

# QQM Research Report

Topic: Qualitative Analysis of Burnout in University Students with Part-Time Jobs

**Department: B.Sc. Software Engineering (A+B)**

**Semester: 2**

**Submission Date: 10 July 2025**

**Team Members:**

1. Shat Chakra Pawar Amgothu (71075197),
2. Xiaoshan Zhou (31740706),
3. Sujal Choudhary (71640579).

# Table of Contents

<b>QQM Research Report Title and Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Table of contents .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Acknowledgements .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Abstract .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>5~6</b>
<b>Literature Review.....</b>	<b>6~8</b>
<b>Research Methodology .....</b>	<b>8~9</b>
<b>Results.....</b>	<b>10~15</b>
<b>Discussion .....</b>	<b>15~17</b>
<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>18~19</b>
<b>Ethical Conditions .....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Bibliography.....</b>	<b>21</b>

# 1.Acknowledgements

Firstly, before we start to show you all about our research. We would like to thank our Professor, Mr. Shain Faiz, for teaching us all the topics and showing us real-life examples of how to conduct research, and my teammates for giving their fullest efforts to make this research happen. I would also like to thank my friends:

1. Ankit Choudhary
2. Aseem Sachdeva
3. Tharun Reddy
4. Praneeth Reddy

For supporting us throughout the research by providing their life as an example to make our research. They assisted a lot in making this research Precise by sharing their personal experiences, which served as much more meaningful examples and significantly contributed to the overall research. We sincerely thank everyone for their support throughout this research.

## 2. Abstract

This qualitative research explores the impact of **part-time work on university students** and how it contributes to academic burnout. The core problem addressed is **the emotional and mental strain experienced** by students who take on jobs to **cover tuition and living expenses**, often without financial help from their families. While this financial independence reflects **maturity and responsibility**, it frequently leads to exhaustion, stress, and reduced academic focus. The **purpose of this study is to better understand how students manage the demands of work and study simultaneously**, and how this affects their emotional well-being and motivation. Using a qualitative methodology, data was gathered through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and open-ended surveys conducted with students from several universities. **Thematic analysis was used to interpret the data.** Key findings show that many students experience **emotional fatigue, social isolation, poor academic performance, and heightened stress levels**. However, a few also **reported increased self-discipline and motivation** due to their drive to remain independent. Overall, the study reveals a need for universities to provide more tailored support for working students, such as **schedule flexibility and financial guidance**. These findings help build awareness of the emotional toll of part-time work and offer direction for future research on student burnout.

## 3. Introduction

### 3.1 General background

Part-time work among university students is increasingly popular, with many students relying on such occupations to **support themselves financially**, **alleviate family pressures**, and **achieve financial independence** at such a young age. However, the stress of finding a part-time job and academic commitments has resulted in widespread burnout among students, causing **emotional, psychological, and physical tiredness**. We still don't completely understand how students balance work and studies, or how part-time jobs affect their well-being, motivation, and academic achievement.

### 3.2 Problem Focus

Many university students work part-time or in small parts to cover living expenses and, more importantly, to relieve family pressures, yet most of them suffer from physical and mental issues. Existing research explores the **"balance between academic studies and work"** insufficiently, particularly in terms of students subjective experiences and viewpoints.

### 3.3 Problem Statement and Research Objectives

1. To explore how students who work part-time jobs to **manage their finances independently** and avoid **burdening their parents**.
2. To understand the **motivational impact and the student mindset** of balancing academic duties with part-time work from the perspective of university students.

### 3.4 Research Value and Scope

This study focuses on students who work part-time jobs apart from their university life to make themselves financially independent, and to make their parents proud by giving them the trust that their kid can support himself/herself without being a burden to their parents. Using Semi-structured interviews, Open-ended surveys, and Focus groups to listen to their stories and feelings. It can supplement the missing real-life experiences in previous studies. Our research can provide a good understanding of students true psychological and physical conditions, helping universities better support these students and make sure that their physical and mental health as well as good academic performance.

