

# Dancing Between Deadlines and Duties: A Qualitative Inquiry into Working Conditions of Senior High School Students

Graciela Monica P. Tormis., Rhey Daffodiel G. Tormis

MAED – Teaching Social Studies, Graduate School Holy Cross of Davao College

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.51584/IJRIAS.2026.110400183>

Received: 26 April 2026; Accepted: 01 May 2026; Published: 19 May 2026

## ABSTRACT

Working students are plunged to poor conditions. I explored the working conditions of working students as outcomes of their strain. Using descriptive qualitative research design, I interviewed 10 study participants selected through purposive sampling. Through thematic analysis, I ascertained that the most difficult challenge of working students is balancing time between work and school, which leads to chronic time pressure, physical exhaustion, and compromised academic performance. Educational leaders may consider flexible academic arrangements, such as adjusted deadlines, hybrid learning options, and accessible mental health services; while employers may implement student-friendly policies like flexible schedules and reduced workloads during peak academic periods. Future directions may include the use of multiple linear regression to examine time-related factors in balancing school and work predict the level of strain arising from competing work–school demands.

**Keywords:** Dancing between deadlines and duties, qualitative inquiry, working conditions, senior high school students

## INTRODUCTION

### The Problem and Its Scope

Balancing work and education have become a growing challenge among senior high school students as economic pressures and the rising cost of living continue to affect youth populations. Many students are compelled to take part-time or full-time jobs to support their schooling or family needs, leading to physical exhaustion, stress, and compromised academic performance (Antoniadou, Crowder, & Cunningham, 2024). As stated by the International Labor Organization (2022), over 160 million young people globally are engaged in some form of employment, many of whom struggle to manage their studies alongside their jobs.

Similar findings across various countries revealed the pervasive challenges faced by working students. Alhassan and Adzrolo (2023) in Ghana, as well as Rodriguez et al. (2022) in the United States, reported that students who combine work and study often struggle with time management, sleep deprivation, and emotional exhaustion, leading to burnout and decreased academic motivation. Likewise, studies conducted in Malaysia and Indonesia (Rahim & Lajuni, 2021; Putri et al., 2023) highlighted that economic necessity compels many students to seek employment, despite its detrimental effects on academic engagement, concentration, and overall performance.

In the Philippines, the struggle of senior high school students to balance work and academic responsibilities is increasingly evident, particularly among those from low-income families (Paglinawan & Orbilla, 2025). Studies indicate that economic hardship, worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic and rising living costs, compels many learners to engage in part-time employment to sustain their studies or support their families (Moral & Maquirang, 2022; Sebulen, Kitani, & Matiwitiw, 2023). Consequently, working students often experience fatigue, poor concentration, and declining academic performance. Other researchers further reported that these students face time management difficulties and emotional stress, especially in remote or blended learning setups (Payusan et al., 2022). In addition, limited institutional support aggravates their situation, reducing motivation and academic engagement (Lopez & Tarrayo, 2021).

Although previous studies have examined the experiences of working students, limited attention has been given to senior high school learners in rural areas like Kiamba, Sarangani Province. Most research focused on university or urban students, leaving the distinct socio-economic realities of rural youth underexplored. This study addresses that gap through a phenomenological inquiry that amplifies the voices of working learners, how they find meaning, balance responsibilities, and cope with academic and emotional demands. Understanding their lived experiences may guide schools, local governments, and policymakers in developing responsive programs that support both academic success and well-being.

### **Significance of the Study**

In this study, I aimed to deepen the understanding of the lived experiences of senior high school students who balance work and academic responsibilities. Guided by the mission and vision of the Holy Cross of Davao College (HCDC), I sought to promote compassion, excellence, and service to the less fortunate. This research also aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), particularly Goal 4 (Quality Education), Goal 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), and Goal 10 (Reduced Inequalities). By exploring the challenges and resilience of working students, especially in rural areas like Kiamba, Sarangani Province, I intend to provide insights that may help educators, administrators, and policymakers develop more responsive and supportive programs. Ultimately, I hope this study contributes to promoting human dignity, educational equity, and meaningful social transformation.

### **Statement of the Problem**

In this study, I explored the lived experiences of working senior high school students in Kiamba, Sarangani Province, focusing on how they manage and make sense of the demands they face in both academic and employment settings. Specifically, I sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of working senior high school students in the challenge balancing their roles as student and as worker; and what are the consequences of this challenge?
2. What types of role strain emerge among senior high school working students in the process of balancing school and work demands?

