

JUGGLING BETWEEN WORK DEMANDS AND ACADEMIC SUCCESS IN NIGERIA

BY

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Abstract

This paper embarks on a comprehensive exploration of the intricate dynamics involved in harmonizing occupational demands with academic achievement, specifically within the context of working-class students in Nigerian tertiary institutions. Employing qualitative research and secondary data analysis, it sheds light on the challenges encountered by these students as they seek to reconcile work commitments with their pursuit of higher education. The findings reveal the substantial hurdles faced by working-class students in their quest to strike a harmonious equilibrium between their professional responsibilities and academic endeavours. This equilibrium is shaped by factors such as the intensity and relevance of their work commitments, as well as their individual circumstances. Working-class students are found to navigate a delicate balancing act between their vocational duties and academic responsibilities. This often necessitates difficult trade-offs, where students must weigh the benefits of economic stability against their pursuit of educational attainment, resulting in varying impacts on their academic performance. The study highlights the indispensable role of effective coping mechanisms, which enable individuals to adapt to their societal roles and facilitate the harmonious coexistence of various societal components. Recognizing the need for suitable coping mechanisms is of critical importance for universities and educational institutions. Tailoring support systems to address the specific challenges encountered by working-class students is essential to ensure their ability to navigate the complexities of modern higher education without compromising their academic potential. Despite inherent limitations arising from the availability and quality of existing literature, this research provides valuable insights into an increasingly relevant facet of higher education. It contributes to the academic discourse by emphasizing the significance of understanding the distinctive challenges and adaptive mechanisms intrinsic to working-class students as they endeavour to maintain a delicate equilibrium between their work and educational pursuits.

Keywords: Academic success, Challenges, Coping strategies, Work-study balance, Working-class students

Introduction

In recent years, an increasing awareness of the interconnected dynamics between work and academic performance has emerged. The relationship between occupational demands and academic achievements, influenced by the convergence of work and studies, has gained significant scholarly attention. This trend is particularly evident in Western Europe and North America, where the surge in working-class students has reshaped higher education. Formerly a minority, working-class students now constitute the majority on American college campuses (Fjortoff, 2015). This shift is reflected in statistics showing that nearly three-quarters of employed students devote at least 10 hours weekly to work (Pascarella et al., 2018). Concurrently, research by Riggert et al. (2016) highlights a substantial rise in students seeking employment during tertiary education, with over 50% of those under 24 engaging in work throughout the academic year. Tertiary institutions aim to cultivate accomplished graduates equipped with skills demanded by employers. However, the challenge of balancing work and studies, particularly for working-class students, can affect academic outcomes, resulting in lower GPAs and carryover courses (Hanson, 2020). While success drives students to manage work and academics, overwhelming demands may lead to students abandoning education or work. This challenges the ability to graduate skilled candidates meeting job market requirements. This situation highlights challenges arising from combining work and studies in tertiary education.

Balancing work and studies involves a multitude of demands. Occupational demands involve role-specific responsibilities crucial for organizational functioning, while academic demands include attending classes, completing assignments, and exams. Inadequate balance may induce stress, impacting both work and academic performance (Quintini, 2015). Occupational demands are a significant source of issues faced by working-class students, hindering academic excellence (Abiola, 2022). While combining work and studies appears ideal, it has become a necessity due to economic changes and technology's pace (Neill, 2015). Students can no longer solely focus on academics. Research reveals varied reasons for student employment, from career exploration to financial support (Cheng & Alcantara, 2017). This prompts scrutiny of the work-study dynamic within the Nigerian context, considering local nuances.

Employment diverts focus from academics, impacting learning time for working-class students (Perna, 2020). Retention rates are higher for students working modest hours (ten to fifteen) compared to no work or excessive hours (Cheng & Alcantara, 2017). Debate surrounds whether occupational demands positively or negatively affect academic outcomes. This study addresses this ambiguity. In organizational structures, varying demands exist. Working-class students must excel academically while meeting employer expectations. While research has explored work-study dynamics globally (Beerkens et al., 2021; Neill, 2015; Pascarella et al., 2018), limited attention is given to the Nigerian context, especially the relationship between occupational demands and academic success (Abiola, 2022; Ibrahim, Freeman & Shelley, 2022). This study fills this gap by evaluating occupational demands and their impact on academic performance among working-class students in Nigerian tertiary institutions.

