An Examination of the Relationship Between Working Experience and Academic Performance

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Abstract

A common problem happens in campus life is that some of the students want to make money for their tuition fee or higher living quality, but they also worry about having a part time job or on campus job may affect their academic performance. And not just the students themselves worry about the problem, the parents of the students who have the part time job or on campus job also worry about their academic performance. To examine the relationship between working experience and academic performance, we conducted a study that requires participants to fill out a survey about the information of working experience and academic performance. The prior research found that the students who had working experience with appropriate working hour had better GPA (academic performance) in average than students who didn’t have. Based on this, it can be concluded that there is a positive correlation between working hour and academic performance.

An Examination of the Relationship Between Working Experience and Academic Performance

The study of relationship between working experience and academic performance has been an issue of debate. From my prediction, the potential reason that working experience may harm the academic performance could be that students may have no enough time to allocate on studying. The potential reason why working experience may benefit academic performance is that working experience can provide students the ability to handle things more efficient, which the students can apply the ability to study to improve their academic performance. As we predicted, students who have appropriate working hour will have better academic performance, but are there any other influences on how the working experience impact the academic performance?

Chan, Fan-Havard, Hess, Ho, and Thompson (2014) conducted the study to examine relationship between the part-time employment and academic performance. They found that a moderate amount of part time employment time beneficial to academic achievement when compared to no employment. It is associated with a positive effect on academic success. These results support the hypothesis we made that appropriate working time will be beneficial for academic performance compared to no employment. And the experiment stated that students who working 15-19 hours had lower GPA, which means the 15-19 hours could be consider as “inappropriate” working time.

Kong, Shan, Vong, and Wang (2010) conducted the study to investigate the effects of doing part-time job on college student academic performance. They found that incentives to work have most effects on student academic performance and doing part-time jobs enriched students’ school life and increase their social network. Their findings also supported my hypothesis, because one of the reasons why people think doing part-time job can be beneficial to academic performance is that students can get the ability to solve things, even though the jobs is not strongly related to their major, but students can still apply the ability to school. The incentives of their work are important factor to decide their quantity of the working experience, which may have different impacts on their academic performance.

Barling, Kelloway, and Rogers (1995) conducted the study that examine some effects of teenagers’ part-time employment, they found that the quality of employment would moderate theses effects such that employment quantity would be associated with detrimental effects only for low quality jobs. This result is related to our result is because the quality of the work is basically talked about the whether the work can provide some chances for students to develop skills or and good feedback from the work. Working too long will make detrimental effects but the high-quality work can moderate that.

Hammes and Haller (1983) found that college seniors who worked studied less than those who did not, they indicated the more efficient use of time and more effective study habits, was associated higher GPA. Even though this study didn’t state any clear working hour, but it still related to my hypothesis, their results support the idea that students who have working experience can study more efficient compared to students have no working experiment. Students can gain ability and skills from real life employment, applying them to academic study.

Logan and Logan (2016) found that there was an increase in college student employment over past few decades and students are working more hours. This could lead to declines in academic as hours worked increase, resulting in less time for studying. The experiment breaks down the sample by various cohorts including class, gender, and age. Estimated findings show that students should not work over 20 hours part-time job in their first two years of college. This result proved a negative effect of working experience, it declared that more college students work longer than before, and their academic performance(GPA) got negative impacts, which related to our hypothesis, working in an appropriate hour will be beneficial for academic performance, but working over 20 is obvious an overworked time for part-time employment, this result also can be supported by other researches.

For the study we have now, we are going to use the online survey questionnaire to ask the participants about their age, gender, major, working hours, etc. that information are the key factors that we are going to examine. Based on the prior research, our first hypothesis is that working too long for part-time job will harm students’ academic performance. Second, working in an appropriate time can be beneficial for students’ performance. Third, the working incentive and working quality can moderate the negative effect. Those factors can help us to discover the relationship between working experience and academic performance clearer.

**Method**

**Participants**

Thirty-four college students (25 males, 9 females), most of the students were from Oregon State University, and the remaining students were from other Universities in the US. These students participated the study voluntarily, they were between the ages of 19 and 28 years old (*M* = 22.88, *SD* = 2.13). Students were recruited using the online survey software “Qualtrics”. However, the data of the two students who failed to complete all the questions was not included in the results.