### **Assumptions**

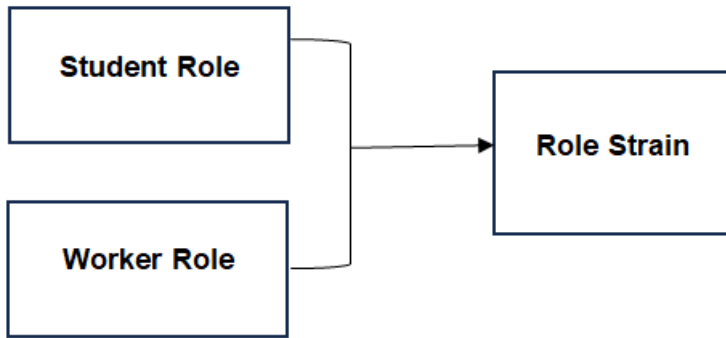
In this study, I assumed that senior high school working students possess unique lived experiences shaped by the dual pressures of employment and academic responsibilities. I presume that these students encounter various challenges, such as time constraints, fatigue, and stress, which influence their academic performance and personal well-being. I also assumed that, despite these difficulties, they develop personal resilience that enable them to balance their work and studies. Furthermore, I believe that their perceptions and experiences differ depending on the nature of their work, socioeconomic background, and available support systems from family and school. These assumptions guided my exploration of their lived realities and provide a foundation for understanding how they make sense of managing their dual roles as students and workers.

### **Theoretical Lens**

I anchored my research on Role Strain Theory developed by William Goode (1960), which explains how individuals experience stress when the demands of multiple roles exceed their time, energy, and resources. Role strain occurs when expectations from different roles conflict or become difficult to fulfill simultaneously, leading to pressure, fatigue, and compromised performance.

I applied this theory to understand how senior high school students struggle to balance their roles as learners and workers, where academic and job responsibilities often conflict. Through this theoretical lens, I aimed to understand the nature of role strain and how it shapes the lived experiences of working students.

## Conceptual Diagram



## METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I presented the research design, locale of the study, sample and sampling technique, data gathering technique, data analysis technique, and trustworthiness of the study.

### Research Design

In this study, I employed a descriptive qualitative research design to explore how senior high school working students experience role strain, while balancing academic and work responsibilities. This approach is appropriate as it enables the researcher to gather rich, detailed descriptions of participants' lived experiences, including their challenges and coping strategies, through interviews and focus group discussions. It ensures that findings remain grounded in participants' own perspectives, providing a clear understanding of how competing demands, limited time, and fatigue shape their experiences (Hall, 2024; Lim, 2025).

### Locale of the Study

I conducted the research in the municipality of Kiamba, Sarangani Province, located in the southern part of the Philippines. Kiamba is a coastal town known for its agricultural and fishing industries, which serve as common sources of livelihood for many families. I chose this municipality as the research locale because it represents a community where many senior high school students engage in part-time or full-time work to support their education and family needs. Conducting the study in this area allowed me to gain deeper insights into the lived experiences of working senior high school students in a provincial setting.

### Sample and Sampling Technique

I selected participants who were senior high school students from Kiamba, Sarangani Province, currently enrolled, and simultaneously employed either as part-time or full-time. Using purposive sampling, I selected a total of ten (10) participants: five (5) for the in-depth interviews (IDI) and five (5) for the Focus Group Discussion (FGD). The inclusion criteria were as follows: (1) officially enrolled as senior high school students, (2) engaged in any form of paid work, whether part-time or full-time, and (3) willing to voluntarily share their experiences. This sampling technique ensured that I included only participants who could provide relevant and meaningful insights about the phenomenon.

### Data Gathering Technique

I used both in-depth interviews (IDI) and Focus Group Discussions (FGD) to gain a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of senior high school students balancing work and academic responsibilities. The IDIs allowed me to explore each participant's personal experiences in detail through one-on-one, semi-structured conversations, providing a safe space for them to express their thoughts and feelings openly. On the other hand, the FGDs enabled participants to interact with one another, share similar experiences, and reflect on common challenges, which helped reveal collective patterns and shared meanings (Adams, 2024; Guest et al., 2024). By

combining these techniques, I was able to gather rich, comprehensive data that captured both individual perspectives and shared realities, leading to a more holistic understanding of the phenomenon.

### Data Analysis Technique

I used thematic analysis to systematically examine the qualitative data and identify meaningful patterns related to the lived experiences of senior high school students balancing work and academic responsibilities. Thematic analysis is a method that organizes and interprets data by developing themes that capture shared meanings across participants' narratives (Braun & Clarke, 2024). I followed the six-step process of thematic analysis: (1) I familiarized myself with the data through repeated reading; (2) I generated initial codes from significant statements; (3) I grouped these codes into potential themes; (4) I reviewed the themes for accuracy; (5) I defined and named each theme; and (6) I presented the findings with supporting excerpts. This process ensured a systematic and rigorous analysis of the data. This approach was appropriate for the study because it allowed me to analyze data from in-depth interviews and focus group discussions in a flexible yet structured manner. This enabled me to uncover recurring themes such as role conflict, stress, and competing demands, providing a clear and coherent understanding of how students experience and make sense of their dual roles.

