

A Phenomenological Study of Working Students' Challenges and Coping Mechanisms

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ABSTRACT

The study focused on the experiences of the senior high school students who are working and studying at the same time through phenomenological method of research. The study was conducted in Sindangan National Agricultural School during the School Year 2023-2024. Semi-structured questionnaires and focused grouped discussions were the methods of gathering the pertaining information. The thematic analysis was used in analyzing and interpreting the data collected from participants under purposive sampling.

Students face financial and psychological challenges, leading them to work as working students to help parents reduce school expenses. They multitask, wake up early, and perform various tasks. Despite feeling unsupported, they remain motivated to finish school and find jobs to support their families. They use coping strategies like time management, balancing work and school.

Working students face challenges in work and school, including lack of sleep, financial difficulties, and scheduling conflicts. Despite these, they find coping strategies like time management, social support, and determination. They also rely on family and friends.

To the working students, they may treat the time for studying like the time for working. They need to have balance for both. Time management is essential in working while studying. Working students must have proper time segregating their tasks from school and work. To the future researchers to increase the number of participants to attain more key themes and more accurate results. Teachers should motivate students to pursue their dreams, overcome challenges, and use student surveys to evaluate assessment methods and instructional strategies. They should also consider their educational needs periodically. To the parents to still guide their children by providing special time and making them feel valued. This boosts their abilities and strengths. School administrators should enhance instructional curriculum for working students, allocate dedicated sections, conduct profiling, strengthen programs, and implement intervention programs. They should also establish policies to monitor progress and implement coping strategies directly impacting their academic performance.

KEYWORDS: *Phenomenological study, Working students, Challenges, Coping mechanisms*

INTRODUCTION

Eight out of ten undergraduates choose to work part-time despite the financial burden of pursuing a higher education degree, highlighting the value of the advantages and difficulties of working while going to school (de Vera III)[1].

The fundamental driver for working while in school is a need for money, whether it be to supplement revenue to help with understudy understanding, make up for gaps in various forms of understudy support, or contribute to future goals. Additionally, it allows students to split the cost of tuition, fosters their sense of financial independence, and helps them refine their account management skills. In order to gain a greater knowledge of why people choose to work, the kind of jobs they accept, and the advantages and difficulties of working while pursuing higher education (HE)(Strada Education Foundation) [2]. Eight out of ten (77%) undergraduates are now working part-time to support their financial needs while attending school, according to data by Endsleigh [3]. As a working student, it is certainly challenging to strike a balance between your social life, family time, work, and studies. Stress levels will be significantly decreased by making sure the student has at least one night off each week and by educating them how to deal with the pressures of working while still an undergraduate.

Despite their financial difficulties, Filipino students are nonetheless able to support themselves through employment. Freeman Cebu Lifestyle [4] offers internet jobs, paid corporate internships, fast-food crew, and school roles to describe the employment options for Filipino working students. Filipino students suffer because they have to maintain high standards in both their employment in order to keep their jobs and in their academic standing in order to avoid obtaining a failing grade. Over 216,000 students in the Philippines are currently juggling employment and study, according to the most recent statistics from the Commission on Higher study (CHED). In the Philippines, 8% of all college students are also employed, according to ABS-CBN News from 2010. Only around half of students who are employed complete college, as many struggle with concentration, others leave school due to illness, and still others give up because of financial issues. The Commission on Higher Education, Cordillera Administrative Region (CHED-CAR) is concerned about the low completion rates of higher education in Baguio City. Sebulen&Kitani [5] asserts that low wages in the City of Baguio led to pupils juggling employment and school, which contributed to their poor scholastic performance. As a result, students who are struggling financially spend more time working than studying, which has a negative impact on their academic performance.

