoming successful. However, Alfano and Eduljee (2013) found in their study that there was not a

significant and strong relationship between the amount of hours and residential and commuter students' GPA.

The purpose of our study is to determine whether there is a relation between the amount of hours students work and their grade point averages. We hypothesize that there is a negative relationship between the number of hours students work and their GPA. Students who work more hours may have a lower GPA due to extraneous factors (sleep, time management, stress level, and feeling anxious). The reason for conducting this survey was to further help us understand our hypothesis and possibly help students understand how working may be associated with their grade point averages. Our study consisted of 45 male and female participants who were given a survey regarding academic performance and work status. The survey was posted via Facebook and the results were generated from SurveyMonkey

Method

Participants

The participants were students recruited from a social media site. The social media site that was used was Facebook. There were a total of 43 participants in the study. Out of the 45 participants only 35 participants were current students. The participants were female and male students over the age of 18. The participants' age rank was between 19 and 35. The majority of the participants were 21 years old. Out of the 35 participants, 2.9 % were freshman, 8.6 % were sophomores, 22.9 % were juniors, 40% were seniors, and 20% marked other. The experimenters submitted a survey online that was placed on Facebook's website, which was obtained from SurveyMonkey. Every participant was given the option to take the survey or opt out of the survey. Each participant read and agreed to the consent form that was provided on the survey. The information being collected for the study was from current students. If the participant was not a current student, he or she was they were directed to the end of the survey, which was

provided on Facebook by SurveyMonkey. The participants were not given incentives regarding the study, although their time and effort were appreciated by the experimenters. This appreciation was noted in the feedback letter of the survey.

Materials and Procedure

In order for the participants to complete the survey they had to have access to a computer as well as Facebook. The participants were given a link to click on which was on a social media website, via Facebook, that directed them to our survey. The survey questions were generated from SurveyMonkey website <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/9NXGXRL> (see Appendix A). This website is a tool to help form specific types of surveys and results. The website provided the questions, kept the information confidential, and even distributed the results of the survey to the primary investigators. The survey asked the participants questions about their current work status and cumulative grade point average. Some questions were open-ended questions; others were mostly multiple choice for the participants to answer. Each participant was asked questions that reflected on the pressure of maintaining a high grade point average as well as being employed. Each participant was asked if he or she wanted to complete the survey; if he or she chose not to complete the survey he or she were directed to the feedback letter. Students under the age of 18 were also not permitted to take the survey; only students who were 18 and above were given the opportunity to take the assessment. Also, if a person was not a student he or she was directed to the feedback letter. The survey was open to everyone who wanted to take it due to it being on a social media site. The experimenters did not have any interaction with the participants, besides using the social media site, Facebook.

After all the survey was completed the participants were given a feedback letter along with the researcher's contact information. The information obtained from the participants were kept private. In order to keep the participant's information safe and together, SurveyMonkey kept

the results anonymous. Additional materials that were used were feedback letters, and consent forms. These additional materials were provided to the participants in the survey in order for them to understand the experiment along with participating in the survey.

Results

The results were retrieved from SurveyMonkey. To test the hypothesis, there was a negative relationship between the number of hours students work and their GPA, we did a Pearson correlation on the data. The Pearson correlation was between the two variables of hours worked per week and current cumulative GPA. We wanted to see if there was a significant relationship between these two variables. Unfortunately, the results showed an $r = -.065$. There was not a significant relationship between these two variables.

We also conducted a couple more Pearson correlations on the data. We did a Pearson correlation between the two variables of how many hours of sleep per night and current cumulative GPA. The results showed an $r = .097$. This showed a weak relationship between the two variables. Subsequently, we were missing data from the variable on how many hours a sleep a participant got per night. There were seven participants who did not answer this question. Also, we wanted to find if there was a significant relationship between current cumulative GPA and age of the participants. We did another Pearson correlation to find this relationship. The results showed a $r = -.201$ which implicated a negative moderately strong relationship between these two variables.

In addition, we analyzed our data by frequencies so we could get a significant amount of descriptive statistics of our data. One variable that was measured was if a participant felt he or she had sufficient time to study. Forty percent of the participants said they sometimes feel they have sufficient time to study and 2.9% felt they never feel they have sufficient time to study. Also, about 22.9 participants did relay that they rarely have sufficient time to study.

Another variable we measured was the amount of hours a participant works per week. The percentage between 20 and 40 hours per week was the same among the participants. Most of the participants reported working 20 hours a week or 40 hours a week (16.7 % each). However, six participants did not answer this question. The results showed we were missing about 20% of our data for this variable.

We also analyzed the participants' cumulative GPA. Our results showed that the average cumulative GPA was 3.0 but two participants did not answer this question. Another variable we measured was the stress level a participant feels with being employed and being a student. About 28.6 participants relayed they felt stressed and 2.9 % felt not stressed with being employed and being a student.