### Trustworthiness of the Study

To ensure the rigor and credibility of my study, I established trustworthiness based on the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. To achieve credibility, I conducted IDIs and FGDs, allowing participants to openly share their lived experiences, and I use member checking to validate the accuracy of their responses. For transferability, I provided thick descriptions of the participants' context, including their backgrounds and experiences, so that readers can determine the applicability of the findings to similar settings.

To ensure dependability, I maintained a clear and organized research process, including detailed documentation of data collection and analysis procedures. Lastly, to establish confirmability, I practiced bracketing and reflexivity to minimize personal bias, ensuring that the findings are grounded in the participants' narratives rather than my own assumptions. Through these strategies, I upheld the integrity and reliability of my study, while faithfully representing the voices of the working senior high school students. These measures also enabled me to secure ethical clearance from the Society for Moral Integrity and Legal Ethics (SMILE).

## RESULTS

In this chapter, I presented the results of my study on the lived experiences of senior high school students who balance academic responsibilities and employment. I also provided the summary of the findings along with the modified paradigm.

### Perceptions of working senior high school students in balancing the roles of student and worker

In my conversation with my study participants, they consistently described time as their most limited and contested resource. The need to divide their day between school and work creates a constant sense of pressure, where neither responsibility can be fully attended to without sacrificing the other. One of them said:

*“Para sa akin ang pinakamahirap na bahagi ng araw ay ang paghati ng oras sa pagitan ng trabaho at pag-aaral.” (IDI5) (“For me, the most difficult part of the day is dividing my time between work and studying.”)*

As another participant shared:

*“So, my experience there was hard, because need nimo ibalance ang imong pag eskwela and ang imong pag trabaho, so bale ang himuon nimo ana is mag time management ka.” (IDI2-TF3-P12) (“So, my experience there was hard because you really need to balance your schooling and your work. Basically, what you have to do is practice time management.”)*

And another participant shared:

*“Lisud jud ibalance... need jud ibalance ang pag eskwela ug ang pagtrabaho.” (FGD1) (“It’s really difficult to balance... you really need to balance your schooling and your work.”)*

As I listened to the participants, I could feel the quiet strain behind their words, especially how exhausting it is to constantly divide themselves between work and school. I could almost see their daily struggle in their statements where balancing responsibilities becomes a demanding routine rather than a simple skill. I could sense the weight of that difficulty, an ongoing tension where time is never enough, and each day feels like a continuous effort to keep up with both roles.

On the demands of work schedule, particularly early morning or late-night shifts, students often experience tardiness and irregular attendance in school. As one of my participants shared:

*“Hindi po sya naging madali para a akin ang pagbalanse ng pag-aaral at pagtatrabaho, dahil naranasan kong mahuli sa klase.” (IDI4) (“It was not easy for me to balance studying and working because I experienced being late to class.”)*

Similarly, with another participant shared her experiences how employment responsibilities directly interfere with her academic participation:

*“So one of my experiences is kung naa jud kay trabaho, isa ka sa mga latecomers sa school, especially kung ang imong duty is buntag.” (FGD1) (“So one of my experiences is that if you have work, you tend to be one of the latecomers at school, especially if your duty is in the morning.”)*

One of my participants also shared:

*“Nahihirapan ako, sa mga gawain, lalo na kung, ahmm..late na late na ako, di ko ito na manage, dahil sa kakulangan ng oras, kaya mahirap Talaga.” (IDI3) (“I find it difficult to handle my tasks, especially when I’m already very late. I’m not able to manage them well due to a lack of time, so it’s really hard.”)*

A deep sense of empathy and heaviness I felt for them. I could sense their frustration and helplessness, knowing that their lateness is not intentional but caused by the weight of their responsibilities. It touched me to realize how much effort they give, yet still struggle to keep up.