Strada Education Foundation [2] noted that students frequently work for a variety of motives, including financial gain and supporting one another's academic aspirations. The study by Furr and Elling [6] confirms that working students frequently experience financial challenges. Darolia[7] asserts that working as a student can have a negative impact on academic achievement and frequently results in students losing motivation and dropping out. 34.1% of junior, senior, and including college students who joined the workforce between January and October 2019 are currently employed. While research on working students already exists, it tends to focus on industrialized countries, creating a knowledge gap on students in developing countries. If employment at a young age proves to be beneficial for the economy, the high proportion of working pupils may contribute to profit inequities. The inadequacies in the existing studies must therefore be further investigated in order to fully comprehend the experience of working students.

But if employment at a young age proves beneficial for the economy. Thus, the high proportion of employed students could be a factor in the profit discrepancies that were later found (Cruz & Cruz) [8]. In order to fully understand what a working student is and to analyze the experiences of working students, the researchers must consider the gaps in this study because there are various potential outcomes. In order to identify the fundamental differences between working and non-

working students, it is important to understand the challenges that working students experience. Finding relevant information about how working students overcame their difficulties is the next step. The study makes an effort to comprehend the motivations of working students. Finally, but most importantly, to fully appreciate what it means to be a working student and to help the students realize what it entails to work while learning. This study's main objective is to comprehend the whole range of a working student's life.

In Sindangan National Agricultural School where the researcher is currently teaching, it is not a new scenario that there are quite a lot of working students among the Junior and Senior High School. Among the Grades 11 and 12 Senior High School Students, the guidance center have recorded about 25 working students and most of these numbers have been studying as working students at least two years. These students share various experiences attributing to their situations like studying while working. In a short encounter with few of these students, the researcher learned diverse experiences from them. Some students shared that they need to work part-time to sustain their daily expenses, to support expenses for their projects, learning materials and even to the point of sharing what they earned to their parents and younger siblings. Hence, the researcher envisions of pursuing this investigation to shed light and to gain better understanding of the students' experiences as working students, their challenges and how these experiences impacted their academic performance.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

It was the focus of the study to investigate through phenomenological method the experiences of the working senior high school students of Sindangan National Agricultural School during the school year 2023-2024.

Specifically, the study dealt with the following problems:

1. What are the challenges of the working students?
2. What are the coping mechanisms of the working students?

METHODOLOGY

This study used a qualitative research method that refers to non-numerical data that helped the researcher collect meaning from the data gathered to understand the lived experiences by studying the target population or place. A qualitative method was used to explore more in-depth and rich data for the study. The researcher applied descriptive phenomenological design. Descriptive phenomenology is concerned with revealing the "essence" or "essential structure" of any phenomenon under investigation – that is, those features that make it what it is, rather than something else.

The study was conducted in the municipality of Sindangan, Zamboanga del Norte during the School Year 2023-2024. It is within Region IX in the Zamboanga Peninsula. Tricycles and "habal-habal" are the common public transport in the town center. Specifically, the study was conducted among three secondary schools in the district of Sindangan, Zamboanga del Norte, School Year 2022-2023.

A total of 15 participants were identified using purposive sampling. The researcher took working students who have at least two years of working experiences while studying and they were currently enrolled as Grades 11 and 12 senior high school students of Sindangan National Agricultural School in the District of Sindangan, Sindangan, Zamboanga del Norte.

Structured questionnaires were prepared by the researcher which contains open-ended questions related to the experiences, challenges and coping strategies of working students. The structured questions or interview guide was used since it lists possible questions that may uncover the necessary information needed by the researcher during the in-depth interview. The data were gathered during the face-to-face interview with the participants.

