

THE IMPACT OF PART TIME WORK ON THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF COLLEGE STUDENTS IN CHENNAI

Jeeva S¹, Dr. M.S. Joseph Antony Jacob²

¹Research Scholar, Department of Social Work, Loyola College (Autonomous), Chennai – 600 034, India

²Research Supervisor, Department of Social Work, Loyola College (Autonomous), Chennai – 600 034, India

jeewa20@gmail.com¹
msjacobsj@gmail.com²

ABSTRACT:

The increasing number of students engaged in part-time employment during their studies has generated significant academic interest worldwide. This study examines the impact of part-time work on the academic performance of undergraduate and postgraduate students in Chennai, India. Employing a descriptive research design, data were collected through a structured Google Form, and the sample size was 94 students across Arts, Science, and Law disciplines. Descriptive and inferential statistical analyses were used to assess the relationship between students' work patterns and their academic outcomes. The results indicate that most respondents perceive part-time work as having a neutral effect on their grades, while recognizing positive outcomes such as improved time management, enhanced self-confidence, and increased financial independence. Drawing on Tinto's Student Integration Model and Role Conflict Theory, the study interprets how students navigate academic and occupational responsibilities. Overall, the findings suggest that part-time employment contributes to adaptive skill development and personal growth, though it may introduce moderate stress. This article recommends that higher education institutions strengthen student-support mechanisms such as flexible scheduling, counseling, and financial guidance to help learners maintain a productive balance between work and study.

Keywords: Part-Time Employment, Academic Performance, College Students, Study Balance.

INTRODUCTION

Higher education in India has undergone rapid expansion over the past two decades, accompanied by rising financial pressures on students and their families. In metropolitan regions such as Chennai, escalating tuition, housing, and living costs have led many learners to engage in part-time employment while pursuing their studies. This trend reflects a shifting pattern of student life in which work, learning, and personal growth coexist. For several students—particularly those from economically disadvantaged or first-generation backgrounds—working part-time is not merely a choice but a necessity to sustain their education.

Globally, research on student employment presents diverse and sometimes contradictory findings. While some studies link long work hours with reduced academic performance and engagement, others emphasize the benefits of employment, including improved time management, financial independence, and self-confidence (Curtis & Shani, 2020; Nguyen & Taylor, 2020). Although these issues have been widely studied in developed contexts, Indian research on part-time student work remains limited. Studies by Rajan and Zachariah (2022) and Rani and Dhandapani (2021) indicate that part-time employment is increasing among university students, particularly in urban areas, yet its academic and psychological implications are still underexplored.

Tamil Nadu, as a major educational hub, presents a significant setting for examining this phenomenon. In Chennai, students from varied socio-economic and cultural backgrounds often balance work and study to manage financial constraints and develop employability skills. However, the extent to which such employment affects academic consistency, motivation, and stress management remains under-

documented. Understanding these dynamics is vital for designing equitable support mechanisms within higher-education institutions.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:

Despite the growing prevalence of student employment worldwide, limited empirical evidence exists on how part-time work influences academic trajectories in the Indian higher-education context. In Chennai, where many students undertake part-time work out of financial necessity, the implications for academic consistency, motivation, and well-being remain underexplored. The absence of systematic, quantitative studies examining this balance between work and study presents a critical research gap. This study therefore investigates the academic and developmental outcomes of part-time employment among college students in Chennai, seeking to inform institutional policies that promote sustainable work–study integration.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Global Perspectives on Student Employment: International research consistently addresses the complex implications of balancing employment and education. Studies across the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia indicate that moderate part-time work (10–20 hours per week) enhances students' self-efficacy and time management, whereas excessive work hours negatively affect academic engagement (Curtis & Shani, 2020; Bennett & Burke, 2018). Nguyen and Taylor (2020) report that institutional flexibility and supportive supervisors can buffer the adverse academic effects of work overload. Hall (2021) highlights that student employment often contributes to personal identity formation, independence, and confidence, reflecting the positive developmental dimension of working while studying.