One of my participants shared that work responsibilities often take precedence, leaving limited time and energy for school work. She said:

*“Para sa akin, mahirap ang pagbalanse sa trabaho at sa pag-aaral ko, dahil may mga takdang aralin na hindi ko agad magawa, dahil may mga trabaho pa akong dapat gawin”. (IDI5) (“For me, balancing work and my studies is difficult because there are assignments I cannot complete right away since I still have work responsibilities to attend to.”)*

Similarly, another participant shared:

*“kulang sa tulog, dahil sa trabaho, at hindi ko rin minsan nagagawa ang aking mga takdang aralin na dapat tapusin.” (IDI4) (“I lack sleep because of work, and sometimes I’m unable to complete the assignments that I’m supposed to finish.”)*

One more participant expressed:

*“maingun nako na kapuy kaayo sya kay sometimes kulang kag tulog then sometimes naman nay mga activities or mga quizzes na need jud nimo sya ihabol... labaw nag gamay kayo imong oras.”(IDI2) (“I can say that it’s really exhausting because sometimes you lack sleep, and there are times when you have activities or quizzes that you really need to catch up on—especially when you have very little time.”)*

I could sense their overwhelming exhaustion and silent frustration, knowing they genuinely want to do well but are constrained by time and lack of sleep. It deeply moved me to witness the extent of their sacrifices, as they continue to push forward despite being physically and emotionally drained. I realized that they carry a constant sense of being “behind,” which further deepens their stress and anxiety as a person.

The cumulative effect of limited time, fatigue, and incomplete requirements is reflected in students’ academic performance. Many participants acknowledged that their grades and outputs suffer due to their dual roles as one shared. One of them expressed:

“sometimes gamay akong makuha na score in grade, kay because, ano sya kanang wala koy time mag study kung busy sa work.” (IDI2) (“*Sometimes I get low grades because I don’t have time to study when I’m busy with work.*”)

Similarly, another participant shared:

“Minsan, nakakaapekto ito sa aking mga exams and mga projects sa kakulangan ng mga oras, minsan ay pagod na pagod na ako, at sa sobrang pagod ko, ay hindi ko na nagagawa ng maayos ang aking mga projects, and kulang na sa oras ang aking pagrereview.” (IDI3) (“*Sometimes, this affects my exams and projects due to lack of time. At times, I am already very exhausted, and because of that, I am unable to complete my projects properly, and I don’t have enough time to review.*”)

Another participant shared:

“and sa exam pud, is on the spot ang study, so bale kung on the spot ka, dili g yud na masulod sa imong utok, imong gistudyhan, so bale wala lang pud didto na part, kay nagkalisud ko, didto kay daghan kaayo ko nalimtan, wala na remember, kay dali dali lagi, so mao to sya nubo akong score.” (FGD2) (“*And during exams, I end up studying on the spot. When you do that, what you study doesn’t really sink in, so it doesn’t help much. I struggled in that part because I forgot a lot and couldn’t remember things since everything was rushed, which is why I got a low score.*”)

Their academic performance is not solely a reflection of their ability, but is deeply shaped by the constraints surrounding of the students. As I listened, I saw how they are often forced to rely on rushed or last-minute efforts, which limits their ability to fully engage with their learning. This made me understand more clearly that role conflict has real and tangible consequences on their educational outcomes.

### **Types of Role strain emerge among senior high school working students in the process of balancing school and work demands**

The participants described having insufficient sleep due to late-night work or school tasks, followed by early morning classes. As one of my participants shared:

“Most challenging kay kulang na, di na enough ang sleep nako, so, dira ginabay man gud ang pagprepare sa imong mga gamit para mag skwela, then kasabay pud ang trabaho nimo inig buntag, magluto ka para sa imong ginatrabahuan para sa ilang makaon-.” (FGD-1) (“*The most challenging part is that I don’t get enough sleep. I have to prepare my things for school while also handling my work in the morning, like cooking for the people I work for so they have something to eat.*”)

Similarly, another participant shared:

“pagka buntag ana is kulang ka sa tulog, na magsulod sa skwela, kay gihimo man nimo imong activity, then pagka gabie ana murag kulang napud ka sa tulog kay mag trabaho naka, so usually kay kung pangbuntag man gud ko maingun nako sya nga lisud kay pag buntag komagtrabaho muuli ko sa udto then pagka hapon napud mu skwela.” (IDI-2) (“*In the morning, you lack sleep when you go to school because you stayed up doing your activities. Then at night, you still don’t get enough sleep because you have to work. Usually, since I work in the*”)

*morning, I can say it's really difficult—I work in the morning, go home at noon, and then attend school again in the afternoon.”)*

I realized that this chronic lack of rest does not only affect their physical health but also their ability to concentrate and participate in class. Yes, I saw how the demands of their dual roles go beyond simple time management, extending into deep physical strain and exhaustion.