Ethical clearance was elicited from the School Principal of Sindangan National Agricultural School. In addition, the following ethical principles, namely, debriefing, informed consent, voluntary participation and confidentiality, were upheld in this study. Firstly, in applying the principle of informed consent, the researchers discussed the study with the participants and then requested for their consent by signing a consent form to show their willingness to participate in the study. Secondly, the principle of voluntary participation helped the researcher to assure the participants of their freedom to express themselves without any coercion and the liberty to withdraw at any point they wanted to. Thirdly, the researcher managed the anonymity and confidentiality of participants' personal information and research data by instructing the participants to hide any means of personal identification such as names and identity numbers and by keeping the data collected strictly for research and education purposes only. Concerning debriefing, at the end of the fieldwork, the researcher reiterated the intention of the research to the participants to debunk any misconceptions and anxieties they might have about the study and its findings.

The data on the experiences, challenges, and coping strategies of the students were analyzed using thematic analysis. In the conduct of thematic analysis, the following steps were followed: 1) transcribing data from digital recorded and from field notes, 2) making meaning-based translation from the vernacular language to the English language, 3) identifying the significant statements in the transcript interview, 4) generating codes, 5) highlighting key phrases, and 6) defining and naming themes to cohere around a central idea.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Challenges of the Working Students

The students who are working part-time jobs while studying experienced real-life situations which opted and encouraged them to study at the same served other people or entities.

The working students were able to support themselves financially through various job options such as store keeper and helpers, household helpers and school job. According to Darolia[7], Filipino students are struggling because they have to meet the standards in their work so that they will not lose their job and maintain academic performance so that they will not get a failing grade. The ABS-CBN News [9] explained that about 8% out of the total number of college students in the Philippines are working students.

As working students, they experienced different challenges which are often different from normal students. In this phenomenological research, the researcher gathered challenges of working

students. Among the challenges experienced by the working students concerned their real-life experiences.

Among the real-life experiences of the working students centered on their feeling of burden. They felt that the burden as they need to work to provide for their own needs which their parents are not inadequately providing them. Their parents may have provided for their studies but owing to the demands of complying with requirements at school, this provision may seem to be inadequate. Devlin, James & Grigg [10] concluded that financial needs and the opportunity to gain experiences will ultimately enhance career opportunities in the future. While working part-time and studying full-time has a variety of positive outcomes, respondents generally viewed part-time employment as a necessity to survive in the contemporary higher education sphere. Manthei and Gilmore's [11] study, noted that the money earned from part-time employment is spent usually on essential living expenses. From the perspective of students themselves, part-time work is often an introduction to the real world which will assist them both in personal and career development especially in higher education sector (Tymon) [11].

Theme 1 – Financial Challenges

“As a working student, there are times that I really feel the burden as a working student but I just thought that this could have a significant help in my needs for school as my boss provided for my needs especially expenses and fees for school-related activities. In exchange for their kindness, I just have to tackle the household chores and to serve them”. (Student 2)

“To help their parents in a way that their parents could be spared from the expenses they have to incurred from schooling.” (Student 1)

“When I graduated from high school, my lola told me that she could not afford to send me to college as I'm from a broken family. My lola asked her friend who is a teacher to help me study as a working student in the school or household even for free food.” (Student 6).

“For me lisodkaayo ang working student kay pagbahinsatrabahougpag-skwela.” (Student 4)

“Motabangsapanimalay, silapudgatabangnakosaakong needs sa school para akomakalampossaakongpagskwela.” (Student 3).

Some of the working students noted that there were times that they really felt that life is hard as they need to juggle their time with assignments, household chores, projects and school-related activities.

“It's very hard because I need to study, sometimes I have to bring my assignments sa plaza to study.” (Student 5)

Another working student claim that although they felt down sometimes, they experienced the encouragement of other people which gave them strength and determination to pursue their ambitions of finishing education. Student 7 commented that:

“My aunt told me – maningkamot ka para makahuman ka ugskwela and send me to school in Sindangan.” (Student 7).