## 4. Literature Review

### 4.1 Overview of Existing Research

Numerous studies have acknowledged the correlation between part-time employment and burnout among university students, **primarily focusing on quantitative analyses of time pressure, role conflict, and academic performance**. For example, if we consider the relevant research information sources online have shown that students working over **20 hours weekly** are **more prone to sleep disorders** and reduced **study efficiency**, and the **interactive effect of financial** and academic stress on psychological exhaustion has also been highlighted. However, these studies predominantly rely on statistical methods, failing to explore the individual students subjective narratives and emotional dimensions of the students who work part-time or mini jobs.

## 4.2 Key Concepts / Themes

- **4.2.1 Burnout:** Studies show that part-time work causes **emotional, mental, and physical exhaustion in students**, but lack qualitative insights into their subjective experiences of this burnout.
- **4.2.2 Work-study-life balance:** Quantitative research finds long work hours disrupt balance yet ignores how job flexibility and cultural factors shape students' role-management strategies.
- **4.2.3 Motivation:** Part-time work motivations include extrinsic (e.g., financial) and intrinsic (e.g., career development) drivers, but studies don't distinguish "voluntary" vs "forced" work, limiting understanding of motivation shifts.
- **4.2.4 Financial dynamics:** Financial independence from part-time work boosts self-efficacy but brings stress; research fails to explore how students negotiate financial responsibility and its mental health impacts.
- **4.2.5 Academic stress:** Part-time work increases academic stress through time conflicts, but studies overlook mental burdens like anxiety about falling behind and students' perception of trade-offs.

## 4.3 Gaps in Existing Literature

**4.3.1 Qualitative Depth:** Ignores students' subjective stories of processing burnout, balancing, and their point of view on how they are independent.

## 4.4 Connection and existing work

**4.4.1 Connection:** Existing research has established correlations between part-time employment and student burnout, primarily through quantitative analyses of time pressure, academic stress, and role conflict.

**4.4.2 Existing work:** By centering student's lived experiences, this study aims to fill the gap in understanding that existing research lacks, offering actionable insights for university counseling services and policymaking to support part-time students' well-being.

## 5. Research Methodology

### 5.1 Research Design

This study adopts qualitative research design. Semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and questionnaires are used as the main methods. It aims to deeply understand the subjective experiences and emotional processes of part-time university students, rather than focusing on quantifying statistical relationships.

### 5.2 Themes

- Burnout dimensions (emotional, mental, physical exhaustion).
- Work-study-life balance (strategies/struggles to balance roles).
- Motivation dynamics (drivers like financial independence; demotivators like role conflict).
- Financial responsibility (intersection of financial pressure, academic stress, and burnout).

### 5.3 Population and Sampling

**5.3.1 Target Population:** Currently enrolled part-time university students who are studying Bachelor's, Master's, or PhD.

**5.3.2 Sampling Method:** Purposive sampling to ensure diversity in university year, major, job type, and work hours.



**5.3.3 Sample Size:** 20~25 students through **Student WhatsApp groups, online university forms, Friends of friends, and personal contacts**

#### **5.4 Data Collection**

- **5.4.1 Interviews:** One-on-one semi-structured interviews to capture personal experiences and emotions.
- **5.4.2 Focus Groups:** To observe group discussion and share issues among working students.
- **5.4.3 Surveys:** For the students who prefer not to speak and show who they are but can write about their life experiences.

#### **5.5 Variables and Operational Definitions**

- **5.5.1 Independent Concepts:** Part-time work characteristics (job type, hours, financial goals).
- **5.5.2 Dependent Concepts:** Burnout experiences (exhaustion, coping strategies).
- **5.5.3 Control Concepts:** Contextual factors (academic major, family financial support).

#### **5.6 Data Analysis Plan**

**5.6.1 Thematic Analysis:** Organize data into themes (e.g., stress, mental/physical health) and analyse intersections between work, study, and mental health.

**5.6.2 Narrative Analysis:** Analyse the timeline of students part-time jobs (such as when they started working in part-time jobs and when they began to feel tired of working), whether there were any unpleasant experiences with the employer during the part-time job.