Despite being physically exhausted, students are still expected to complete academic tasks, which adds another layer of difficulty to their experiences. As one of my participants shared:

*“the most challenging part of the day is evening, after work because I’ am already tired but still need to study or complete assignment.” (IDI-1)*

I felt a deep heaviness in realizing how relentless academic demands can be, where rest is often sacrificed just to meet expectations. I could sense how they push themselves beyond their limits, holding on through sheer perseverance, yet quietly drifting toward exhaustion and burnout.

As I engaged in my participants, they frequently described feelings of stress, pressure, and even depression. One of them said:

*“emotionally I feel pressured but I stay motivated because I know I’ am doing this for my dreams and my family.” (IDI-1)*

Another participant shared:

*“ minsan ay gusto ko ng tumigil, dahil sa pagod, sa stress, sa depression, na aking nararamdaman, pero hinaharap ko ito sa pamamagitan ng pagpapaalala sa aking sarili, kaya ko to.” (IDI-3) (“Sometimes I feel like stopping because of the fatigue, stress, and depression I experience, but I face it by reminding myself that I can do this.”)*

I could feel the weight of their pressure, the quiet battles they fight within themselves, and the moments when giving up feels so close. It touched me deeply to hear how they carry both exhaustion and hope at the same time, how they feel overwhelmed, yet still choose to keep going for their dreams and for their families. In their voices, I felt both pain and strength intertwined, and it left me with a profound respect and compassion for everything they endure in silence.

In addition to emotional stress, participants also experienced psychological strain characterized by anxiety, negative thinking, and mental exhaustion. The constant pressure to meet expectations from both school and work leads to cognitive overload to the participants.

*“if maghimo ko ani sa akong mga academic tasks kung naa koy trabaho, akong ma feel is.. number one is stress, number one ang stress, then number two is anxiety. Kay ma anxiety ko because like naa koy ginahuna-huna nga dili nako sya mahimo na murag negative thinking, kay syempre lisud sya imanage as a student ang pag eskwela ug ang pag working student.” (IDI-2) (“If I work on my academic tasks while I have a job, what I feel is—first is stress, and second is anxiety. I feel anxious because I keep thinking that I won’t be able to do it, like having negative thoughts. Of course, it’s really difficult to manage both studying and working as a student.”)*

Another participant shared:

*“I wanted to shout out. My anger, and sometimes I want to cry, because of the piling up academic tasks, assignments and projects while doing work at the same time.” (FGD-3)*

Some participants even questioned their situation and purpose:

*“As a working student, the thoughts that usually comes to my mind, when I feel the expectations from work and school, overlap or conflict is, the three major signs of, mental disorder. Like, depression, anxiety and stress.”*

*Like, what I am doing? What I am doing wrong? Why I am still doing this? Is it worth it?... Like, I don't know. I am very uncertain, about my future, why do I Keep doing this.” (FGD-2)*

As I reflected on their words, I felt a deep ache and emotional heaviness, realizing that their struggles run far deeper than what is seen on the surface. I could sense their uncertainty, their quiet fears, and the painful questions they carry within themselves, wondering if what they are enduring is worth it. It touched me to recognize how role strain reaches into their inner world, where they begin to question their purpose and the meaning of their sacrifices, making their journey not just physically exhausting, but emotionally and mentally overwhelming”

### **Adaptive Coping Under Role Strain**

Students cope by organizing, planning, and prioritizing tasks to handle limited time. One of my participants shared:

*“so for me, lesser jud ang pahuway, then ikaw na mag discipline sa imong lawas na kabalo ka nga naa kay trabaho, you're gonna wake up early para mahuman nimo sya and mahabol nimo ang time sa klase. Again, naa ra jud sya sa time management, and mao lang jud na imong ibalance.” (FGD1) (“So for me, rest is really limited, and you have to discipline your body—you know you have work, so you need to wake up early to finish it and still catch up with your class time. Again, it really comes down to time management, and that's what you need to balance.”)*

Similarly, another participant shared:

*“kanang wala nay mabilin na trabaho, so, naa ra gyud dira ang disiplina sa amoa, as a working student, ginahimo gyud namo sya ahead of time, ga plan jud mi kung unsa ang unahon, ug unsa ang kasunod, so, naa gihapon ang first things first, or katung asa tung mas ipriority namo, mga activities, mao jud tu among unahon” (FGD1) (“It's about making sure no tasks are left undone. It really comes down to discipline on our part as working students—we make sure to do things ahead of time. We plan what to do first and what comes next, following a 'first things first' approach, prioritizing the most important activities before the others.”)*

One more participant:

*“I managed them by planning my time and finishing household chores fast before studying. Making simple schedule and completing tasks step by step”. (ID11)*

As I listened to the participants, I felt both admiration and concern. I was struck by their strong self-discipline and intentional time management, how they plan ahead, prioritize tasks, and push themselves to meet both work and academic demands. At the same time, I sensed the cost of this routine, particularly in their reduced rest and constant pressure. Their experiences made me realize that for them, balance is not easily attained but carefully maintained through effort, sacrifice, and persistence.