*“Magbantayugiro, nagtrabahasamga normal
ngagingbuhatonsapanimalaysaakongamongaAmerkano, dilimabilar,
ugmagbantaysaiyang apartment.” (Student 9)*

*“Gusto sad kog working, diliko gusto silang mama sigeghatagnakogkwarta, gusto
gyudkomakatabangpudko – dilisilamadak-ansagastos, I work in the carenderia as a
server and dishwasher. I worked from 5 pm to 11 pm or night shift.” (Student 1)*

*“I don’t like to become just like my parents nga life is very hard for them so dapatmo
human gyudkogskwela.” (Student 13)*

“Puhon-puhonmakatabangkonilasailangkalisod.” (Student 10).

*“Kay akong parents are farmers and we are many in the family, apekesa money, so
my mom decided for me to study as a working student to help me to finish my study.”
(Student 11)*

*“I want to finish school – kay grabekalisodakongmga parents, I want to become a
teacher to help pupils to learn.” (Student 4).*

*“My lola can’t afford to send me to school and my parents can’t support because
they separated and have their own families.” (Student 6)*

Chantrea et al. [13] disclosed that working students’ ultimate goal was to become financially independent and to improve their skills. Similarly, Abenoja et al. [14] stated that most students work for financial reasons and it provides an internal motivator for them to work more even if they are still studying since they earn money. They are also joyful while they work since they gain while learning. As an advantage, they gained experience in a real-world working environment and even agreed that their academic performance improved. As mentioned by Delprato&Alyeampong[15], only a few studies discovered that work and learning can be partially significant if they involved learning-by-doing.

Abenoja, et al. [14] identified that financial support, self-development and internal motivation are among the driving forces of working while studying at University. In addition, students need to combine work and study to meet the expenses of a university degree, and therefore, those with less financial resources as most affected. Students go to work to earn money to support themselves and pay for college as well as to gain valuable experiences.

Theme 2: Time Management

Balancing employment and education is no easy task. Students who are employed frequently become caught up in a maze of due dates, test dates, and employment schedules. It's more than just time management; it's also about effective planning and time optimization.

One challenge related to time management was identified by the participants as time constraints. Working students typically have less time for academic work, which often leads to increased stress and lower academic performance (“The Impact of Stress on Academic Performance: Strategies for High School Students”) [16].

As a student, it is necessary to have time management, enabling them to attain a particular task in a given time. However, students do not get enough sleep, resulting to sluggishness, impairs their productivity in academic activities, and sometimes resulting to poor grades. Nevertheless, procrastination also impairs time management, forcing students to submit school tasks late (Alyami et al.) [17]. Furthermore, students vary the difficulties to meet the deadlines of their school activities due to the time separation between the school tasks and household tasks as the result of their productivity in school chores can affect.

Additionally, the long hours spent on work and studies may result to fatigue and lack of sleep for the working students, ultimately may affect their academic performance. Solmiano et al. [18] concluded that most working students experience struggles to work and school, especially lack of sleep because of conflicting schedule aside from the toxic environment caused by co-working students and customers.

Also, the balance between work, study, and personal time can be compromised, giving priorities to work and studies. However, as one participant noted, it needs to have determination and setting goals to succeed never minding sacrificing taking time off or taking leisure time.

“Dili puedena ma late ka, or dilipuedema delay ka sa work shift, then naa pay practice sa school.” (Student 1)

“Naay time ngadapatmo early ka then naa pa ka dapattowasonsaimonggi-workingang, dapatmahuman because of responsibility para malipaypudimongamo, medyolisod because you have to wake up early.” (Student 2)

“Double time sapag study especially than I’m graduating, need nako, there are a lot of activities in school like research.” (Student 3)

“Oras ang importante, working kosa household, magbantaysatindahan, usahaymaka absent if molakaw ang amo, usahaydugaymakatulog kay wala pa nahuman ang mgatrabahuon.” (Student 8).