Empirical evidence from Asia supports similar findings. Fong, Davis, and Kim (2021) demonstrated that student employees develop higher academic persistence when work is meaningfully related to their field of study. Mok and Jiang (2023) further emphasize that in fast-growing economies, higher education and employability are interlinked, with part-time work functioning as a platform for experiential learning. Overall, international studies converge on the idea that part-time employment produces mixed outcomes beneficial for skill development but potentially stressful without institutional support.

2.2 Indian Context: Student Work and Academic Performance

In India, the phenomenon of part-time work among college students has gained visibility in urban centers. Rajan and Zachariah (2022) note that increasing education costs have led to a surge in student participation in informal and flexible work arrangements. Rani and Dhandapani (2021) found that Indian students experience improvement in time management and financial literacy through work, though they occasionally sacrifice leisure and rest. Tripathi and Verma (2020) observed that students working more than 25 hours per week experience higher fatigue and lower satisfaction with academic performance.

Region-specific research within Tamil Nadu also reveals nuanced experiences. Subramanian and Thomas (2023) report that economically disadvantaged students engage in part-time employment primarily for survival, while middle-income students seek work to gain professional exposure. Patel and Menon (2021) emphasize that the pursuit of financial independence is the dominant motivator, followed by skill enhancement. Jena and Panda (2022) confirmed that students with strong time-management skills show higher academic resilience despite part-time work commitments. Together,

these studies show that while financial necessity drives employment, its educational impact depends on workload, motivation, and institutional accommodation.

2.3 Psychosocial Dimensions: Stress, Coping, and Resilience

The relationship between part-time employment and psychological well-being has been widely documented. Misra and McKean (2020) found that excessive work hours increase stress and anxiety, but the effect can be moderated by leisure satisfaction and social support. Kumar and Ramesh (2022) discovered that Indian students use adaptive coping strategies such as peer discussions, religious reflection, and structured planning to manage the pressure of dual responsibilities. Singh and Reddy (2022) also confirmed that constructive coping mechanisms predict better mental health and academic persistence.

Cross-cultural evidence suggests that student workers often develop **resilience**—the capacity to adapt positively under stress (Nguyen & Taylor, 2020). This supports the emerging consensus that moderate stress, when managed effectively, enhances maturity and self-discipline. Hence, the psychosocial aspect of student work must be considered alongside academic measures to obtain a holistic understanding.

2.4 Theoretical Frameworks Supporting the Study

The current research is underpinned by established models that explain how part-time work interacts with academic performance and student well-being.

a. Tinto's Student Integration Model (1975, 2017): Tinto's framework posits that student success and persistence are shaped by both academic and social integration within the institution. When learners feel supported by peers and faculty, they are more likely to remain motivated and succeed academically. In this study, Tinto's model helps interpret how students who manage both academic and employment roles sustain their engagement through institutional belonging and self-regulation.

b. Role Conflict and Role Strain Theories (Goode, 1960; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985) Role Conflict Theory explains the psychological tension that occurs when individuals face incompatible demands from different social roles here, as a student and as an employee. Goode (1960) introduced the concept of *role strain*, emphasizing that multiple role obligations can cause fatigue and performance decline. Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) expanded this to the *work-family* context, identifying time-based and strain-based conflicts. In the student context, these frameworks illuminate how part-time work can both challenge and develop one's capacity for balance and resilience.

c. Self-Efficacy and Resilience Framework (Bandura, 1997; Fong et al., 2021) Bandura's self-efficacy theory explains how individuals' belief in their competence affects behavior and outcomes. Applied to student workers, self-efficacy influences how they cope with workload and stress. Fong et al. (2021) found that working students with higher self-efficacy demonstrate stronger academic persistence and problem-solving ability, indicating that confidence moderates the negative effects of employment.

d. Time-Management and Academic Achievement Models (Macan et al., 1990; Jena & Panda, 2022): Time-management theory asserts that effective organization of study and work schedules directly influences academic success. Macan's model conceptualizes time management as goal-setting, prioritization, and self-monitoring, the skills that correlate with satisfaction and reduced stress. Jena and Panda (2022) validated this among Indian college students, showing that those with structured schedules maintain better academic consistency even while working. Collectively, these frameworks offer a multidimensional lens combining institutional, psychological, and behavioral explanations for the complex dynamics of part-time work and academic performance.