Some of the participants utilize every free moment for productivity. One of them shared:

*“If naa koy break, didto nako ginahimo akong schoolworks.” (FGD3) “If I have a break, that's when I do my schoolwork.”)*

Another one also shared:

*“There was a time I had a project do while also having a work shift, I used my free time to work on the project to continue late at night even though it was tiring, I finished it on time.” (ID11)*

And another:

*“So the situation I handled my academic performances and work, at the same time is, during a time on Saturday, when a lot of people buying stuff for the holidays, and at the same time I did my presentation when nobody's buying, at all and I start making my presentation.” (FGD3)*

I was impressed by how they use even small pockets of time, breaks, idle moments, or slow work hours, to stay on top of their academic tasks. At the same time, I sensed the strain behind this routine, especially when they continue working despite fatigue. Their experiences made me realize that their productivity is driven not by convenience, but by necessity and constant effort.

The participants perform academic and work tasks simultaneously. As one of my participants shared:

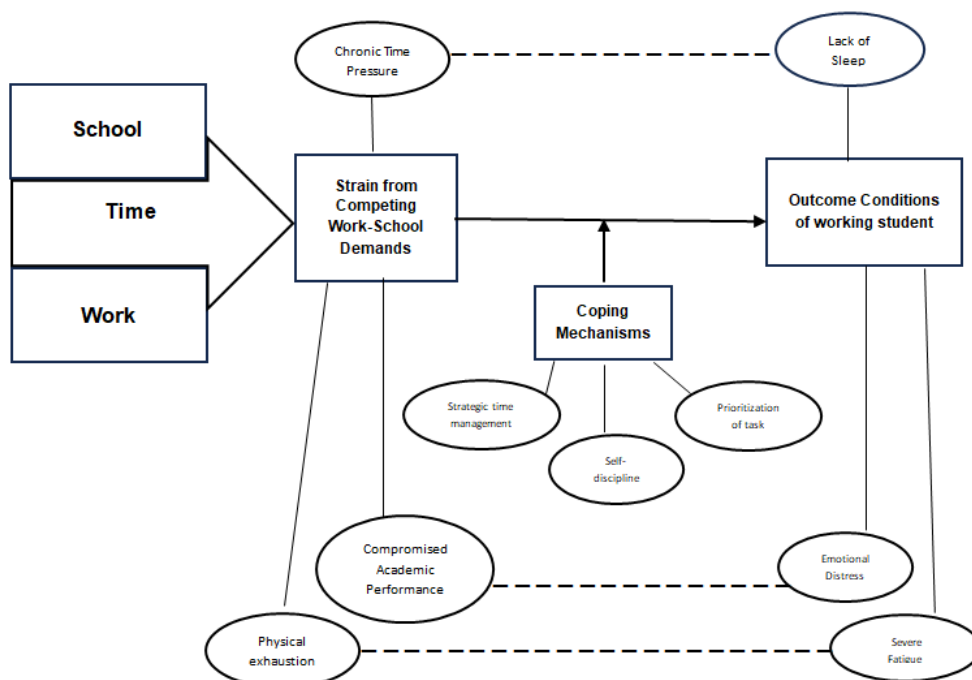
*“when we have a performance of memory speech in school. So, while doing my duties, na ano, in my work place, anu pud, ga memorize pud ko, while ginahimo nako ang mga trabaho nako sa balay, anu pud, gina, ... multi-tasking ko, which is gina, hugas, ga memorize, habang ga limpyo, ga memorize, .. so mao lang to.” (FGD1) (“When we had a memory speech performance in school, I was also memorizing while doing my duties at my workplace. While doing household tasks, I multitasked, washing, cleaning, and at the same time memorizing. That’s what I did.”)*

I was struck by how the participant seamlessly integrates studying into everyday tasks, memorizing while working and doing household chores. It showed a strong sense of determination and adaptability. At the same time, I sensed how demanding this constant multitasking can be, leaving little space for rest or focus. It made me realize that their effort to keep up is continuous and often comes at the cost of ease and stillness.

Beneath their exhaustion lies a deep, almost unspoken determination: the need to rise above their circumstances, to build something better, and to give back to the people who depend on them. As I reflected on my conversations with the participants, I found myself to understand their struggles but also feels the weight of their daily battles, the fatigue that lingers, the doubt that creeps in, and yet the steady decision to keep going despite it all. Being a working student, I realized, is not just about managing responsibilities; it is about constantly negotiating with oneself, choosing perseverance over rest, hope over discouragement.