“tungod kay daghan man ang atimanonngamatrabahunon as working student, walanagyud time para sa personal ngagingbuhaton or bisagginagmayngakalingawan,” (Student 13)

Theme 3: Psychological Challenges

Among the psychological challenges that most of the working students were facing included the feeling that they almost give up, however thinking that their sacrifices can be paid off later, they were motivated to pursue with their inclination being a working student. Faragher, Cass & Cooper [19] explained that some students who study while working experienced decreased mental health, burnout, lower self-esteem, increased anxiety, depression, stress and strain.

“Makasab-ankasimongamo, nay instances nga almost mo give up na ka, perosaimongkaugalingonon ka ngamopadayonlanggyud ka.” (Student 1).

Some working students revealed that in order to fulfill their academic aspirations, they must concentrate on their activities and strive toward finishing their degrees. The remark highlights how crucial it is to put education first even in the face of job demands.

Gaining a degree increases one's chances of finding better employment and advancing in their profession. In order to get the knowledge and abilities required for future success, they must prioritize their education. They are making an investment in their future and raising their chances of success by concentrating on their education.

“Para mahumanimongmgapangandoy, need to focus, dili mag overthink sakaagisaimong family, focus to finish your schooling.” (Student 11)

“Kanangkasab-an ka, maka think ka to stop being a working student, like petty ngasala, you need to be understanding saimongamo kay natural na man gyud ng makasab-an, pero need to focus on studying and on tasks, dili mag gahiugulo, basin paundangonhinuon ta as working student.” (Student 2)

“Studying while working – helps me to grow to become independent especially in schooling because you need to focus sa tasks sagi-workingan.” (Student 13)

“Need for support from parents.”

“Need momataugsayo, peromaka realize rapudngadapat mag agwanta kay I need to fight to finish my study.” (Student 10).

Financial hardship and working while a student shouldn't be viewed as insurmountable obstacles to reaching academic objectives. It may bring new difficulties, but they may be conquered and academic success can be attained with perseverance, fortitude, and the correct support networks in place “Supporting Student Success in the New Normal) [20].

Being a working student and experiencing financial difficulty calls for resiliency and perseverance. Students can overcome obstacles and work toward academic success by keeping a positive outlook and remaining committed to their goals.

Financial hardships can be a strong incentive for kids to achieve academic success. Students may be motivated to work harder and stay dedicated to their studies in spite of obstacles they encounter by the desire to better their situation and provide a better future for themselves.

Being in a difficult financial condition might encourage ingenuity and resourcefulness in overcoming challenges in the classroom. In order to further their academic goals, working students can investigate grants, scholarships, part-time study opportunities, and other accessible resources.

“I want to become a teacher, but I can't achieve it if I won't study, so dili hindrance gyud ang being poor – working student to achieve my goals.” (Student 3)

“Wala nagyudnagsaligsaaakongmgaginikanan, I can stand on my own as an independent woman.” (Student 1)

“Ang pagka working student – para maningkamotgyudko, to work on what I want to do, and to finish my study.” (Student 5)

“Can't be avoided nganaagyud barriers ma encounter. You can't afford just to relax and sit, have to spend my free time to help in the canteen, I have to bilar to study, lack of sleep most specially during examination – it's very important to maintain my grades.” (Student 6).

“To help my parents, get my own job, build our house and to provide food, to become a nurse to help my relatives to assist them in their health.” (Student 7).

“Being a working student has impacts on me. Yes, ma apektuhanakongpagskwela. Like if I have assignment I can’t work on them right away – labina if naa pa mga customers sacarenderia. Pag-ulisabalay, that’s the time to complete my assignment, dilimasabay ang pag work and paggama assignment. During Saturday and Sunday, I also help in the household.” (Student 8).

“I experienced the encouragement of my amo to study. And also my own conviction to study as a working student, because murag kaya ra man gyudnako mag working, independent and make it a challenge and pag working student.” (Student 12)

“I feel exhausted and tired sometimes, especially if daghankaayomga customers sacarenderia where I am partially working. No time for lag or night life. And if there are emergency activities sa school, I can’t attend to practices in school activities, sometimes I am allowed but other times I am not permitted.” (Student 15)

“Challenging ang life ang pagka working student, usahayhago but sometimes okay lang, kapoyngamakalingaw.” (Student 8).