Literature Review

Challenges in balancing work demands and academic success among working-class students

The interaction between work and education has garnered extensive research, revealing a mix of advantages and disadvantages. Juggling studies and employment entails a trade-off, often leading working students to allocate less time to their academics. This duality can hinder learning, potentially resulting in academic setbacks and even dropout rates. Inadequate regulation of work-study combinations within universities can lead to prolonged time-to-degree. Research by Stinebrickner and Stinebrickner (2023) illustrates that while completion times for Master's degrees have improved slightly, they still exceed target durations by over a year. Work emerges as a key contributor to extended study periods, largely due to elevated unemployment rates curtailing job prospects. This highlights the negative impact of combining work and education on graduation rates. Pascarella et al. (2018) argue that occupational commitments disrupt labour supply dynamics, prolonging educational journeys and curtailing post-graduation careers. This suggests a potential mismatch in time allocation, where prompt study completion and higher-level job attainment could be more economically favourable. Stinebrickner and Stinebrickner (2023) agree, observing a negative effect of employment on college academic performance. In contrast, Hood, Craig, and Ferguson (2022) find that moderate workloads often correlate with higher grade point averages. Conversely, Ehrenberg and Sherman (2017) reveal positive effects of on-campus employment, contrasting with off-campus work's negative consequences.

Hunt, Lincoln and Walker's study (2014) highlights that work experience during schooling shapes graduate employment nonlinearly. Moderate in-school work experience aligns Finnish graduates with education-related jobs, but excessive experience yields reduced job alignment. Neither degree completion time nor credit count influences job quality. Aremu and Sokan (2023) demonstrate how students' coursework structure affects both work ability and academic success. Meanwhile, Hunt et al. (2014) contend student employment compromises academic goals. In contrast, Marsh (2021) suggests work-study synergy enhances character, skill development, and academic achievements. Hunt et al. (2014) assert working-class students, often from disadvantaged backgrounds, turn to employment to mitigate debt. Students report work's negative impact on academics (Goldrick-Rab, 2016; Hunt et al., 2014). However, they underline the potential decline in academic achievement due to compromised future earnings from work-study trade-offs, impacting skill acquisition. Many students work outside their desired fields. Fjortoff (2015) contradicts this, asserting that working-class students' academic performance is on par with peers', with employment fostering qualities that enhance academic success, countering adverse effects. Aper (2014) studies U.S. college students' work impact on outcomes, finding academic or career-related campus jobs yield greater gains than other roles.

Canadian research focusing on high school students found that 'light' work, less than 15 hours per week, had minimal impact on academic time (Bachmann & Boes, 2014). However, more demanding jobs led to reduced leisure and sleep. Another study of high school students revealed that working beyond 15-20 hours weekly correlated with higher absenteeism, lower GPAs, and less time for homework (Auers et al., 2017). Among higher education students, working over 15 hours on campus is common. However, Pascarella et al. (2018) stress that exceeding 20 hours of off-campus work results in negative work-study consequences. Furthermore, a British study shows that 15+ hours of work weekly reduces homework time and academic performance (Davies, 2022). These findings highlight the complex balance between work commitments and academic achievement.

Additional factors beyond occupational demands can significantly influence academic achievement. Research from Australia suggests that students who hold primary responsibilities as breadwinners and child caretakers at home display heightened motivation, engagement in lectures, and dedication to planned educational activities (Zimitat, 2023). This subgroup appears more content with their academic pursuits compared to those with fewer familial commitments. Thus, it is evident that employment's impact on academic performance varies based on the type of job and weekly hours worked (Tur-Sinai, Romanov & Zussman, 2017; Van Dyke, Little & Callender, 2015). Work related to a student's field of study could be beneficial, especially when undertaken part-time (15 hours or fewer per week).