## 6. Results

The qualitative results are organized around the major themes identified, accompanied by illustrative data displays. We first describe the participant work patterns to contextualize the level of commitment alongside studies. Then, we detail the emergent themes: **Academic Strain, Emotional and Mental Health Impact, Social and Personal Life Impact, Financial Motivations and Pressure**, and **Coping Strategies**. Each theme is supported by representative quotes and, where applicable, quantitative summaries from the survey (used for triangulation).

**6.1 Participant Work Hours:** Students in our sample worked between 5 to 30 hours per week at their part-time jobs. Most (around two-thirds) worked 10–20 hours weekly, while a smaller portion exceeded 20 hours.

(Table 1 shows the distribution of weekly work hours among the 30 participants)

Working hours per week	Number of students (N=30)	Percentage
<b>1 to 10 hours</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>11 to 20 hours</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>50%</b>
<b>21 to 30 hours</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>30%</b>

Most students, therefore, kept their work commitments at or below 20 hours, though nearly a third had workloads of more than 20 hours weekly. Several students noted that during peak times (e.g., holidays or exam periods), their work hours could spike unexpectedly, further straining their schedules. This **context of time allocation** is crucial: those logging more hours generally reported more severe burnout symptoms, aligning with prior findings that around 15–20 hours of work is a threshold after which academic performance declines.

**6.2 Reasons for Working Part-Time:** Students cited a variety of reasons for holding a job while studying, predominantly financial. Many needed incomes for tuition or living expenses, while others sought work experience or extra spending money. The primary motivations (as reported in the survey) are summarized in Figure 1.

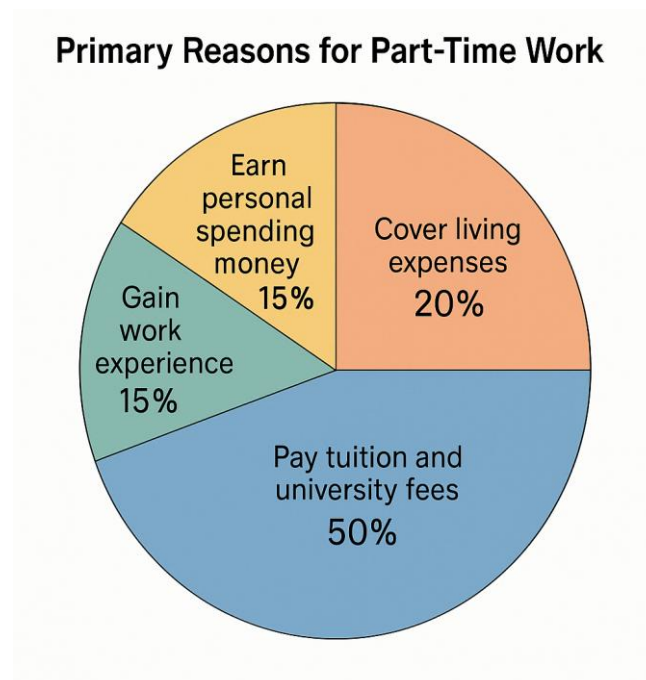


Figure 1: A pie chart showing students' primary reasons for part-time work. The majority (50%) work to pay tuition and university fees, and an additional 20% work to cover living expenses. Gaining work experience (15%) and earning personal spending money (15%) are also notable motivations.

As Figure 1 illustrates, financial necessity (tuition and cost of living) is the driving factor for most student workers (together 70%). One student explained, **"If I didn't work, I couldn't afford rent or living expenses such as Insurance,"** highlighting how basic needs push students into employment. Another 15% view working as an opportunity to gain experience or skills beneficial for their future careers, and a similar portion work for discretionary income.

### 6.3 Academic Strain and Performance Decline

Virtually all participants reported that working part-time negatively affected their academics to some degree. **Academic Strain** emerged as a core theme, encompassing difficulties in keeping up with coursework, reduced study time, and drops in grades or academic quality. Students often described a **tug-of-war** between job and studies. For example, one interviewee (Participant 5) said:

**"After completing a full evening shift, I'm exhausted and can't focus on homework. My assignments pile up, and I ended up with lower grades last semester."**

Common subthemes included **procrastination due to fatigue**, inability to attend study groups or office hours, and in some cases, contemplating dropping classes or credits. Several students noted their **GPA had slipped** since starting work. Survey responses echoed this: about 75% of respondents felt their academic performance had **"moderately or greatly suffered"**

because of their job. Figure 2 highlights how many participants perceived burnout impacting different aspects of their lives, including academics.

