

## **Evaluating the Influence of Working on Academic Progress of Pharmacy Students**

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### **Abstract**

*The prevalence of student employment in Iraq and many other nations has prompted the question of how working while studying affects students. Prior research is largely in agreement that working lengthy hours negatively affected students' educational attainment. However, little research has been conducted on the factors that predict students' decision to engage in time-consuming employment while they are still in school, and there has been little differentiation between fields of work. Our study, which is based on a sample of 1,462 pharmacy students from various public and private institutions or departments in Iraq (the study was aimed at fifth-graders), reveals that the risk of working varies significantly between student groups. In addition to financial necessity, the results indicate that working while studying may have positive outcomes. We emphasise that universities should assist students in establishing networks, obtaining insight into entry-level work, and bridging the breach to employment after graduation.*

**Keywords:** *Pharmacy students, working, studying, health, years to degree, Iraq.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Student employment has become ubiquitous in Iraq and numerous other nations, as well as a common practise among university students (1).

Changes in socio-demographic and socio-economic characteristics are partially responsible for the rising number of employed students. The majority of studies focus on characteristics such as gender, age, the educational attainment of parents, or ethnicity, while others examine reasons such as the rising cost of living and high tuition costs (2). Regarding future career opportunities is a further motivation for students to work concurrently with their studies (3), i.e. students are increasingly aware that gaining work experience is an effective strategy for securing employment after graduation (4).

Since various college disciplines are compensated differently on the labour market, the field of study is one of the primary determinants of the tendency to work while studying.

In addition to financial necessity, the decision to engage in some form of employment during university is typically motivated by the desire to acquire work experience and related skills that may enhance post-graduation employment opportunities (5).

The analysis of the (academic) costs and (employment) benefits of working experiences before graduation has been the subject of numerous studies over the past few decades, given the importance of this topic. The theoretical literature reveals the mechanisms

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underlying the relationship between employment while studying and academic or labour market performance.

The purpose of this paper was to take a more critical look at pharmacy students and the sectors of work as a factor that influences the education and health status and its effect on graduation rates.

## METHODS:

Data collection and analysis:

This study draws its information from a survey of student employment. Several previous studies (6, 7, 8) have utilised surveys to depict student employment. The preponderance of these studies, however, have not empirically examined the effects of term-time employment on time to graduation and the influence on the working field.

A cross-sectional study conducted in Iraq between November 2022 and January 2023 to investigate the effect of student employment and the type of employment on student standing.

1462 participating students from Karbala, Babylon, and Muthanna completed a paper survey and in-person interviews.

The fifth-grade students who participated in the study were from various public and private colleges or departments and had worked for at least two years. Except for this, responses were omitted.

Using a previously devised 26-item questionnaire, data were collected.

Questions 1 through 6 were demographic in nature (age, gender, province, marital status, etc.), while questions 7 through 14 pertained to employment while attending school. The remaining queries focused on the apparent effects of employment on health and academic skills.

Statistical analysis:

Statistical analysis was carried out using SPSS version 16. Categorical variables were presented as frequencies and percentages. Continuous variables were presented as mean  $\pm$  SD with 95% confidence interval. A p-value  $< 0.05$  was considered as significant.

## RESULTS:

The majority of the 1462 students who participated in the study had an average age of less than 25 years, 59% were females, and 41% were males.

The majority of them were from Karbala, with the remainder hailing from Babylon and Muthanna. To prevent bias, they were all final-year pharmacy college or department students from both public and private institutions.

Other participant characteristics were displayed as frequencies and percentages in table (1).

Table (1): characteristics of all participants

Variable	Types of the variables	frequency
Gender	female	59%
	male	41%
Type of study	Public	50%

	Private	50%
Average age	Less than 25 years	90%
	More than 25 years	10%
Province	Karbala	69%
	Babylon	7%
	Muthanna	24%
Marital status	single	93%
	married	7%
Employed	yes	42%
	no	58%

More than 600 pupils out of 1,462 were employed for more than two years. The table (2) was constructed to illustrate the various characteristics associated with them.

More than 68% of working students were male and laboured primarily for financial reasons, according to data collected. The majority of the remaining females laboured in the entertainment industry.

Significantly ( $p < 0.05$ ), a large number of them slept for less than 8 hours per day, which can be considered a risk factor in addition to the emergence of a variety of health problems, such as headache, arthritis, frequent flu and covid-19 infections, and other issues.

The negative impact increased as working hours and commute distance increased.