A UK survey revealed that most students perceived their jobs as having a negative impact on academic achievement (Davies, 2022). This sentiment aligns with the observations of Callender (2018), Hunt et al. (2014), and Auers et al. (2017). Their collective research underscores that employment correlates with reduced average grades, class attendance, and time available for independent study. Notably, full-time workers exhibit lower grades and attendance compared to part-time workers. Auers et al. (2017) identify significant factors influencing academic performance among working-class students, including age, year of study, gender, field of study, and employment status. Notably, employment status emerges as the most potent determinant of academic success, evaluated through GPA. Specifically, full-time working-class students experience notably lower grades compared to peers from other backgrounds. Part-time employment yields less drastic effects, especially when considering school-specific variables.

Research within the United Kingdom highlights how occupational commitments might adversely affect the academic performance of working-class students. Callender (2018) unearthed a striking discrepancy: students engaged in an average of 15 part-time weekly hours of work were 33% less likely to attain high-degree classifications (first or upper second) compared to non-working-class peers with equivalent admission tariff scores. This disparity is further substantiated by Hunt et al. (2014), who found that working-class students received grades three percentage points lower than their non-working-class counterparts. These findings underscore the impact of employment on academic achievement among working-class students in the UK. Employed students often anticipate and experience lower academic success compared to their non-working peers. Some students view work-study balance positively, especially if working five hours or less weekly, citing valuable experience or social aspects. However, this view is based on a small sample size, lacking data on actual academic achievement. The repercussions of combining employment and study on student health, subsequently influencing academic achievement, have garnered attention. Carney, McNeish, and McColl (2015) aimed to quantify this impact and found that working-class students, on average, reported worse physical and mental health compared to non-working-class peers of the same age in the general population. Additionally, debt and part-time enrolment exhibited modest yet significant adverse effects on mental and physical health. Moreover, increased work hours heightened the likelihood of perceiving negative academic performance impacts. The research illuminated a concerning cycle: elevated job expectations correlated with deteriorating mental health, contributing to heightened awareness of adverse job demands' impact on academic achievement. McGregor (2015) reinforced this narrative, highlighting that most students from working-class backgrounds believed that employment negatively influenced mental health, social life, and academic accomplishments. This body of work underscores the complex interplay between work, health, and academic success for students.

Apart from the motivations behind students seeking employment, another crucial focus of research delves into the vital issue of how combining work and studies influences academic outcomes. While much attention has been dedicated to understanding how work affects academic performance, the past decade has also seen substantial interest in assessing the broader effects of this combination. Callender (2018) conducted a study involving 1,000 students

across six British universities, revealing that employment during studies detrimentally affects both yearly and cumulative academic achievements, regardless of the institution's type. Higher working hours were linked to poorer academic performance. Students maintaining an average weekly workload faced a 1/3 lower likelihood of achieving high grades compared to their non-working counterparts. This pattern was most evident for students with lower qualifications and income levels. Callender (2018) argued that work-study dynamics significantly shape perceptions of higher education. Triventi's (2014) Italian study revealed complex effects of student work on academic attainment. High-intensity work hindered learning outcomes, while low-intensity work affected specific groups' progress. A French study (Body, Bonnal, & Giret, 2014) mirrored this pattern, showing adverse impacts of work beyond 16 weekly hours. Public sector work had fewer negative effects than private sector roles due to flexibility. This underscores the importance of part-time, study-related jobs for skill validation. Slovenian research (Body et al., 2014) found 18 intense work hours weekly harmed academic performance. In Estonia, Beerkens et al. (2021) did not find work's detrimental impact on timely program completion. An Israeli study (Tur-Sinai et al., 2017) highlighted minimal employment influence, varying by age groups like no effect for 22-26 age group. These insights highlight contextual complexities in balancing work and academic progress.

Effective coping strategies for navigating the impact of work on academic achievement

Understanding the experiences of working-class students provides actionable strategies for their success in higher education. These include flexible course offerings during evenings, weekends, and through distance education, along with advance course scheduling (Cubie, 2019; Hanson, 2020; Karnad, 2023). Accessible academic advising and support services during unconventional hours, coupled with online course registration, cater to working students' needs (Cubie, 2019). Child-care options and designated study spaces address specific challenges faced by working parents (Hanson, 2020; Karnad, 2023). Colleges and universities can also facilitate career counselling and job placement to help students align their work experiences with their educational pursuits. This integration supports working-class students in balancing work and education (Karnad, 2023). Recognizing that many undergraduates struggle with the juggling act between employment, home responsibilities, and academics, institutions have a responsibility to ensure the success of all students, particularly those from working-class backgrounds.