### 6.3 Emotional Exhaustion and Mental Health

The **Emotional Exhaustion** theme captures the toll on students' mental and physical well-being. Students commonly reported feeling **chronically tired, anxious, and overwhelmed**. Many used the very word "burnout" to describe their state. Signs of classic burnout were evident: **fatigue** ("I'm always running on empty"), **sleep problems**, irritability, and difficulty finding motivation to study. About 90% of participants indicated their emotional or health state had significantly worsened due to balancing work and study. One focus group member shared:

**"It's like a cycle: I work late, so I sleep less, then I'm too tired to pay attention in class, which stresses me out more. I feel emotionally drained all the time."**

Students described experiencing **heightened stress and anxiety**, especially around exam periods when academic demands peak but work schedules remain unforgiving. Several interviewees admitted to feeling **depressed or hopeless** at times, saying things like **"I often break down and cry from the stress."** These reflect how burnout among working students is not just an academic issue but a serious **mental health concern**, aligning with studies that link student burnout to anxiety and depression.

This visualization reinforces how **pervasive and intense negative emotions** were among the students. A few students felt **guilty** that they couldn't "do it all," blaming themselves for not handling the pressure better, which further harmed their mental state. Some mentioned feeling **isolated**, a transition to the next theme, in that their peers or professors did not fully understand their struggles.

## 6.5 Social Life and Personal Sacrifices

Burnout's impact was not limited to school and mental health; it also stepped into students' social and personal lives. **Social Isolation** and curtailed personal time emerged as significant issues. Over half of the participants noted that their **social life suffered** due to working and studying. Free time was often the first thing students cut out to make room for work or classwork. Students reported missing out on social activities, extracurriculars, or simply downtime. One survey respondent wrote, "**I've stopped going out with friends because I always have something due or a shift to cover. It's lonely.**"

Relationships with family and friends also took a hit. Several interviewees mentioned they became **irritable or withdrew from loved ones due to stress**. One student shared that he **stopped calling home as often because he was ashamed to always report being tired or doing poorly** in classes. **Personal hobbies** and self-care routines were largely abandoned, and few students had time for exercise, relaxation, or hobbies they once enjoyed.

Nonetheless, a few participants did try to **carve out small moments** for socializing or self-care as coping strategies (discussed under the Coping Strategies theme). **But commonly, working students perceived a trade-off: every hour spent on leisure was an hour they felt they "should" be working or studying**, so they often forewent social life to avoid falling behind or financial shortfalls.

## 6.6 Financial Pressure and Motivation

Unsurprisingly, **Financial Pressure** was a recurrent theme intertwining with all other aspects of burnout. Most students in this study worked out of necessity: **paying for tuition, housing, food, and other expenses** (as shown by the

majority slice in Figure 1). This financial stress served both as a motivation to work and as a source of anxiety. Students talked about constant worries regarding money; a focus group participant noted, **“Even when I’m studying, in the back of my mind I’m thinking about rent and bills.”** Such worries can detract from academic focus and contribute to mental strain.

Several students described feeling **trapped**: taking fewer shifts to rest or study was not an option because it might mean not meeting their budget. One interviewee, who worked ~25 hours/week, explained:

**“I know cutting back work hours would help my grades, but I literally can’t afford to. That financial stress is a huge weight on me.”**

In our sample, some students benefited from **support systems or financial aid** that eased pressure (e.g., supportive parents, scholarships), and they reported lower stress. But others, especially financially independent or low-income students, bore heavy burdens. One example was a student who revealed she **occasionally skipped meals to save money**, highlighting how acute financial strain and burnout can intersect.

Overall, the theme of financial pressure underscores that burnout for working students is not merely a time management issue, but also a socioeconomic one. Those with greater economic hardships are at higher risk of burnout. This suggests that solutions need to address financial support (through scholarships, stipends, or higher wages) alongside personal time management.