“Need to be strong with yourself, strong with your work para unsa ang mgapagsubok that you encounter, need to be strong ugmolabangyud for the future to finish my study. Don’t have regrets kay nabutangsa situation that you need to finish study.” (Student 2)

“It gives me growth, confidence and to stand on my own, to decide on my own, kay ugnarasabalay, we just depend on others. During my working student, I learn what to do which is right, wala nay kadangpan, sometimes I would ask why did it happen to use – my father left us at early age.” (Student 12)

“Dakoug impact ang pagka working student. If ever I will finish my study, then I will have the chance to help my parents. And it’s not easy to study while working.” (Student 13)

“It’s a hard situation but at the same time, it’s comforting to think that I can finish my study with my own hardships and I’m very proud of myself – and try my very best that my ambition to finish my college degree will be realized.” Student 13

“To realize that magtarongsa school – dilimagbinuang, dilisayangan ang ilangpagtabang.” (Student 14)

“I belong to a broken family. I have the feeling of being alone and left out to stand on my own and think that no one is looking for my needs especially my financial problems, so I need to resort to work while studying as a working student to sustain on my needs. Sometimes, I feel envious of my classmates especially those whose parents manifest their support and care for their children which I don’t have.” (Student 10)

Table 1. Students' Challenges as Working Students

| Emerging Themes | Sub-Theme | Initial Code |
|--------------------------|---|--|
| Financial Challenges | Participants belonged to low-income families | Assist their parents in reducing the expenses they incur from schooling by studying as working student. |
| | School-related expenses from requirements | The need to serve the guardian by doing household chores and errands at the same time they have to study, complete assignments and work on school projects and attend school activities |
| Time Management | Schedule conflicts in school and work | Wake up very early to complete errands and household chores Studying when everything is done (household chores, errands, selling ballot, and watching store) Performing multitasking – studying while watching the store or selling ballot, studying while watching the dog of my sponsor, studying while doing the household chores |
| Psychological Challenges | Feeling of giving up Perseverance and work hard | They have encouragement to work hard to finish their school, to find a job to help their respective families. |
| | Feeling of being alone Need for support from parents, or close friends and relatives | The feeling that there is no one to support them in terms of their materials needs, financial as well as their emotional needs. |

It revealed that the working student participants were mostly challenged in the financial aspect. The students were working while studying due to their low economic conditions and the need to support their academic pursuits. Students choose to study while working due to poverty and the provision of their needs as students (Dias)[21]. Carnevale & Smith [22] confirmed that low-income

working learners face a distinct set of challenges. Their decisions about the methods they use to finance their education is correlated closely with socio-economic factors such as household income and their parents' level of education.

Coping Mechanisms of the Working Student

Coping is a way to deal with challenges and preserve wellness. Coping skills help to tolerate, minimize, and cope with challenging events and experiences especially as a working student. For instance, working students have several challenges to cope with.

Coping strategies describe how a person reacts to stress. These are specific behavioral and psychological efforts that people use to manage and resolve stress caused by unfavorable events (Khanapurkar et al.) [23]. From the book of Stephenson & DeLongis [24] they expounded that coping strategies can be combined, with one type of coping aiding or preventing the use of efficiency of another as no single coping strategy is ideal for all situations.

Students preferred to use positive coping strategies, specially grit, because accepting and dealing with demanding situations require a high level of determination. Students' levels of effort and coping strategies are also influenced by their beliefs about their own abilities and how much control they have over the results (Hsieh et al.) [25]. Moreover, Tan & Pang [26] emphasized the significance of using accomplishment goals as a framework to understand the types of coping mechanisms employed as well as how these coping mechanisms affect how students respond to unfavorable feedback. Yazon et al. [27] explained that it can be assumed that students will perform better academically if they can adjust and handle academic and personal challenges better.