**Materials**

The participants were asked to finish an online questionnaire with seven questions, the participants followed the link posted on the Facebook to access the questionnaire, the smart phone or computer screen was used to present the seven questions. the purpose of the study was to figure out the correlation between working experience and academic performance, therefore the seven questions were used to get the information about working experience, such as gender, age, college (major), working incentive, working hour, satisfaction to the working experience. Those information can be used to divide students into different groups(gender, college), and working incentive (positive or negative) and working quality may moderate the negative working effect in our prediction. The responses to the seven questions were measured and recorded through “Qualtrics”. And the responses to those multi-item scale would be changed to numerical value, then the participants would be divided into different groups in the data analysis. For example, male would be changed to A group, and female would be changed to B group. Then, then gender would be the independent variable and GPA would be the dependent variable. We can control other independent variables, such as college, work or not, etc. to find the correlation between gender and GPA easily.

**Procedure**

All the participants followed the link posted on the Facebook, they were instructed to the key information about the study, included what’s the study is about, what data will be measured, etc. After the participants read through the instructions and consent to participant the study, then the participants were asked some basic personal information first, such as gender, age, GPA. And then the participants were asked some information to relate to work experience, such as working hours (if applied), working incentive, satisfaction. The participants’ responses were used to set groups for them, for instance, college included liberal arts, science, engineering. Then group A was liberal arts, group B was science, group C was engineering. After all, these groups can be manipulated easily by controlling other factors.

**Results**

These participants were grouped by test how working experience affects their academic performance, a descriptive statistic were taken and an independent-samples t-test was conducted to determine whether the groups’ academic performance was affected by the working experience compared to other groups.

The mean GPA for group with working experience was 3.35 (*SD* = 0.36), the mean GPA for group without working experience was 3.12 (*SD* = 0.35). This data indicated that GPA for group with working experience was higher than group without working experience. However, the independent samples t-test suggested no difference between the two groups *t*(32)= -1.57, *p* = 0.126. After received this independent samples t-tests result, I conducted another independent samples t-tests with more precise working hour limitation group to compare with the group has no working experience or work too long. The new group was about participants who have working experience and work less than 15 hours (appropriate amount of time). This time, the group with appropriate working (*M =* 3.44*, SD* = 0.33) time had significantly higher GPA than group has no working experience or work too much (*M =* 3.10*, SD =* 0.33). *t*(32) *= -2.82, p* = 0.008.

**Discussion**

The main hypothesis was that college students who have working experience with appropriate working time can enhance their academic performance, and the hypothesis was supported by the previous descriptive and inferential statistics. At first, when comparing the group who has working experience with group who has no working experience, the data cannot be supported. There were two main reasons, the first one is because students who overwork may lower their GPA, which lowered the average GPA of the group who has working experience. The second reasons could be individual’s characteristic, because of the limitation of the study was that the sample size was too small, the individual’s characteristic may influence the result a lot. After the analyze, taking a cue from Ho *et al*. (2014), the new group setting was made, the new group was about the students who have working experience and work in a moderate amount of time, which was the group that our original hypothesis proposed to test on. Ho *et al.* even limited the college to only medical major students in their study. Their data showed that the students who working 15-19 hours had lower GPA, which means the 15-19 hours could be consider as “inappropriate” working time in their experiment. My findings had the similar results with their findings, my findings proved that students who have working experience and work less than 15 hours (appropriate time) had better GPA. It supports their findings also. Those students who overwork usually had lower GPA. The possible reasons why students who work in a moderate amount of time can enhance academic performance is that those students can use their ability that learn from the work to apply to their academic study also, in which increases their study efficiency indirectly. Some future improvement could be adding more sample, so that we can divide more working hour interval, such as 0-4 hours, 4-8 hours.

Also, limiting the major and year in college could help the study if we get enough sample.

According to Logan and Logan (2016)’s study, there was an increase in college student employment over past few decades and students are working more hours. How working experience influence academic performance became a more valuable problem for us to study nowadays. My statement was that those students who work in an appropriate amount of time may enhance their study efficiency then increase their academic performance instead of lowering their GPA. I conducted the online questionnaire to acquire some basic information about the college students, the independent variable such as working hour, gender, age. Then I manipulated the independent variables to get the relationship with dependent variable, which was the academic performance. The information contains the dependent and independent variable was being measured and recorded by Qualtrics. The conclusion was that students who have working experience and work in an appropriate amount time have better academic performance.

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