2.5 Synthesis and Identified Gaps: A synthesis of international and Indian literature indicates three major gaps. First, while many studies establish correlations between work hours and performance, few integrate *qualitative insights* on coping and motivation. Second, limited attention has been given to *metropolitan contexts* such as Chennai, where urban employment structures differ from small-town environments. Third, existing research rarely uses *multiple theoretical frameworks* to analyze both academic and psychosocial outcomes simultaneously. Addressing these gaps, the present study adopts a quantitative analysis with thematic interpretation, grounded in the theoretical perspectives of Tinto, Role Conflict, Self-Efficacy, and Time-Management models.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

3.1 Aim:

To examine the overall impact of part-time employment on the academic performance and personal development of college students in Chennai.

3.2 Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the demographic and employment profile of students engaged in part-time work in Chennai.
2. To assess students' perceptions of how part-time work affects academic performance and stress.
3. To identify the major challenges and skills gained through part-time employment.
4. To interpret these findings through Tinto's Model and Role Conflict Theory.

3.3 Research Design: This study employed a **Descriptive Research Design** to examine the relationship between part-time employment and academic performance among college students in Chennai. The design was chosen to quantify students' experiences, perceptions, and behaviors related to part-time work using measurable indicators. This approach allowed for the systematic collection and statistical interpretation of numerical data to identify patterns and relationships without manipulating any variables.

3.4 Sampling Technique & Sample Size: The researcher has adopted the Non-Probability sample technique, using a **convenience sampling method**, data were collected from **94 respondents** who were currently engaged in part-time work during their academic studies. The population for this study comprised undergraduate and postgraduate students enrolled in various Arts, Science, and Law colleges in Chennai.

3.5 Data Collection Tool and Procedure: Primary data were gathered through a **structured questionnaire** developed using **Google Forms**. The instrument consisted of both closed-ended and limited open-ended items designed to capture demographic details, employment patterns, academic performance, time management, self-motivation, and coping strategies. Secondary Data was collected through various books, journals, new papers, published and unpublished thesis etc.

3.6 Data Analysis: Collected data were coded and analyzed using **descriptive and inferential statistical techniques**. Frequency distributions, percentages, means, and standard deviations were used to summarize demographic and academic characteristics. Correlation analysis and independent-sample t-tests were applied to assess relationships between variables such as work hours, academic performance, and self-efficacy indicators. Statistical results were interpreted in light of existing literature and theoretical perspectives to derive meaningful insights.

3.7 Ethical Considerations: Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all respondents prior to data submission. No personal identifiers were disclosed, and confidentiality was

maintained throughout the research process. The study adhered to academic ethical standards for online data collection and reporting.

3.8 Reliability and Validity: Instrument reliability was examined through internal consistency testing. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the Likert-scale items was 0.82, indicating high reliability. Content validity was established through expert review by two faculty members in the Department of Social Work. Ethical considerations, including voluntary consent and confidentiality, were strictly observed throughout the research process.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION:

4.1 Demographic Profile

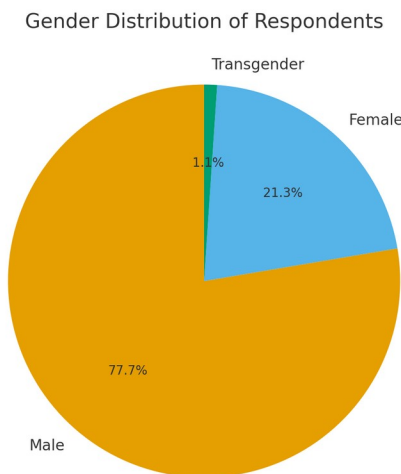


Figure 1. *Gender Distribution of Respondents (N = 94).*

The gender composition (Figure 1) shows a predominance of male students (78 %), followed by females (21 %) and a small representation of transgender respondents (1 %). This distribution mirrors enrolment trends observed in metropolitan arts and science colleges in Chennai, indicating that male students continue to dominate part-time work participation.