During our sharing, one phrase lingered in my thoughts: *“Laban lang jud mi ani! ma’am.”* (“We just keep fighting through this, ma’am!”). At first, it sounded simple, almost casual, but the more I sat with it, the more it revealed its depth. It carried the quiet ache of sleepless nights, the tension of unfinished tasks, and the courage it takes to face another demanding day. It was not just a statement; it was a mindset, a silent promise to endure. Like a small but unyielding flame flickering in the wind, their resilience refuses to be put out. Their journey feels like walking a tightrope in a storm, every step uncertain, every moment demanding balance, yet they move forward, not because it is easy, but because they have chosen, again and again, not to fall.

### Modified Conceptual Paradigm



---

## Summary of Findings

My meaningful encounters with my study participants have led me to the following realizations:

1. The participants consistently described that the most difficult challenge is balancing time between work and school, which leads to chronic time pressure, Physical exhaustion, and compromised academic performance.
2. The participants reported that the most challenging part of their daily experience is severe fatigue from lack of sleep combined with emotional distress, as they struggle to meet overlapping work and academic demands.
3. The participants managed the demands of work and school through strategic time management, self-discipline, and prioritization of tasks. They maximize available time by working on school tasks during breaks, idle moments, or late at night despite fatigue.

## DISCUSSIONS

In this chapter, I presented the discussion of the findings based on the themes generated from the result of the study. I presented the implications for practice, and future direction of the study.

### The Cost of Balancing Work and School

In my conversation of my study participants, I learned that they consistently described that the most difficult challenge is balancing time between work and school, which leads to chronic time pressure, Physical exhaustion, and compromised academic performance. This finding aligns with Libago et al. (2024), who said that working students experience difficulty balancing work and academic responsibilities, resulting in time pressure, physical exhaustion, and compromised academic performance. The study of Ramos and Dizon (2025) also affirm that students experiencing burnout and emotional exhaustion due to academic demands struggle with engagement and motivation, indicating that excessive role demands contribute to fatigue and negatively affect academic performance. However, my finding opposes Samaratunga et al. (2025), who argued that students who develop effective time management skills and maintain strong motivation can successfully balance both roles without compromising academic performance.

### The Enduring Strain of Balancing Work and School Demands

In this study I ascertained that my study participants reported that the most challenging part of their daily experience is severe fatigue from lack of sleep combined with emotional distress, as they struggle to meet overlapping work and academic demands. With this finding, I agree with Alonzo et al. (2024), who affirmed that students facing multiple academic and role demands experience heightened stress, fatigue, and difficulty sustaining academic performance, indicating that overlapping responsibilities contribute to exhaustion and compromised academic outcomes. Similarly, my finding corroborates the claim of Suminguit et al. (2025), stating that working students struggle with the competing demands of academic and work responsibilities, resulting in pressure, fatigue, and difficulty maintaining academic performance. However, based on my findings, I disagree with Pérez-Jorge (2025), who suggested that some working students are able to maintain psychological well-being and avoid severe fatigue through strong resilience, adaptive coping strategies, and structured routines, allowing them to effectively manage both academic and work demands.

### Adaptive Coping Under Role Strain

My findings highlight that participants managed the demands of work and school through strategic time management, self-discipline, and prioritization of tasks. They maximize available time by working on school tasks during breaks, idle moments, or late at night despite fatigue. With this finding, I agree with Garcia (2023), who said that working students manage dual responsibilities through effective strategies, as he highlighted their use of time management, prioritization, and maximizing small time intervals. My finding also agrees with Chen

(2024), who emphasized the role of self-discipline and structured scheduling in sustaining academic performance despite fatigue. However, I opposed the study of Rahman (2022), who argued that relying on fragmented time may reduce learning quality and increase burnout, suggesting that these coping strategies are not always effective.

### Implication for Practice

Based on the findings of the study, it becomes evident that both teachers and family members play an important role in supporting working students through practical interventions that address strain while strengthening coping capacity. Educational leaders may consider implementing flexible academic arrangements, such as adjusted deadlines, hybrid learning options, and accessible mental health services. At the same time, employers may adopt student-friendly policies, including flexible work schedules and reduced workloads during peak academic periods. A coordinated effort among schools, workplaces, and families is therefore essential in buffering the pressures of dual-role demands and in promoting students' overall well-being and academic success.