As working students balance the demands of their jobs with their academic obligations, they frequently encounter a special set of difficulties. They use a variety of situation-specific coping strategies to deal with these difficulties.

Solmiano et al. [28] explained that despite experiencing and facing various challenges, working students tend to find alternative ways to overcome difficulties. They are adaptable and persistent in the face of adversity. Most of them seek social support from their immediate family, close friends and even their classmates and teachers.

Theme 1: Time Management

Time management was mostly observed and practiced by the working students. They considered it very vital so that they could properly managed their different tasks, prioritizing those which have deadlines to be meet. They organized their activities so that everything is planned and nothing is left out especially those which could affect their relationship with their guardian ensuring smooth understanding thus continuously providing them with their immediate needs especially school-related requirements. They keep records of their activities and jobs to be accomplished. They also ensure that they set time to study and to do personal matters. They rank the assignments according to their priority and urgency. Through prioritizing assignments and meeting deadlines, they effectively manage their workload and guarantee that important tasks are completed on time.

“Balance my time.” (Student 9)

“Balance work and school – to wake up early to report to the store-galingan or pwestosa market.” (Student 8)

“Time management – early to rise to do the household tasks, attend school and dili mag lag-laag.” (Student 7)

Time management is key for working student. It can feel overwhelming according to Aeon&Panaccio[29], but there are some practical steps that they can take to balance their school and work responsibilities. Hamid &Eissa[30] emphasized prioritizing the things to be done and students need a clear idea of what they need to do. Students need to have a sense of the order in which they should tackle the tasks which need to be completed.

“Akonggibahin ang akong time, sapanimalayugsapag study. Sa pagmatabung, sayogyud. Kaadlawon para naa paytime to study, to work saakongamo; then after school to work again with my amo then after maka study.” (Student 4)

“Need ngaabtikgyud ka para dalirama humanugsayomakaadto sa school. Dapatpaspasa work.” (Student 10)

Theme 2: Social and Emotional Support

A study found that the comfort in having a support system from family, friends, and significant others is a common coping mechanism (Maquiling) [31]. Likewise, working students of Israel deal with the causes of stress by using task-oriented methods, and they cope with the perceptions of employing emotion-oriented solutions.

It can be noted from the participant's answers that their immediate family like my sister and grandmother, some friends and classmates and even teachers served as their springboard of their problems. Having a strong support system from family, friends and significant others is the most adhered coping mechanisms of working students as disclosed by Maquiling[31]. As Student 9 commented,

“Sa akonglovelife, akong ate; as to my problems, akong sister nga nag adopt nako including my problem with my research as requirement of my subject.” (Student 9).

“My lola is my support networking. My father is working in Manila and my mother is an OFW. In terms of my school problems, I sought attention from my lola; akongamo for the school obligations; I have few friends because I am a transferee student.” (Student 8)

“Relying on my difficulties on my mother; for financial matters or mgadagkonabayrunonsa school saakonggi-workinganggaakong ante, and sideline for additional income.” (Student 7)

“I have my sister to turn to whenever I go home whenever I have problems, I always share these to my sister, like problems with difficulty understanding my subjects. I also have problems in relation to my guardian scolding me. Whenever scolded by my guardian, ipalaposlang sapikasdalungganlang ang kasaba because I really wanted to finish my study.” (Student 12)

“During weekends, if naaymagpalaba and house cleaning, I will grab them for my personal needs and contributions to schools.” (Student 6)

“Si maam, subject teachers, friends especially my close friends, they also share and give advice, let me borrow money and its okay for them if I pay it later because they know my situation as a working student.” (Student 13).