Table (2): sorting of working students

Variable	Types of the variables	frequency
Type of employment	in the field	75.3%
	Out of the field	24.7%
Intensity of working/day	Less than 5 hrs.	50%
	5 hrs. and more	50%
Average age	Less than 25 years	76%
	More than 25 years	24%
Reasons for working	financial	19%
	entertainment	17%
	both	64%
Distance to work	far	53.6%
	close	46.4%
Hours of study/day	Less than 6 hrs.	71%
	6 hrs. or more	29%
Sleeping hours/day	Less than 8 hrs.	89%
	8 hrs. or more	11%

Figure (1) was used to illustrate the effect of labour on academic advancement. The graph demonstrated that there is no statistically significant difference ( $p < 0.05$ ) between the two

groups in terms of the number of students who received failing grades, whereas grading may reveal statistically significant differences.

Employment in the field had a positive effect on student grades compared to employment outside of the field, as indicated by a statistically significant effect.

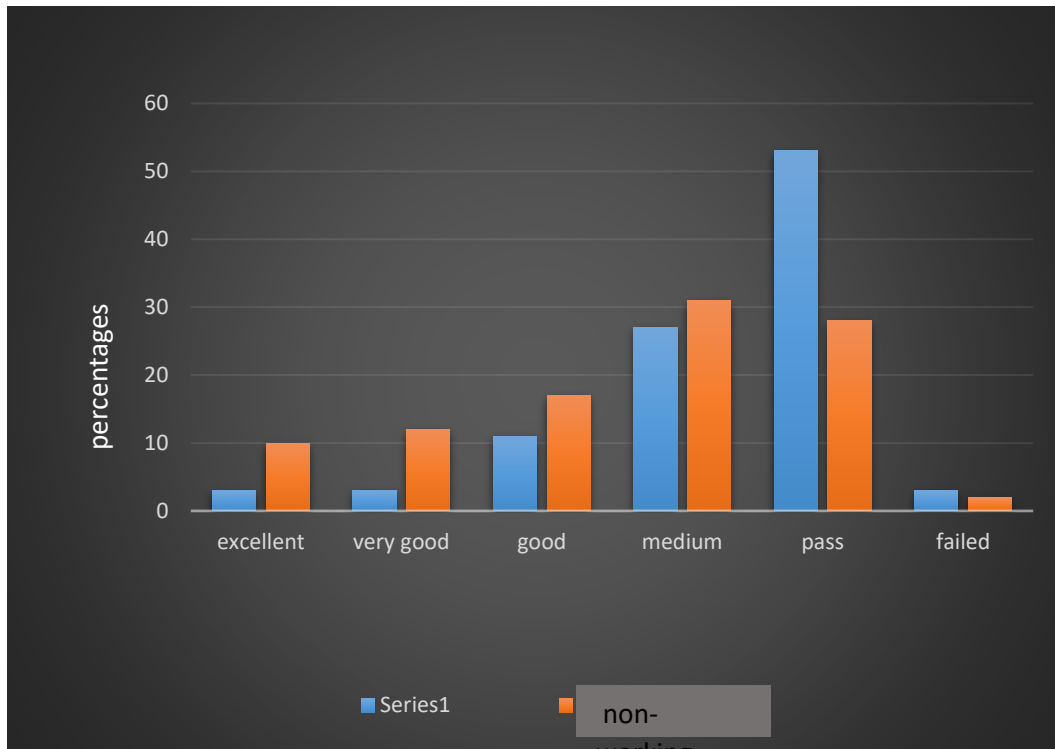


Figure (1): the impact of working on students grading.

## DISCUSSION:

Given the global increase in term-time employment over the past few decades, we were interested in the role that pharmacy students perceive it to play. We have hypothesised that term-time employment in higher education may play multiple roles. On the one hand, it may be a significant factor in a student's budget constraint, providing much-needed funding, but it may also divert time away from study, thereby impairing academic performance. On the other hand, temporary employment may aid in the development of additional marketable skills. We examined the role of students' employment using a 26-item survey of final-year pharmacy students that included questions about their academic performance, labour, and personal characteristics. Numerous positive effects of student employment have been reported by working students, including obtaining work-related experience, developing educational skills, boosting confidence, and enhancing time management abilities. Working modest levels of employment appears to be advantageous in terms of the skills developed, although other studies have identified a considerable positive influence on degree performance (9).

## CONCLUSION:

This study examined the relationship between working while studying and academic advancement, taking into account the role of work intensity and job relation to the field of work. Regarding academic outcomes, working while pursuing a degree does not substantially increase the time to completion. In contrast, working has a marginal effect on academic performance in terms of the likelihood of obtaining a higher grade.

Intriguingly, these findings emphasise the significance of assisting students in establishing networks, obtaining insight into entry-level work, and bridging the study lacuna caused by employment.

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