Reframing employment as a potential enhancer of student learning and acknowledging the prevalence of student jobs within institutional policies are critical steps forward (Cubie, 2019). To create a supportive campus environment, Perna (2020) advises faculty and administrators to understand the unique needs of working-class students and adapt institutional structures accordingly. Local employment trends should be considered alongside national statistics to inform strategies that bridge occupational and academic experiences (Marsh, 2021). By embracing these measures, colleges and universities can effectively foster an inclusive environment conducive to the triumph of working-class students. Higher education institutions must evaluate their structures to ensure they cater to the diverse needs of students, including those working longer hours. Traditional models primarily tailored for full-time, on-campus students may not effectively serve working-class students (McGregor, 2015). Cultivating an institutional culture that supports the achievement of these students necessitates a collective effort across campus, involving administrators and educators. Faculty members play a pivotal role in this process. Pinto (2020) advocates for encouraging and aiding educators who adapt their teaching methods to better serve working-class students. Ibrahim, Freeman, and Shelley (2022) underscore the benefits of cooperative learning, setting high standards, and assigning tasks that prompt deep understanding. Collaborating with campus teaching centres can enhance these efforts. Facilitating meaningful interactions between professors and students, especially for working-class students, is vital for building a supportive campus community (Riggert et al., 2016).

Addressing the perception of being "out of place" on campus is crucial. Cheng and Alcantara (2017) suggest that personalized connections with faculty and administrators foster a sense of belonging and legitimacy, ultimately enhancing academic success. Beyond instructional adjustments, colleges and universities should explore strategies to further accommodate working-class students. To alleviate the need for extensive work, institutions can mitigate financial pressures through lowered tuition and increased need-based scholarships (Perna, 2020). Financial aid counselling that educates students about the implications of employment and alternative funding options can also be beneficial. However, given economic uncertainties and the intrinsic value of jobs for students, substantial employment

may persist (Goldrick-Rab, 2016). In embracing these approaches, higher education institutions can create an environment where working-class students thrive, pushing boundaries and achieving academic success. Even in cases where student employment is limited in hours and predominantly on-campus, it is worth reconsidering how we perceive the relationship between work and education (Perna, 2020). While conventional wisdom suggests that working reduces study time, a shift in perspective can view employment as a tool to enrich learning. Both employment and formal education contribute to students' human capital. Thus, higher education institutions should explore ways to turn student jobs into intellectually valuable experiences. Strategies to transform employment's impact on education can be derived from understanding working-class students' demands and academic performance. Neill (2015) suggests connecting work experiences to coursework. Another approach involves awarding course credit for relevant job experience, demonstrated by organizations like the College Board's College-Level Examination Program and the American Council on Education's College Credit Recommendation Service.

Managing working time impacts mental health, and universities should prioritize balance (Carney et al., 2015). The concept of a "full-time student" should evolve to accommodate working-class students, and the positive effects of combining work and studies on grades should be communicated. Recognizing the challenges working students face can improve mental well-being. Students' requests for flexibility in coursework deadlines align with their time-critical jobs. Formal acknowledgment of work-study commitments can foster a supportive environment. Early access to course and exam schedules aids planning, and technology offers flexible learning options (Stinebrickner & Stinebrickner, 2023). "Learning from work" courses, even unrelated to a field, can teach valuable skills. Providing mechanisms to recognize employability skills acquired through employment could further enhance students' learning experiences.

Theoretical Framework: Structural Functionalism

Structural functionalism, a sociological theory originating in the early 20th century, was crafted to address the complexities of society. It finds its roots in the contributions of scholars like Emile Durkheim and Herbert Spencer. Durkheim's emphasis on social order, integration, and the role of institutions significantly shaped the theory. He laid its foundation in works such as "The Division of Labour in Society" (1893) and "Suicide: A Study in Sociology" (1897). Additionally, Talcott Parsons, another prominent figure, further refined and extended the theory's framework through writings like "The Structure of Social Action" (1937) and "The Social System" (1951). Structural functionalism asserts that society is a complex system composed of interrelated parts that work together to maintain social order and stability. Institutions, norms, and values contribute to maintaining this equilibrium. Society's institutions and components are interconnected, and each serves a specific function that contributes to the overall health of the system. Institutions exist to fulfil essential societal needs. Actions and institutions have both manifest functions (explicit and intended) and latent functions (hidden and unintended). Structural functionalism seeks to uncover both types of functions to understand their effects on society. Society seeks equilibrium and adapts to changes through mechanisms like socialization, social control, and institutions. Any disruptions are temporary and eventually resolved to restore stability.