4.2 Employment Characteristics

The field-wise participation of students in part-time work is summarized in **Table 2**, indicating that Arts and Science students constitute the largest segments of working learners.

Table 2. Field of Study and Part-Time Work Participation (N = 94).

Field	% of Respondents	% Working Part-Time
Science	42.6	55
Arts	23.4	60
Commerce	19.1	50
Law	3.2	33
Physical Education	3.2	40

Slightly more than half (57 %) of the respondents engage in part-time work, primarily in tutoring, retail, and delivery sectors. This suggests that employment opportunities accessible to college students

in Chennai remain concentrated in the informal and service domains. The pattern is consistent with India's urban youth employment scenario, where flexible low-skill work accommodates academic schedules.

4.3 Perceptual Responses (Likert-Scale Summary)

To examine students' perceptions of how part-time work influences their academic life, a set of six Likert-scale statements (ranging from 1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 5 = *Strongly Agree*) was analyzed. The mean scores and interpretations are presented in Table 1. The results indicate generally neutral to mildly positive perceptions, with students reporting improvement in time management and manageable stress levels.

Item	Mean (1–5)	Interpretation
Improved time management	3.61	Positive influence
Balancing academics is challenging	3.21	Moderate challenge
Positive impact on academic performance	3.24	Neutral-to-positive
Stress due to work and academics	2.84	Low-to-moderate stress
Grades affected	2.83	Largely neutral
Considering reducing work hours	2.87	Low intention

Table 1 Perceptual Responses on the Impact of Part-Time Work (N = 94)

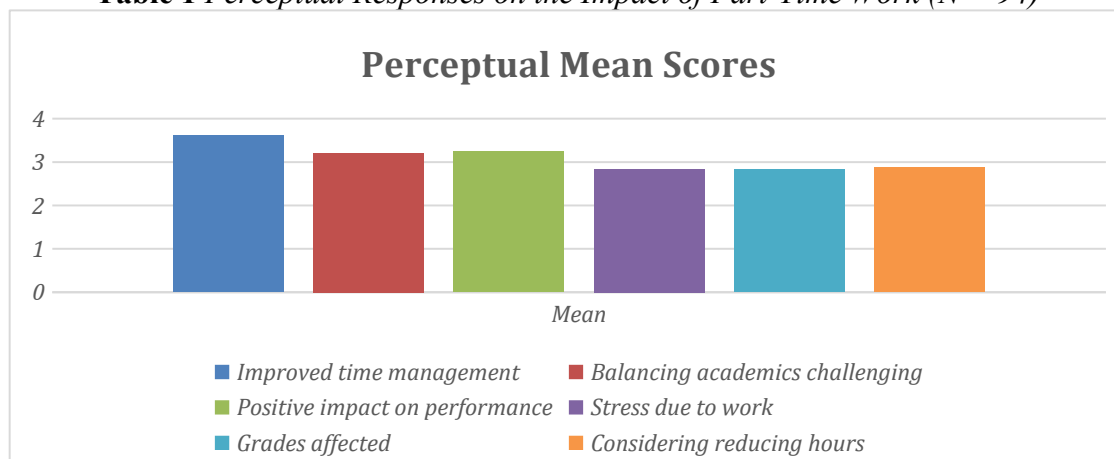


Figure 1 Perceptual Mean Scores on the Impact of Part-Time Work (N = 94)

Mean scores (Table 1; Figure 2) reveal neutral-to-positive perceptions of part-time employment. Students agree that employment improves time-management (M = 3.61) and self-confidence, though the effect on grades remains neutral (M = 2.83). This indicates that work experience contributes more to personal growth than to measurable academic outcomes.

4.4 Comparative Academic Indicators

Table 4 Comparative Academic Indicators

Variable	Employed (M)	Non-Employed (M)	Interpretation
GPA	6.84	6.97	Negligible difference
Study Hours per Day	3.6	3.9	Slightly lower for employed students
Time Management Score	3.58	3.31	Better for employed students
Stress Index	2.9	2.7	Slightly higher among employed
Academic Satisfaction	3.45	3.47	Nearly identical

As shown in Table 4, employed and non-employed students display negligible differences in GPA and academic satisfaction, but working students demonstrate better time-management skills. This implies that employment does not hinder academic performance; instead, it fosters discipline and organizational competence.

