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Hours Worked Versus Academic Grades in College Students

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A students' grade point average has a huge impact on the life of a student. This study proved that the amount of hours worked is not reflective of the students' grade point average which proved our hypothesis incorrect. Past studies have shown varied results on grade point average and the amount of hours a student works. Individual differences may be a determining factor in considering how the individual balances work and school. There were sixty participants in this study from Lindenwood University. The results of this study showed a negative correlation of $-.043$ between the two variables.

Everyone has heard the phrase "Poor college student", but it seems that more and more college students are working while they are in school. A working student has a full and stressful day. Students wake up and go to school for about four hours then they go to work and once they are off they go home and do homework. Some students also have sports and extra-curricular activities they have to fit in their busy schedules. Studies have shown that males are more likely than females to spend four or more hours per week in extracurricular activities (Zierold, Garman & Anderson, 2005). Students may feel more inclined to work because of tuition costs. In 1999, the average tuition was \$3600. An increase in tuition rates was enforced and the average cost of tuition in 2001 rose to \$4500 (Manthel & Gilmore, 2005). In one study, students reported that the reasons they

work were to save up for college, pay for a car or just to get the employee discounts (Ruscoe, Morgan & Peebles, 1996).

Many students reported that their jobs did damage their academic performance (Callender, 2006). In that same study, students that worked received lower grades than the students that did not work. On the other hand, it was reported in a past study that nonworking students had a slightly lower grade point average than students that worked (Zierold et al, 2005). One study showed that students that worked did not get lower grades; however, their drop-out rates were higher than non-working students (Hawkins, Smith, Hawkins II & Grant, 2005). Eighty percent of high school students are employed at some point before they graduate high school. Of those employed, forty-six percent worked more than 20 hours per week (Zierold et al., 2005).

Some of the advantages to students working is that most students report having greater self-esteem and a sense of responsibility (Zierold et al., 2005). However, students that worked reported that their stress increased, and they had feelings of exhaustion and fatigue (Hawkins et al, 2005). Students that work are at greater risk of developing unhealthy behaviors, such as smoking, drinking and using drugs (Zierold et al., 2005).

Do the hours that a student spends at work take up precious study time? The purpose of this study is to see if there is a correlation between a students work schedule and GPA. The results of the study could help students balance their work and school schedules. Employers and educators can also benefit from the results because they could have a better understanding of their employees and students. This is also important when

employers screen job applicants based on their grade point average when they are analyzing resumes (Ridgell & Lounsbury, 2004).

The researchers also wanted to explore the thought that students who worked are less likely to participate in sports and/or school related activities. Some of the participants were recruited from the Human Subject Pool at Lindenwood University and the others were students from the university that were recruited through word of mouth. All participants were undergraduates. The participants that were recruited through the Human Subject Pool received extra credit for their time. Each participant was asked to fill out a short survey asking them about the amount of hours they work and if they participated in any extracurricular activities. Each participant was thanked for their time and debriefed about the study. The researchers hypothesized that students who worked more hours would have poorer grades than the students that did not. They also hypothesized that students that work are less likely to participate in sports and extracurricular activities.

Method

Participants

The subjects in this experiment consisted of 60 undergraduate students from Lindenwood University. Forty-four subjects were from the Human Subject Pool and the other sixteen were not from the Human Subject Pool but still attended Lindenwood University. Twenty seven of the participants were male and thirty three were female. Thirty of the subjects were freshman, eight were sophomores, twelve were juniors and

ten were seniors. The subject's ages ranged from 17 to 62 years of age with a mean age of 20.77.

The students from the Human Subject Pool were recruited by the sign up sheet and the description of the experiment posted on the HSP bulletin board. The other students were recruited by word of mouth and students from our classes. The students from the HSP received extra credit from their professors in their 100-level or 200-level classes for their participation in our experiment. The other participants did not receive any compensation for their time.

Materials

We developed a questionnaire to find out the subjects year in school, age, gender, current grade point average, hours worked per week, if he/she does work and learn, and his/her feelings about working and school (see Appendix A for questionnaire). We used psychology lab B with a table and four chairs in Young. We also used a couch and table at Butler Library. A computer was used to type out the questionnaire, feedback letter, informed consent form, participant receipt, experimenter's list of participants and the results. A printer was used to print out all of the forms for this experiment. A binder was used to hold all the paperwork needed for the study. Two pens were used to fill out the appropriate forms, and a three-hole punch was used to put all the papers into the binder.