Functionalism, a sociological theory, offers insights into exploring the objectives of balancing occupation-related demands and academic achievement among working-class students. It perceives society as a system with interconnected parts that work harmoniously for stability. Triventi's (2014) study demonstrates how the intensity of student work can hinder or facilitate learning outcomes. From a functionalist perspective, this can be understood as a balance between the functions of work and education. High-intensity work that hinders learning outcomes might be seen as disrupting the equilibrium between these two roles, potentially leading to a strained educational system. On the other hand, low-intensity work affecting specific groups' progress suggests a differentiation of functions based on individual needs and capabilities. The French study by Body, Bonnal, and Giret (2014) aligns with functionalism by revealing adverse impacts of excessive work hours beyond a certain threshold. This finding implies that there is an optimal level of work-study balance required to maintain the stability and efficiency of the education system. Public sector work's lesser negative effects further highlight the flexibility of roles in maintaining this equilibrium. The concept of part-time, study-related jobs as a means of skill validation underscores the functionalist view of education as a mechanism for preparing individuals for their roles in society. Functionalism emphasizes the role of education in

transmitting necessary skills and knowledge to individuals, and these studies support this perspective by showing that aligning work with study can lead to better skill development and validation.

Slovenian research by Body et al. (2014) and the Estonian study by Beerkens et al. (2021) fit within functionalism by showcasing the interplay between work and timely program completion. These studies highlight how maintaining a balance between work commitments and educational progress is essential to ensure the efficient functioning of the educational system. The Israeli study by Tur-Sinai et al. (2017), indicating minimal employment influence with variations based on age groups, aligns with functionalism's emphasis on differentiation of roles within society. Different age groups might have varying levels of commitments and expectations, and these findings reflect how the education-work relationship needs to adapt to these diverse needs to ensure the overall stability of the system. In this paper, the challenges faced by working-class students in reconciling work demands and academic success disrupt this equilibrium. Functionalism posits education readies individuals for societal contributions, while work sustains economic needs. Overwhelming work commitments can disrupt this equilibrium, straining the educational system. Understanding these challenges illuminates ways to enhance the system for their benefit. Functionalism also illuminates challenges in balancing work demands and academic success, disrupting the education system's functioning. Education transmits vital skills and knowledge, preparing individuals for societal roles. If students from working-class backgrounds struggle to manage both work and education, it hampers skill acquisition, creating a gap between societal needs and individual capabilities. This imbalance ripples through the education system's stability and efficacy. In contrast, exploring effective coping strategies to navigate the impact of work on academic achievement aligns with functionalism's stability emphasis. Functionalism contends that society's parts collaborate for harmony. Similarly, uncovering strategies aiding students in juggling work and academics identifies mechanisms maintaining equilibrium between education and economic duties. These strategies reflect individuals' adaptation to societal roles, ensuring work and education harmonize. Functionalism underscores the harmonious operation of societal components. Identifying effective coping strategies for students to manage work's impact on academics sustains this harmony. When students effectively balance work and education, they enhance education system stability. These strategies act as mechanisms for individuals to adapt and fulfil societal roles, aligning with functionalism's cohesion focus within society.

Functionalism provides a lens through which to understand the subject matter. By highlighting the interplay between work, education, and societal roles, functionalism underscores the importance of maintaining equilibrium and harmony within the educational system. Structural functionalism offers a comprehensive framework for understanding the complex interactions within society, highlighting how institutions and components work together. The theory emphasizes social order and stability, highlighting the importance of shared norms and values in maintaining cohesion. Structural functionalism identifies how different components of society fulfil specific functions, helping to elucidate the purpose and role of institutions. Critics argue that structural functionalism tends to reinforce the status quo and maintain existing power structures, neglecting conflict and inequality. The theory's focus on equilibrium can oversimplify the complexities of social change and conflicts, ignoring the dynamic nature of societies. Structural functionalism might downplay individual agency and the role of human agency in shaping societal outcomes. The theory's focus on stability may struggle to explain social change and revolutionary movements.