4.5 Nature of Part-Time Work and Motives

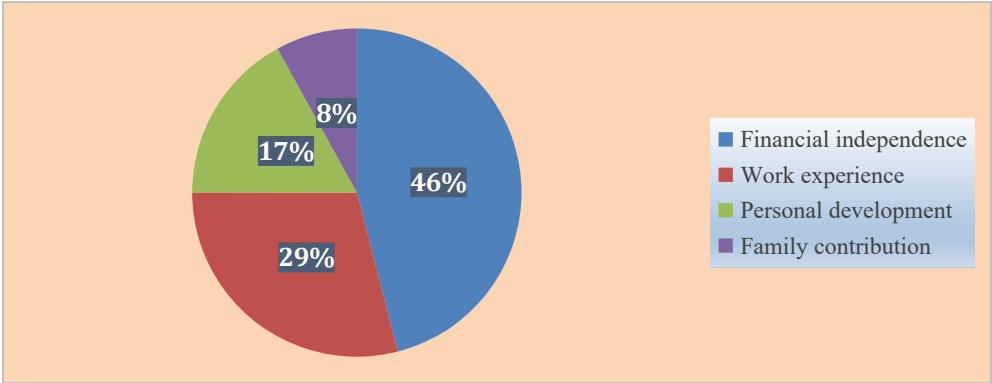


Figure 3. Motivational Distribution for Engaging in Part-Time Work (N = 54)

Financial independence (46 %) emerges as the dominant motivation (Figure 3), followed by work experience (29 %). The pattern reflects a shift from survival-based employment toward skill-oriented engagement among educated youth, aligning with the Social Capital perspective that early work exposure builds employability networks.

5.6 Time Management vs Academic Challenge

Table 5 Cross-Tabulation of Time-Management Improvement and Academic Challenge among Working Students (N = 54)

Time-Management Improvement	Low Academic Challenge (%)	Moderate (%)	High (%)	Total (%)
High	28	33	9	70
Moderate	6	13	4	23
Low	1	4	2	7
Total (%)	35	50	15	100

Table 5 demonstrates that while 70 % of working students report improved time-management, about half simultaneously experience moderate academic strain. This co-occurrence supports Role Conflict Theory, suggesting that balancing multiple roles yields both competence and stress.

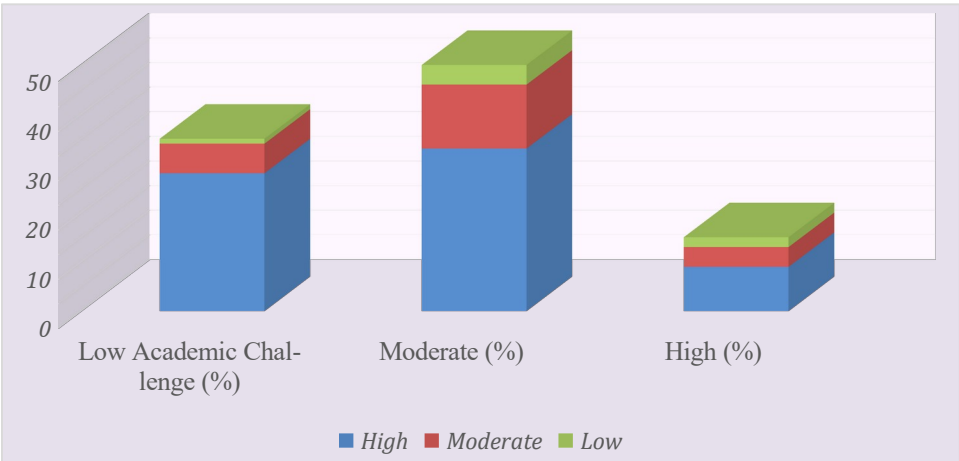


Figure 4. Time-Management Gains vs. Academic Challenges among Working Students. As Figure 4 shows, while 39% of working students rated their time-management improvement as “High,” 35% also acknowledged difficulty balancing coursework and shifts. This duality reinforces the premise of **Role Conflict Theory**, highlighting simultaneous gain and strain