Another variable we analyzed was how well a participant balancing his or her time between school and other commitments. Out of the 35 participants 14 said they balance their time fairly well and 7 said they balance their time very well between school and other commitments. Also, the stress level with school and the how comfortable a participant felt with his or her stress level was measured as well. About 34.3 % of the participants said they were stressed or very stressed with school. On the other hand, only 2.9% of the participants said they were never stressed at all with school. Regarding how the participants felt with their stress level, about 48 % answered they were moderately comfortable and 25.7 % answered that they were slightly comfortable.

Furthermore, we did analyze the data on the variable of how restless a participant felt when he or she went to sleep every night. About 42.9 % of the participants answered they sometimes feel restless and 5.7 % answered that they never feel restless. In addition, our results showed that most participants woke up at seven in the morning. The last variable we analyzed was how anxious a participant felt on a daily basis. About 42.9 % participants felt a little anxious

and 25.7 participants felt anxious on a daily basis. Only 5.7% of the participants answered that they did not feel anxious on a daily basis.

Discussion

In conclusion, the purpose of our study is to determine whether there is a relation between the amount of hours students work and their GPA. We did hypothesize that there was a negative relationship between the number of hours students work and their GPA but our results did not show a significant relationship between the number of hours worked and GPA. At this time we can conclude that our hypothesis cannot be supported by our results of this study.

Some aspects of our study and our findings did line up with one of our literature reviews. Alfano and Eduljee (2013) study consisted of 108 participants. All of the participants in the study were undergraduate students at a private college in the Northeast. Alfano and Eduljee (2013) research showed that there was not a significant and strong relationship between the amount of hours and residential and commuter students' GPA. In relation to our study we were unable to find a significant relationship between hours students worked and GPA.

One explanation for this result is that our sample was small. We collected data from 43 participants but only 35 of the participants were a current student. If we had a larger sample we might be able to show a significant relationship.

However, our study did not relate well with other parts of our literature review. For instance, Wenx and Yu (2010) conducted a research on a student's financial responsibilities regarding school. One burden of being a student is the financial responsibilities that a student has to uphold. These researchers did find some correlations between student's working for primary financial reasons and a student's grades. For instance, they found a relationship between students who worked for mainly financial reasons earned lower grades compared to students who worked

for career goals. Unfortunately, we cannot Wenz and Yu (2010) support our study because we did not concentrate on a student's financial responsibilities.

Also, Sparkman et al. (2012) researched the traditional predictors of student success. On the contrary, our study focused on GPA as well as on sleep, the feeling of being anxious, stress level, time management, and the number of hours a student worked.

Moro-Egido and Panades (2010) researched if there was a high grade point average that may be related to the level of a student's satisfaction stratification. One of their findings showed that students who had a part time job while being in school reported less satisfaction with their college experience. However, our study did not concentrate on student's satisfaction so we are unable to support their results at this time. In addition, Galbraith (2012) found in his study that academic and work-related burnout showed that overtime the burnout generally does increase over an academic cycle. This researcher also found that gender had a different impact on academic burnout and work-related burnout. Regarding work-related burnout our study looked at stress level. We found that 34.3 % of the participants said they were stressed or very stressed with school. About 48 % answered they were moderately comfortable with their stress level. We did not look at gender in our study

Kouliavtsev (2013) researched if there was a relationship between a students' educational background and their academic performance in college. Our study did focus on students academic performance in college but we did not look at students educational background. Also, our study did not associate with Hovanitz and Thatcher's (2012) study. These researchers focused on how a frequent headache can be associated with the reduced ability to work and a decline in quality of work. We did not focus on the physical symptoms that students were experiencing.

Also, Wenx and Yu (2010) conducted a research on a student's financial responsibilities regarding school. One burden of being a student is the financial responsibilities that a student has to uphold. These researchers did find some correlations between student's working for primary financial reasons and a student's grades. For instance, they found a relationship between students who worked for mainly financial reasons earned lower grades compared to students who worked for career goals. Unfortunately, we cannot Wenz and Yu (2010) support our study because we did not concentrate on students financial responsibilities.

Some respondents did not answer certain questions, and there were data that were unable to be calculated or measured in the results. There were missing data on the questions regarding hours per work a participant worked, current cumulative GPA, hours of sleep, and the typical time a participant wakes up in the morning. Some participants answered the question of how many hours worked by giving a number with a decimal. Unfortunately, we were unable to use their answers because we wanted to get the average hours worked and we could not use decimals. Also, participants gave ranges or numbers with a decimal to answer the following questions on how many hours they sleep and what the typical time was that they wake in the morning. We were unable to use these answers.

The results showed that most participants woke up at seven in the morning. On the other hand, we cannot assume this result is accurate because out of the 35 participants' responses we lost 26 responses to this question.

We suggest for future research to have a bigger sample in order to see if there is a significant relationship between how many hours a student works and GPA. Also, if future researchers want to do this study on current students they must make those participants are aware they must be a current student to continue with the study. One suggestion to make sure the participants are current students is for the researchers to conduct the study on a college campus.