Research Questions

- i. What challenges do working-class students encounter in balancing work demands and academic success in Nigeria?
- ii. What effective coping strategies can be identified for working-class students to navigate the impact of work on academic achievement in Nigeria?

Methodology

This paper employs a qualitative research approach, utilizing secondary data analysis to explore the challenges and strategies associated with balancing occupation-related demands and academic achievement among working-class students. Secondary data analysis involves the examination and synthesis of existing scholarly literature and research

findings on the subject. The primary data source for this study consists of scholarly articles, research papers, and relevant publications that address the interplay between work commitments and academic success among working-class students. These sources have been identified through academic databases, such as JSTOR, Google Scholar, and EBSCOhost, based on the comprehensive review of the literature previously conducted. The selected secondary data are scholarly publications published within the last two decades to ensure the relevance and currency of the information. Articles that provide insights into the challenges faced by working-class students in balancing work and academics, as well as strategies employed to manage these demands, are included in the data pool. The research draws on a diverse range of studies conducted globally to capture various perspectives and contexts. The collected secondary data are analysed thematically. A systematic approach is used to categorize the challenges encountered by working-class students and the coping strategies they employ. Themes related to the impact of work on academic performance, factors contributing to success, and contextual nuances are identified and extracted from the selected sources. This analysis seeks to establish patterns, trends, and commonalities across the literature. Since this research relies solely on secondary data, ethical considerations related to data collection, privacy, and informed consent are not applicable. However, proper citation and attribution to the original authors and sources are ensured to maintain academic integrity. As with any secondary data analysis, this paper is limited by the availability and quality of the existing literature. The research is reliant on the accuracy and validity of the data collected from previously conducted studies. Additionally, the lack of primary data collection may restrict the depth of analysis and prevent the exploration of new insights that could emerge from direct engagement with participants.

Results

The literature review highlights the intricate challenges faced by working-class students in balancing work demands and academic success, revealing a mix of advantages and disadvantages in this delicate equilibrium. Research indicates that the interaction between work and education often leads to a trade-off, impacting academic performance and potentially leading to dropout rates. The study by Stinebrickner and Stinebrickner (2023) emphasizes the negative effect of employment on college academic performance, contributing to extended study periods and hindering graduation rates. The literature further explores the impact of work on academic achievement, revealing varying perspectives. While some studies find that moderate workloads correlate with higher grade point averages (Hood, Craig, & Ferguson, 2022), others show negative consequences, especially concerning the social and interactive aspects of education (Ehrenberg & Sherman, 2017). Moreover, the research underscores the complex interplay of factors influencing academic outcomes, including the type of job, weekly hours worked, and work-related to a student's field of study (Tur-Sinai, Romanov & Zussman, 2017; Van Dyke, Little & Callender, 2015). Theoretical frameworks such as structural functionalism offer insights into understanding the challenges in balancing work and academic success. These frameworks highlight the need for equilibrium between work and education for the efficient functioning of the educational system. However, the literature also acknowledges the need for effective coping strategies to navigate these challenges, with an emphasis on flexibility in course offerings, accessible support services, and personalized connections with faculty and administrators.

Discussion

The findings of this study illuminate the intricate challenges and opportunities arising from the interplay between work demands and academic success among working-class students. The research underscores the delicate balance required to navigate this relationship and its implications for educational outcomes. Juggling work and studies often leads to a trade-off, potentially hindering academic performance and extending time-to-degree. The negative impact of employment on college academic performance is evident in the prolonged completion times for Master's degrees (Stinebrickner & Stinebrickner, 2023). Economic factors, such as elevated unemployment rates, contribute to extended study periods and lower graduation rates (Pascarella et al., 2018). The study by Hood, Craig, and Ferguson (2022) presents a contrasting view, suggesting that moderate workloads may correlate with higher grade point averages. This divergence in findings underscores the complexity of the relationship between work and academic success. The challenges faced by working-class students extend beyond completion times and graduation rates, encompassing factors like work experience shaping graduate employment outcomes (Hunt, Lincoln, & Walker, 2014). The type and intensity of work, as well as its alignment with a student's field of study, play crucial roles in determining academic