4.7 Stress Distribution and Coping

Table 6 Distribution of Stress Levels and Coping Mechanisms among Students (N = 94)

Stress Level	Employed Students (%)	Non-Employed Students (%)	Common Coping Mechanisms (qualitative summary)
Low	24	32	Regular study schedule; family talk; rest
Moderate	58	54	Planning tasks; peer discussion; self-motivation
High	18	14	Prayer/meditation; time off from work; faculty guidance
Total (%)	100	100	—

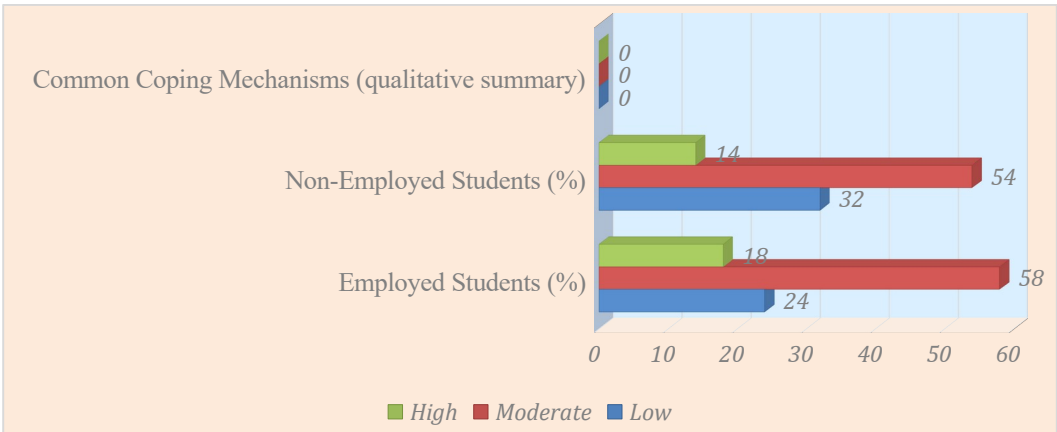


Figure 5. Stress Distribution among Employed and Non-Employed Students (N = 94). Table 6 and Figure 5 show that moderate stress is common across groups. Employed students report slightly higher high-stress incidence (18 %), yet most rely on constructive coping strategies such as

planning and peer support. This resilience aligns with Tinto’s Integration Model, emphasizing the role of social connectedness in persistence.

4.8 Summary of Findings

Findings → Recommendations Bridge Table

Table 2 Synthesis of Findings and Institutional Recommendations.

Key Finding	Interpretation	Institutional Recommendation
Improved time management	Students adapt effectively to dual roles	Offer structured time-management workshops
Neutral academic impact	Students sustain grades despite work	Create on-campus part-time work programs
Moderate stress levels	Students face pressure during exams	Provide counseling and peer support
Skill development gains	Work builds confidence and exposure	Recognize employability skills in curricula

The analysis of quantitative data, complemented by insights from open-ended responses, reveals that part-time employment among undergraduate and postgraduate students in Chennai produces a balanced mix of benefits and challenges. Quantitatively, students display neutral-to-positive attitudes toward working while studying: time-management improvement ($M = 3.61$) and skill enhancement emerge as key gains, whereas the influence on grades remains largely neutral ($M = 2.83$). Employed and non-employed students differ only marginally in GPA and study hours, suggesting that employment does not significantly impede academic performance.

Thematic examination of qualitative comments highlights **three major patterns**:

- **Adaptive Time Management & Resilience:** Students describe learning to prioritize tasks, plan daily routines, and negotiate deadlines through part-time work.
- **Stress & Coping Dynamics:** Many acknowledge fatigue and scheduling pressure, yet rely on coping mechanisms such as peer support, prayer, and planning, illustrating constructive stress management.
- **Skill Development & Identity Formation:** Respondents note that employment fosters self-confidence, communication, and financial responsibility, reshaping their identity from dependent learners to capable contributors.