This will help ensure that every participant is a current student. Furthermore, if researchers want to get an accurate number of a participant's GPA, they can ask for permission from the college and participants to access the college's academic records. Another suggestion for future researchers is to make sure the wording of the questions allows the respondents to give an accurate answer to the question. This may help avoid respondents to respond with a range or a decimal to the question. These suggestions will help prevent data from being lost and help researchers collect accurate data for their research. Researchers will be able to support their findings if they can eliminate these limitations. There are improvements needed for this study and we hope future research will be able to retrieve accurate and better results in order to support our hypothesis if there is a negative relationship between the number of hours students work and their GPA.

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Appendix A

Survey

1.) This survey, designed to determine whether there is a relation between the amount of hours students work and their grade point averages was created by Lauren Kennington and Verdina Pilipovic as part of a class research project in the department of Psychology at Lindenwood University. It will take no more than 10 minutes to complete. Although your participation will not result in direct benefits to you, information from this study may help provide additional insight into the relation between work and GPA among college students. Please read the information below before deciding whether or not to participate.

Your participation is completely voluntary.

- You may discontinue taking the survey at any time.
- If you choose not to participate or stop participating before the end of the survey, you will not be penalized in any way.
- You may also choose to skip any questions you wish without penalty or judgment.

Your responses will be anonymous.

- No information that identifies you personally will be collected, not even your IP address.
- The primary investigator will not be able to identify your answers as belonging to you; data will be examined at the group level only.

The results of this survey will be used for scholarly purposes only. If you have any questions about the survey itself, please contact the primary investigators, Lauren Kennington and Verdina Pilipovic, at lmk299@lionmail.lindenwood.edu and vdp312@lionmail.lindenwood.edu.

In the unlikely event that the questions on the survey causes any discomfort, please stop participating and contact the researchers if you have concerns.

ELECTRONIC CONSENT: Please select your choice below.

Clicking on the "agree" button below indicates that:

- you have read the above information
- you voluntarily agree to participate
- you are at least 18 years of age

If you do not wish to participate in the research study, or are not at least 18 years old, please decline participation by clicking on the "I choose not to participate" button.

- I choose to participate in this survey.
- I choose not to participate.

(If the participant chooses not to participate in this survey the participant will be automatically directed to the feedback letter and out of the survey)

2.) Are you currently a student?

- Yes
- No (Skip to question #19)

3.) Are you currently employed?

- Yes
- No (Skip to question # 6)
- Prefer not to answer (Skip to question # 6)

4.) How many hours per week do you work?

Answer _____

5) On a scale 1-5, how stressed do you feel with being employed and being a student?

- 1 (not stressed at all)
- 2 (a little stressed)
- 3 (stressed)
- 4 (very stressed)
- 5 (extremely stressed)

6) What is your current cumulative GPA?

Answer _____

7) On a scale 1-5, how well do you balance your time between school and other commitments?

- 1 (poorly)
- 2 (fairly well)
- 3 (well)
- 4 (very well)
- 5 (excellently well)

8) On scale 1-5, how often do you feel you have sufficient time to study?

- 1 (never)
- 2 (rarely)
- 3 (sometimes)
- 4 (often)
- 5 (always)

9) On a scale 1-5, how stressed do you feel with school?

- 1 (not stressed at all)
- 2 (a little stressed)
- 3 (stressed)
- 4 (very stressed)
- 5 (extremely stressed)

10) On a scale 1-5, how comfortable are you with your stress level?

- 1 (not all comfortable)
- 2 (slightly comfortable)
- 3 (moderately comfortable)
- 4 (very comfortable)
- 5 (extremely comfortable)

11) On average how many hours of sleep do you get per night?

Answer _____

12) On a scale for 1-5, how often do you feel restless when you go to sleep every night?

- 1 (never)
- 2 (rarely)
- 3 (sometimes)
- 4 (often)
- 5 (always)

13) What time do you typically wake up in the morning?

Answer _____

14) On a scale from 1-5, how anxious do you feel on a daily basis?

- 1 (not at all anxious)
- 2 (a little anxious)
- 3 (anxious)
- 4 (very anxious)
- 5 (extremely anxious)

15) What is your age?

Answer _____

16.) What is your class rank? (Circle one)

- Freshman
- Sophomore
- Junior
- Senior
- Other

17.) Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey for our class project at Lindenwood University. We wanted to find whether the number of hours students work is related to GPA. We hypothesize that there is a negative relationship between the number of hours students work and their GPA. Students who work more hours may have a lower GPA due to extraneous factors (sleep, time management, stress level, and feeling anxious). The reason for conducting this survey is to further help us understand our hypothesis and possibly help students understand how working may be associated with their grade point averages.

If you would like to see the results of our survey after May 20, 2014, please feel free to contact us using the contact information below. Again, thank you very much for your time and effort!

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