achievement. Notably, the study emphasizes the importance of considering individual needs and capabilities when exploring the impact of work on academic outcomes. Additionally, the research addresses the impact of student employment on mental health, emphasizing the potential adverse consequences and the cyclical relationship between employment, mental health, and academic achievement (Carney et al., 2015; McGregor, 2015).

Structural Functionalism provides a comprehensive lens through which to interpret these findings. Structural functionalism highlights the interconnectedness of societal components, emphasizing their collaborative efforts for social order and stability. The challenges faced by working-class students in balancing work demands and academic success disrupt this equilibrium, affecting the stability and efficacy of the educational system. The theory's emphasis on societal institutions fulfilling essential needs aligns with the study's exploration of how effective coping strategies can enhance the system for the benefit of working-class students. By identifying strategies that maintain equilibrium between education and economic duties, the study reflects individuals' adaptation to societal roles, contributing to the cohesion and stability of the education system. While recognizing the strengths of structural functionalism, it is important to acknowledge its limitations, including potential oversimplification of social complexities and a tendency to reinforce existing power structures. The study provides valuable insights for higher education institutions to adapt their structures, support mechanisms, and perceptions to foster an inclusive environment conducive to the success of working-class students.

Conclusion

This study has delved into the intricate relationship between occupation-related demands and academic achievement among working-class students. Drawing from a wealth of existing research and literature, the study has highlighted the challenges faced by these students as they strive to balance work commitments with their pursuit of education. It is evident that the interplay between work and academics can significantly impact students' ability to succeed academically, with varying consequences based on factors such as the intensity of work, sector relevance, and individual circumstances. The research has underscored the delicate equilibrium that working-class students must navigate and the potential trade-offs they encounter in their pursuit of both economic stability and educational attainment. The findings indicate that while some students perceive employment as beneficial to their studies, the delicate balance between work and academics can lead to strain and compromised academic performance. Moreover, the paper has revealed the importance of effective coping strategies in mitigating the negative impact of work on academic achievement. These strategies serve as mechanisms through which individuals adapt to their roles within society, striving to maintain the harmonious functioning of various societal components. Recognizing the need for suitable coping mechanisms becomes crucial for universities and educational institutions to better support working-class students and create an environment conducive to both work and academic success. In essence, this study has shed light on the dynamics of juggling work and academics for working-class students. It emphasizes the necessity for educational institutions to tailor their support systems to address the challenges faced by this demographic, enabling them to navigate the complexities of modern education without compromising their academic potential. By understanding the delicate balance between work and academic pursuits, institutions can foster an environment that facilitates both personal growth and economic advancement among working-class students, ultimately contributing to a more equitable and thriving educational landscape.

Recommendations

Educational institutions should establish comprehensive support services tailored to the needs of working-class students. This includes offering flexible scheduling options, providing academic advising during non-traditional hours, and creating spaces for studying while working. Such measures can help students effectively balance their work commitments with academic pursuits. Universities should consider integrating work-related learning experiences into the curriculum. This approach aligns with functionalism's emphasis on roles contributing to societal harmony. By incorporating practical skills gained from work experiences, students can enhance their academic learning and acquire valuable skills for future employment. Institutions should provide targeted career counselling for working-class students, focusing on aligning their employment choices with their academic and career goals. This guidance can help students make informed decisions about the type of work that complements their studies, reducing the risk of

detrimental impacts on academic achievement. To address the challenges of managing work and academics, universities should offer flexible coursework schedules and provide students with early access to course and exam timetables. This enables students to plan their work commitments in advance and minimize potential conflicts between work and study responsibilities. Policymakers, educators, and institutions should collaborate to advocate for policies that recognize the academic and economic needs of working-class students. Raising awareness about the potential academic implications of work commitments and promoting policies that support work-study balance can contribute to more equitable educational opportunities for all students.

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