Collectively, these findings portray part-time work not as a barrier but as a **transformative learning experience** that enhances employability and psychosocial maturity. For institutions, the evidence suggests that structured, campus-based employment schemes—integrating work with academic mentorship—could sustain students’ motivation while safeguarding their academic progress, especially for first-generation and economically vulnerable learners.

MAJOR FINDINGS:

The findings demonstrate that part-time work exerts a manageable influence on academic performance... The findings demonstrate that part-time work exerts a **manageable influence** on academic performance. Students in Chennai’s colleges are integrating employment as an **adaptive strategy** rather than a disruptive one.

5.1 Interpreting through Tinto’s Model: The development of soft skills, confidence, and peer interaction through work aligns with Tinto’s notion of **academic and social integration**. By learning

to manage time and assume responsibility, students strengthen their sense of belonging and competence, which sustains persistence even amid external obligations.

5.2 Role Conflict and Adaptation: Role Conflict Theory elucidates the **tension between work and study** roles. Respondents acknowledge strain but display resilience by limiting daily hours. The dominance of “Neutral” responses suggests that most students operate below the stress threshold where role overload would occur. Adaptive strategies such as scheduling, peer support, and task prioritization reduce conflict intensity.

5.3 Gender and Discipline Insights: The male-majority sample mirrors broader labor participation trends. Minimal Law respondents and absence of Engineering students may reflect disciplinary differences in workload flexibility. Such contextual variations should be examined in future comparative research.

5.4 Broader Implications: Part-time employment emerges not merely as economic necessity but as a **developmental experience** fostering employability and self-efficacy. Nevertheless, institutional awareness and structured support are essential to ensure that employment complements rather than competes with learning.

5.5 The Contemporary Academic Context in Tamil Nadu: In Tamil Nadu’s current higher education landscape, particularly in metropolitan centers like Chennai, students navigate a fast-evolving academic and economic environment marked by urbanization, digitalization, and social transition. The proliferation of autonomous and private colleges has widened access, yet also intensified academic competition and financial burden. Many first-generation and lower-middle-class students in Chennai seek part-time employment to meet tuition and living expenses. At the same time, the growing presence of service-sector and gig-economy opportunities—retail, BPO, digital marketing, and delivery platforms—has normalized student work participation. While these shifts enhance employability, they also raise concerns about academic fatigue and unequal opportunity. Jesuit institutions like Loyola College, through initiatives such as the Loyola Students Support Services (LSSS), play a vital role in mitigating inequities and fostering equitable education. Hence, Chennai’s higher education environment reflects education as both a vehicle of social mobility and a site of economic negotiation.

6.1 RECOMMENDATIONS

- ✓ **Institutional Work Opportunities:** Colleges and universities should introduce on-campus part-time employment schemes for economically challenged students. Roles such as library assistance, peer tutoring, lab support, and administrative help can combine income generation with skill-building and academic flexibility.
- ✓ **Structured Work–Study Models:** Higher education institutions can adopt stipend-linked or credit-based work programs coordinated by student-support offices such as LSSS, ensuring that work commitments complement academic learning.
- ✓ **Policy Collaboration:** The Department of Higher Education (Tamil Nadu) and UGC may collaborate with autonomous colleges to design scalable campus-based work–study frameworks prioritizing first-generation learners.
- ✓ **Supportive Infrastructure:** Providing mentorship, career counseling, and financial literacy workshops can help students balance financial responsibilities with academic goals more sustainably.

CONCLUSION: The present study examined the impact of part-time employment on the academic performance of college students in Chennai using a quantitative descriptive approach. The findings revealed that moderate levels of employment do not adversely affect students' academic performance; instead, they can foster essential life skills such as time management, self-confidence, and financial responsibility. Students who work limited hours appear to balance academic and occupational commitments effectively, while those exceeding 25 hours per week experience mild academic strain and fatigue. In the context of Chennai's higher-education environment, part-time employment represents both an economic necessity and a developmental opportunity. However, the benefits depend greatly on the number of work hours, the nature of employment, and the support extended by academic institutions.

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