## 7. Discussion

This study’s qualitative findings reveal how did the interviews and surveys illustrated **how and why** this occurs in personal terms: exhaustion from long

days, constant time deficits, and the mental load of financial worry. These personal accounts put a human face on statistical trends reported by larger studies.

One striking pattern in our results is the interconnection of academic and emotional burnout. Students described a cycle where working long hours led to fatigue, which led to poorer academic performance, **which then increased stress and anxiety**, a vicious loop well-described in stress literature. This aligns with the conservation of resources theory, whereby the loss of time and energy resources in one domain (work) diminishes performance and well-being in another domain (academics), further draining emotions. Our participants reports of sleep difficulties, anxiety, and feeling “drained” mirror the symptoms of burnout identified by **Maslach and Leiter (2017)**, emotional exhaustion being chief among them. The presence of terms like **“depressed” and “hopeless”** in the word cloud is worrisome, echoing studies that link student burnout to mental health risks like depression. **This suggests universities should take student burnout seriously as a mental health issue, not just an academic one.**

The financial dimension of burnout was strongly evidenced in our study. Many students explicitly connected their stress to monetary concerns, a link supported by other research showing financial stress can precipitate anxiety and burnout. Our qualitative data adds depth by showing how financial pressures are felt on a day-to-day basis – from choosing work over study time to the cognitive distraction of money worries. These findings reinforce the idea that burnout in working students has a structural aspect: **rising tuition and living costs are driving students to work more, thus increasing burnout risk.** It becomes clear that tackling student burnout may require economic interventions (like financial aid, affordable housing, or food assistance) in addition to personal time-management advice.



Our results also demonstrate the social impact and potential invisibility of working students on campus, as noted by **Paulson (2023)** and colleagues. Participants feeling isolated or “**not a real college student**” because of work commitments underscores a gap in campus culture and support. This could partially explain why some students report burnout; they lack the social buffering and engagement that can make college enjoyable and reduce stress.

Interestingly, **not all outcomes were negative**. A subset of students in our study did manage to cope relatively well or even thrive. Those who found meaning or relevance in their work sometimes experienced less burnout, which dovetails with **Nugraha et al. (2023)**’s finding that intrinsically motivated students fare better than extrinsically motivated ones. Additionally, a few participants mentioned supportive employers or mentors. This points to potential protective factors: if a part-time job is **aligned with a student’s interests or career goals (e.g., an internship in their field)** and if employers offer flexibility (like adjusting schedules during exam weeks), students might experience more positive stress (eustress) and less burnout. **Future research could explore this “quality of work” aspect, not just hours worked, but how the nature of the job and workplace support influence student well-being, which is explained in the next part.**

There are a few contrasting views to note. While a couple of students in our sample did report becoming more organized thanks to their busy schedule, the predominant narrative was that beyond a certain point, the cons outweighed the pros. This difference might be due to our focus on burnout those who manage well might not label their experience as burnout and thus could be underrepresented in our sample. It’s possible that students who work only minimal hours (**say <10 per week**) or have ample support do not experience burnout and are less likely to participate in a study about burnout.

This highlights a need to consider the spectrum of experiences: **not all working students burn out**. Understanding what differentiates those who cope well from those who struggle is valuable.

In summary, University students with part-time jobs often face a triad of challenges such as **academic strain, emotional exhaustion, and financial pressure**, which collectively contribute to burnout. The qualitative lens reveals personal struggles behind statistics, reinforcing the urgency for interventions. The next section concludes with practical implications, limitations, and suggestions for future research.

## 8. Conclusion

**Summary of Findings:** This research examined burnout in university students holding part-time jobs. We found that juggling work and study creates significant stress, leading to academic difficulties, emotional exhaustion, and reduced social engagement. Major themes included academic strain (**e.g., falling grades and concentration issues**), emotional and physical fatigue (symptoms of burnout like **chronic tiredness and anxiety**), and social/personal life sacrifices (**isolation and lack of free time**). **Financial necessity** was a driving force behind student employment, linking economic stress to burnout. On a positive note, some students developed coping strategies and resilience, such as improved time management or seeking social support, though these were not universally effective.