Procedure

A brief description of the experiment along with a sign up sheet with the time and location was posted on the Human Subject Pool board. Interested subjects from the HSP signed up for a particular time in which they would participate in the experiment. The

same brief description of the experiment was said to the other subjects when approached and asked if they had five minutes to complete this survey. The following procedure was for the Human Subject Pool members. Each subject filled out two informed consent forms, a participant receipt, signed the experimenter's list of participants form, and filled out the ten question questionnaire on amount of work and grade point average. The students who were not part of the Human Subject Pool filled out two informed consent forms and the questionnaire. Once the questionnaire was complete, the subject was debriefed on the study and was administered the feedback letter that contained the hypothesis of the study and both experimenter's contact information for further questions or for the final results. In conclusion, the subject was thanked for his/her participation in the study. Once the subjects were finished and had left, the papers were collected and put into the separate folders to later analyze the results. The entire process was repeated for each subject.

Results

The Pearson correlation test was used to compute the results of the hours work and the grade point average of the subjects. It was a two-tailed test that showed a negative correlation of $-.043$ between the two variables which revealed that the number of hours students work and their GPA are not highly correlated $r = -.043$. Descriptive statistics was used to compute the frequencies in the remaining variables and are as follows: 11.7% were completely responsible for school cost while the remaining 88.3% were not solely responsible for school cost by getting assistance from family, financial aid, grants, scholarships, loans and college funds. Out of the 88.3% of subjects who

received assistance, 60% had help from family, 48.3% had help from financial aid, 26.7% received grants, 70% received scholarships, 40% took out loans, and 5% had a college fund.

Of the 60 subjects 76.7% participated in the work and learn program at Lindenwood University and out of that percentage, 40% also worked outside of school. There were less than half of the subjects who participated in sports while in school at 41.7% and a smaller amount who participated in extracurricular activities at 35%. When asked about their opinion on the amount of hours worked and their grade point average, 55% believed that their grade point average had an effect on the number of hours they worked with 58.3% feeling that the amount of hours they worked affected their grade point average. If the subject had the option of not working and just going to school 68.3% said that they would.

Discussion

The results of the present study showed no difference in the grades of students who worked more hours. The purpose of this study was to examine if there was a relationship between the hours a student works and his/her grades. The findings did not support our hypothesis, there seemed to be no relation between the number of hours worked and their grades. This is believed to have happened because of the self reporting measures used to obtain the grade point average. The way the question was asked to obtain the grade point average could have also been a negative factor because the grade point averages were asked in clusters instead of a written reply blank. The findings of this study did coincide with the study done by Grant et al., which appeared in the Journal

of Social Work Education in 2005. There it was reported that students who worked more did not get lower grades than the people who did not work or worked fewer hours, but that they had a higher dropout rate and/or took longer to graduate.

The study had some limitations that could have skewed the results. Some of these limitations could include, the population studied from just one university that the data was obtained from since it was not a very large subject pool. There were also limitations from the questionnaire. We should have taken into account how many credits the students were currently enrolled in and if they were seeking a double major. Another limitation could be that students work more in the winter for holiday funds than in the spring. The last and final limitation could have been the length time the study was conducted in.

For future research, devising a questionnaire that does not have the self reporting measures of the GPA and the hours worked, would entail the researchers a more accurate result. The researchers should receive the consent from the participants to obtain their actual GPA from the schools record. Also have the participants state which semester they are taking their GPA from such as J-Term, Spring, Summer, or Fall. Keeping in mind the grade levels of the participants could sway the results in different directions because of the maturity level. For an example, upper-class students could have more responsibilities that would cause them to work more such as: rent, car loans, utilities, children, etc. For future studies, we recommend that the study be conducted over a full school year instead of the fraction of the time the present study was based on.

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Appendix A

Questionnaire

1. Are you male or female?

Male Female

2. What is your age? _____

3. What is your year in school?

Freshman Sophomore Junior Senior Other

4. Are you completely responsible for your schooling costs?

Yes or No

5. If no to #4, where do you receive financial help for school cost? (Circle all that apply)

Family financial aid grants scholarships loans college fund

6. How many hours do you work per week including work and learn? _____ hrs/wk

7. What is your current grade point average from your last semester of school?

> 1.0 1.0-2.0 2.0-3.0 3.0-3.5 3.5-4.0 4.0< Do not know

8. Do you participate in the work and learn program?

Yes or No

9. If yes for #8, do you also work outside of school?

Yes or No

10. Do you participate in any sports?

Yes or No If yes, which one(s):

11. Are you involved in any extracurricular activities?

Yes or No If yes, which one(s):

12. Do you feel your GPA affects the number of hours you work?

Yes or No

13. Do you feel the amount of hours you work affects your GPA?

Yes or No

14. If you had the option of not working and just going to school, would you?

N/A Yes No