

## **The Impact of Part-Time Employment on Education of Undergraduates (A Case Study from Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka)**

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### **Introduction**

Although many undergraduates in Sri Lanka allocate their time, energy and commitment fully to education, a considerable proportion of undergraduates, by choice, divide the above three components between education and employment. Usually, the objectives of these two time allocations are highly contradictory. Many studies have found that part-time employment of students has adverse effects on academic performance (Callender, 2008; Darmody and Smyth, 2008). However, some argue that holding part-time employment will not significantly affect the academic performance of students (Oi and Morrison, 2005).

Sri Lanka is facing rapid population aging and the challenge of a shrinking labour force according to Arunathilake (2009). Due to this, more part-time employment opportunities will open up for students. Therefore, involvement of students in part-time employment will increase rapidly in the future. According to the theory of displacement (Hofman and Steijn, 2003), students will grab more job opportunities from unskilled workers. Part-time employment however could also have a negative influence on building up expert human capital for the professional labour market due to the poor performance of students in their academic activities. Therefore, identifying the impact of part-time employment on education will be important for policy makers in both the fields of education and labour markets.

### **Objective**

The main objective of this study is to observe the impact of part-time employment on educational performance of undergraduates.

### **Methodology**

Primary data were collected from 200 students representing all five faculties of the Sabaragamuwa University between October and December 2011, using a questionnaire.

A stratified random sampling method was used in selecting the sample from among 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year students, representing all five faculties of the university. 26 students from the Faculty of Agriculture, 40 students from the Faculty of Applied Sciences, 17 students from the Faculty of Geomatics, 63 students from the Faculty of Management Studies and 54 students from the Faculty of Social Sciences and Languages were included in the sample, proportional to the student numbers in the respective faculties. The first three faculties were taken as Science faculties in the analysis.

OLS regression models were used to identify the impact of part-time employment on students' Grade Point Average, by using 'undertaking part-time employment', 'hours of work in part-time employment' and several other socio economic variables as independent variables. Descriptive statistics were also used for the analysis.

## Results

The study found that male students engage more in part-time employment than female students. The key reasons for having part-time employment are to obtain work experience and to cover financial expenses. Providing private tuition is a common form of part-time employment.

Table1: Comparison of GPA between undergraduates holding part-time jobs and others by faculty, year and gender

Category	Holding part-time job		Not holding part-time job	
	GPA	N	GPA	N
Faculty				
Science Faculties(Agriculture, Applied Sciences , Geomatics)	3.0483	26	3.1944	57
Management	2.9113	28	3.1439	35
Social Sciences	2.8032	22	2.9605	32
Year of Study				
3rd year	2.8663	35	3.0930	61
4th year	2.9785	41	3.1457	63
Gender				
Male	2.8946	46	3.0931	62
Female	2.9763	30	3.1464	62
Total	2.9268	76	3.1198	124

According to Table 1, undergraduates holding part-time employment obtained lower GPA in last year's examinations than those who did not hold such part-time employment for all categories.

According to Table 2 (below), the GPA of the students in the overall sample and for the three faculty divisions was negatively affected by part-time employment. The gap in GPA among management faculty part-time job holders and others is higher than that in the other faculties. Considering part-time job holders, the relationship between hours of work and GPA also shows a significant negative relationship.

Table 2: Simple regression models to see the impact of part-time employment on academic performances

Regression models for different samples (No of obs)	Explanatory Variable	Unstandardised Coefficients			Goodness of fit in the models
		B	Std. Error	t value	
Total (200)	(Constant)	3.120	0.030	103.85	F =15.67 (0.000)
	part time employee	-.193	0.049	-3.96	R <sup>2</sup> = 0.07
Science Faculties (83)	(Constant)	3.194	0.049	65.28	F =2.79 (0.099)
	part time employee	-0.146	0.087	-1.67	R <sup>2</sup> = 0.03
Management (63)	(Constant)	3.144	0.039	80.01	F = 15.57 (0.000)
	part time employee	-0.233	0.059	-3.95	R <sup>2</sup> =0.20
Social Sciences and Languages (54)	(Constant)	2.960	0.060	49.60	F =2.82 (.099)
	part time employee	-0.157	0.094	-1.68	R <sup>2</sup> =0.05
Only for part time job holders (76)	(Constant)	3.228	0.092	35.02	F =12.05 (0.001)
	Hours of work in part-time employment	-0.012	0.003	-3.47	R <sup>2</sup> =0.14

Note : Dependent variable: GPA for last year

According to the multiple regression model (Table 3), being a part-time employee and being a social science student have negative relationships with GPA while age, having parents educated up to G.C.E. A/L or more, fluency in English and financial support from home have positive relationships with student's GPA ( $R^2 = 0.31$ ,  $F = 12.078$ ).

The study involves a paired sample t-test to see the difference between GPA in semesters pre and post engaging in part-time employment. Paired differences of the mean (0.16776), was statistically significant at 99% confidence level.

From among the of part-time employed undergraduates, 16 percent were unable to sit at least one subject at the examination in the last year, and most part-time job holders believed that the marks of their continuous assessments are negatively affected by their employment. Only a small percentage of such students participated in other professional courses simultaneously with the degree, in comparison to undergraduates not holding such work positions. Employed undergraduates have poorer involvement in social activities at university than others. Part-time employment further adversely affects students' mental and physical health conditions, which could have an indirect influence on their academic performance.

Table 3: Multiple regression model for GPA

Variable	Unstandardised Coefficients		t
	B	Std. Error	
(Constant)	1.648	0.553	2.978
Being Male Student	-0.051	0.045	-1.145
Being Part Time Employee	-0.109	0.049	-2.212
Having parents educated up to G.C.E. A/L or more	0.119	0.046	2.609
Being a student from faculty of Social Science and languages	-0.181	0.048	-3.785
Age of the student	0.056	0.023	2.425
Having Fluency in English	0.168	0.057	2.969
Financial Support from home	0.000	0.000	1.763

## Conclusion and Policy recommendations

The study concluded that part-time employment of undergraduates has negative impacts on the academic performance of such students in the Sabaragamuwa University. This situation is common to all faculties. Therefore, the university should pay attention to this situation and should implement policies to limit this practice. Since financial constraints is the key reason for part-time employment, the government could intervene to resolve this issue, by increasing the financial support given through subsidy programs such as Mahapola and Bursary for undergraduates, as part time employment seems to have an adverse impacts on future human capital formation.

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