**Limitations:** A few limitations of this study should be acknowledged. First, the sample size (20 to 25 students) is relatively small and may not capture all perspectives, and the experiences might differ in other universities or cultural contexts. The sample was also self-selected; students who chose to participate may have been those experiencing more severe burnout. Second,

the data are self-reported and thus subject to bias, such as **memory recall error or social desirability** (though we assured anonymity to mitigate this). Third, our study was cross-sectional, capturing a one-shot in time. Burnout levels and work circumstances can change over a semester; a long approach might reveal how student burnout evolves or how students adjust. Despite these limitations, the in-depth qualitative approach provides valuable insights that quantitative reports alone might miss.

**Future Research:** Building on this study, future research could explore several avenues. One suggestion is a comparative **study between students who work on-campus jobs vs. off-campus jobs**. On-campus employment might offer more flexibility or understanding of student needs, potentially resulting in different burnout outcomes. Additionally, as we have shown that the **financial stress is found to be at the core of this issue**, research on these financial issues (e.g., increased financial aid, work-study reforms) could be valuable. Lastly, qualitative research **focusing on success stories**, such as students who manage to thrive academically while working, could identify resilience factors that can be **taught or encouraged** in others.

Key Takeaways: Key takeaways from this study include:

- (1) Early warning signs of burnout (**fatigue, disengagement, declining grades**) should be identified and addressed proactively, especially in students known to be working long hours.
- (2) Support systems are crucial, and this can range **from counselling services and support groups** for stressed students to faculty being flexible with deadlines and employers offering student-friendly scheduling.
- (3) Students should be encouraged to **practice self-care and seek help** without hesitation; raising awareness that burnout is a common challenge

may prompt more students to utilise the resources rather than suffering in the silence.

In conclusion, burnout in university students with part-time jobs is a multifaceted challenge at the intersection of academic life, work life, and personal well-being. Addressing it requires a collaborative effort, **by students developing healthy coping strategies**, by universities creating **supportive environments and flexible policies**, and by society acknowledging and easing the **financial pressures on students**. By implementing supportive measures, we can help and ensure that working students not only survive their university years but thrive in both **their educational and employment endeavours**.

## 9. Ethical Considerations

Ethical protocols were diligently observed in this study to protect participants rights and well-being. Key ethical considerations included:

- **Informed Consent:** All participants received a clear explanation of the study's purpose, procedures, and their role (via a Consent Form). They were informed that participation was voluntary and that they could skip any question or withdraw at any time without any hesitation. Each participant **signed a written consent** form before the data collection began.
- **Confidentiality:** The identities of participants were kept confidential. Any potentially identifying details (specific workplaces, unique personal stories) were generalized or omitted to prevent recognition. Digital data **(audio recordings, transcripts)** were stored on a password-protected computer accessible only to the research team and will be deleted after a certain period.

## 10. Bibliography

1. Drăghici, **G.-L.**, & Cazan, **A.-M.** (2022). Burnout and Maladjustment Among Employed Students. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, Article 825588. DOI: 10.3389/fpsyg.2022.825588 [frontiersin.org](https://www.frontiersin.org)
2. Maba, **A. P.** (2022). Comparison of Burnout Based on Gender and Part-Time Work Among Higher Education Students. *Couns-Edu: International Journal of Counseling and Education*, 7(4), 171–175. DOI: 10.23916/0020220742140 [counsedu.iicet.org](https://counsedu.iicet.org)
3. Moore, **A.**, Nguyen, **A.**, Rivas, **S.**, Bany-Mohammed, **A.**, Majeika, **J.**, & Martinez, **L.** (2021). A qualitative examination of the impacts of financial stress on college students' well-being: Insights from a large, private institution. *SAGE Open Medicine*, 9, 20503121211018122 [pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov](https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov)
4. Paulson, **S.** (2023). Working Students: Balancing Academic and Work Lives. *Undergraduate Research Stories, University of Wisconsin–La Crosse (UWL)* [cur.org](https://cur.org)
5. Crown **Counseling** (2024). 30+ Eye-Opening Student Burnout Statistics That Demand Attention in 2024 [crowncounseling.com](https://crowncounseling.com)