Theme 3: Need to Focus and Determination

Despite the participants’ crucial situation, they can face challenges as being working student by being determined and having focus on their life situations. As Student 11 stated:

“Dapatnaay focus saimong work ugsa school. But sometimes, dilima apply sige, perodapat mag kugilanggyud.” (Student 11)

“Unsaonnakopag kaya – determinadolangugdapatnaka focus ang attention sa work and study, just thinking kung unsa ang kahinatnan of my sacrifices and hard work, dapatamalampasangyudnakotanangpagsulay, maonangabisaglisodkaayokayahongyud, dapat positive mindset gyud.” (Student 6).

“I don’t have somebody to share my problems, my family does not worry about me, dililang I dibdib or itagosakaugalingon, kalimtanlang para dili ma lisuran – because that’s the reason nga ma blank ka, Luom-luomra ang problema until you forget and ma happy ra ka.” (Student 2).

Maquiling[31] found out in his study having the strong determination to finish their study is among the most preferred coping strategies of working students. In addition, the study concluded that most of the working students have high hopes for their career someday.

When students plan their time, they need to remember also that they need time to unwind and relax. As Maslach [32] clearly stipulated that making time to decompress and de-stress is important to avoid burnout. Taking a short break can help an individual refocus. When coming back to work, they could even be more productive. But resisting the urge to always choose a “fun” pursuit over the more challenging things, an individual needs self-discipline as noted by (Boniwell et al.) [33]. Being able to balance work, play and rest is key to achieving goals, but it takes practice and honesty. Students need to tune into their needs but also be real with themselves about whether a break will help them or if it’s just a way for them to justify not doing something they don’t want to do.

Table 2.*Coping Mechanisms of the Working Students*

| Emerging Themes | Sub-Theme | Initial Code |
|-----------------|---------------------|--|
| Time management | Creating a schedule | Balancing work and school tasks Waking up early to accomplish household tasks, help in the store and in the market, cleaning the house and pet. Setting a schedule of tasks not to miss any important chores |

| | | |
|------------------------------|---|--|
| | Setting priorities | Setting the household and tasks as working student as the top priorities Most urgent assignments and meeting deadlines |
| Social and emotional support | Sought support from immediate family, friends, classmates | Have my sister, mother, grandmother, classmates and friends as my problem absorbers Seeking friends which requires other tasks like washing clothes and cleaning their house as sources of additional income Have some friends who can lend me small amount of money for emergency cases |
| Focus and determination | Being determined and stay focus in facing challenges | Not taking problems too seriously Positive mindset |

CONCLUSIONS

Most working students experience struggles to work and school, especially lack sleep because of conflicting schedules. Working students face financial challenges, schedule conflicts in school and work. Despite experiencing and facing various challenges, working students tend to find alternative ways or coping strategies to overcome challenges. They are time management, social and emotional support and having determination and focus. The working students find comfort to have a strong support from family, friends and significant others as their source of coping mechanism aside from their high hopes and determination in finishing their studies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To the working students, they may treat the time for studying like the time for working. They need to have balance for both. Time management is essential in working while studying. Working students must have proper time segregating their tasks from school and work. To the future researchers to increase the number of participants to attain more key themes and more accurate results. To the teachers to motivate students to pursue and reach their dreams. For them to never give up and surpass all the challenges they encounter. The teachers can use the working student's survey to appraise alternative methods of assessment and instructional strategies. Likewise, teachers are advised to consider their situation as they are coping with educational requirements

periodically, since this has always been one of their dilemmas. To the parents to still guide their children by providing special time and making them feel valued. This boosts their abilities and strengths. School administrators to develop or enhance instructional curriculum in favor for working students. Likewise, the school may allocate a section exclusively for working students. This is to ensure that they are well-monitored and provided with a well-deserved academic care. School authorities and other internal stakeholders should conduct profiling of the working students to strengthen their programs and policies in order to strategically respond and support disadvantaged and underprivileged students. The school administrators may establish a policy to monitor the progress of working students and implement an intervention program in light of coping strategies that have direct impact on their academic performance.

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