### Future Directions

Future research may consider employing multiple linear regression to examine how time-related factors in balancing school and work predict the level of strain arising from competing work–school demands. This approach may also be extended to analyze how strain and coping mechanisms influence outcome conditions such as compromised academic performance, fatigue, and emotional distress. In addition, an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) may be conducted to develop and validate a measurement instrument that captures the underlying dimensions of coping mechanisms. These dimensions may include strategic time management, self-discipline, and task prioritization, which can be operationalized as indicators in a structured questionnaire. Through this, future studies may provide a more comprehensive and generalizable understanding of how working students manage dual responsibilities.

### REFERENCES

1. Alhassan, M., & Adzrolo, M. (2023). Balancing work and academic responsibilities among students in Ghana. *Journal of Educational Development*, 45(2), 123–137.
2. Antoniadou, M., Crowder, M., & Cunningham, L. (2024). Working students and academic performance: The impact of employment on student well-being. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 27(1), 45–60. <https://doi.org/10.xxxx/xxxx>
3. International Labor Organization. (2022). Global employment trends for youth 2022: Investing in transforming futures. <https://www.ilo.org>
4. Lopez, R., & Tarrayo, V. (2021). Institutional support and academic engagement of working students in the Philippines. *Philippine Journal of Education*, 98(1), 67–82.
5. Moral, J., & Maquirang, R. (2022). Economic challenges and educational participation among Filipino students during COVID-19. *Asian Education Studies*, 7(3), 89–101.
6. Paglinawan, K., & Orbilla, J. (2025). Socioeconomic factors affecting working senior high school students in the Philippines. *Philippine Social Science Review*, 77(1), 112–130.
7. Payusan, R., Dela Cruz, M., & Santos, P. (2022). Time management and stress among working students in blended learning environments. *Journal of Educational Research and Practice*, 12(4), 201–215.
8. Putri, D., Santoso, H., & Wibowo, A. (2023). Student employment and academic engagement in Indonesia. *Indonesian Journal of Education*, 14(2), 155–170.
9. Rahim, N., & Lajuni, N. (2021). Economic pressures and student employment in Malaysia. *Malaysian Journal of Learning and Instruction*, 18(1), 89–105.
10. Rodriguez, L., Smith, J., & Brown, T. (2022). The effects of part-time employment on student burnout and motivation in the United States. *Journal of College Student Development*, 63(5), 543–558.
11. Sebullen, J., Kitani, R., & Matiwitiw, K. (2023). Work-study balance and academic outcomes among Filipino learners. *Philippine Journal of Educational Psychology*, 15(2), 78–95.
12. Goode, W. J. (1960). A theory of role strain. *American Sociological Review*, 25(4), 483–496. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2092933>

13. Adams, W. C. (2024). Conducting semi-structured interviews. In J. S. Wholey, H. P. Hatry, & K. E. Newcomer (Eds.), *Handbook of practical program evaluation* (5th ed.). Jossey-Bass.
14. Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2024). *Thematic analysis: A practical guide*. SAGE Publications.
15. Guest, G., Namey, E., & Mitchell, M. (2024). *Collecting qualitative data: A field manual for applied research* (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications.
16. Hall, R. (2024). *Qualitative research design in education: Theory and practice*. Routledge.
17. Lim, J. (2025). *Exploring lived experiences through qualitative inquiry*. Springer.
18. Alonzo, M. R., Santos, J. P., & Cruz, L. A. (2024). Academic stress and role demands among working students. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 16(2), 112–128.
19. Chen, Y. (2024). Self-discipline and academic resilience among working students. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 118, 102145. <https://doi.org/10.xxxx/ijer.2024.xxxx>
20. Garcia, R. L. (2023). Time management strategies of working students in secondary education. *Asian Journal of Education and Learning*, 5(1), 55–70.
21. Libago, K. M., Dela Cruz, A. P., & Reyes, J. T. (2024). Balancing work and academics: Challenges of senior high school students. *Philippine Journal of Social Sciences*, 12(1), 34–49.
22. Pérez-Jorge, D. (2025). Resilience and well-being among working students: A coping perspective. *European Journal of Education Studies*, 11(3), 201–219.
23. Rahman, A. (2022). Fragmented study time and its effects on learning and burnout. *Journal of Educational Studies*, 9(4), 88–102.
24. Ramos, E. F., & Dizon, M. L. (2025). Burnout and academic engagement among working students. *Journal of Student Affairs Research*, 14(1), 75–90.
25. Samaratunga, K., Perera, H., & Silva, D. (2025). Time management and academic success among employed students. *International Review of Education*, 71(2), 145–162.
26. Suminguit, R. J., Lopez, G. H., & Bautista, P. M. (2025). Competing demands and academic performance of working learners. *Philippine Educational Review*, 18(2), 98–115.