



Employment Status of Students from a Local University during the Covid-19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

Working while taking classes is one of the most frequently cited reasons cited by university dropouts. As the Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated the adoption of teleworking by employers, online employment opportunities have increased. Given that the scenario allows students to work while studying online, determining the number and extent of employed students is an important area of research. This study aims to document the employment profiles of undergraduate students of Quezon City University. A total of 7,050 responses were received during the survey period. According to the findings of the study, approximately 15% of the students are employed full- or part-time. At the time of the survey, 64% of the working students who responded in the survey are working on-site, while 24% are working from home. Meanwhile, 50% of these working students are extremely satisfied with their current employment situation, while 44% are somewhat satisfied. In general, the majority of respondents are pleased with their current employment situation. Despite the fact that only two out of ten respondents are working students, the school administration must still pay close attention to this issue. The development of policies that will assist these students is required. For future studies, it is also important to examine employment patterns among undergraduates and how these patterns vary over time and based on student characteristics.

RESUMO

Trabalhar enquanto assiste às aulas é um dos motivos mais citados pelos evadidos universitários. Como a pandemia de Covid-19 acelerou a adoção do teletrabalho pelos empregadores, as oportunidades de emprego online aumentaram. Dado que o cenário permite que os alunos trabalhem enquanto estudam online, determinar o número e a extensão dos alunos empregados é uma importante área de pesquisa. Este estudo tem como objetivo documentar os perfis de emprego dos alunos de graduação da Quezon City University. Um total de 7.050 respostas foram recebidas durante o período da pesquisa. De acordo com os resultados do estudo, cerca de 15% dos alunos estão empregados em tempo integral ou parcial. No momento da pesquisa, 64% dos alunos trabalhadores que responderam à pesquisa estão trabalhando no local, enquanto 24% estão trabalhando em casa. Enquanto isso, 50% desses estudantes trabalhadores estão extremamente satisfeitos com sua situação atual de emprego, enquanto 44% estão um pouco satisfeitos. Em geral, a maioria dos inquiridos está satisfeita com a sua situação profissional atual. Apesar do fato de que apenas dois em cada dez entrevistados são estudantes trabalhadores, a administração escolar ainda deve prestar muita atenção a essa questão. É necessário o desenvolvimento de políticas que atendam a esses alunos. Para estudos futuros, também é importante examinar os padrões de emprego entre os alunos de graduação e como esses padrões variam ao longo do tempo e com base nas características dos alunos.

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Introduction

Many employers require a bachelor's degree as a prerequisite for employment. Employees with more education frequently earn higher salaries than those with less education, regardless of their talents and experience (Nurwulan & Selamaj, 2020). Despite the fact that many local universities and colleges in the Philippines have been offering free tuition through the Philippine government's Unified Student Financial Assistance System for Tertiary Education (UniFAST) program, many students are still forced to work while studying in order to pay for school supplies, transportation, and meal allowances, as well as provide for their families' needs.

Furthermore, being employed while studying is one of the most widely mentioned reasons by many students who drop out of university (Hovdhaugen & Aamodt 2009). Many researchers have attempted to analyze the extent of paid work among students, as well as the motives for working and the relationship between working while studying and completion or dropout rates (Hovdhaugen, 2015).

The Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated the terrible condition among students. During the epidemic, layoffs and suspensions of workers spiked, especially among non-standard workers (Tsurugano et al., 2021). During the crisis, many parents and adults who support their families lost their employment, which had a huge impact on their lives and the lives of their children.

However, due to social distancing conventions and statewide lockdowns, the Covid-19 pandemic has also resulted in an increase in the usage of digital technologies (De et al., 2020). The COVID-19 outbreak prompted an abrupt change to online education, which has since become the primary style of instruction, particularly in the Philippines, where the majority of schools remain shuttered (Bautista et al., 2022; Almendingen, 2021). Simultaneously, as a result of the pandemic's increased digitalization, businesses, and educational institutions are shifting to work-from-home policies (WFH). As the epidemic has accelerated the adoption of teleworking modalities by employers, more online employment has become available (International Labor Organization, 2020). Given that the scenario allows students to work while studying online, finding out how many students are employed and to what extent is an important research subject.

The purpose of this study is to document QCU students' employment profiles as well as their attitudes toward working while studying. The survey's goal is to collect information that will help our administrators and policymakers develop suitable policies and projects for our working students during and after the covid-19 pandemic.

Literature Review

The Quezon City University (QCU), formerly known as the Quezon City Polytechnic University (QCPU) is a local university established on March 1, 1994, by virtue of the City Council Ordinance No. SP-171. The institution was established to provide skilled worker training in response to the city's industry and business organizations' need for people. The old Skills and Training Center was integrated into the structure of the Polytechnic as a local government educational institution. Under the leadership of the University President, Dr. Theresita V. Atienza, QCU envisions being recognized as the #1 local university of employable graduates. QCU is committed to developing competent graduates who can readily respond to perennial challenges and meet the domestic and global markets' demands.

As of academic year (AY) 2021-2022, the University has more than 10,000 students across its five programs namely the Bachelor of Science in Entrepreneurship (BS Entrep), Bachelor of Science in Industrial Engineering (BSIE), Bachelor of Science in Electronics Engineering (BSEE), Bachelor of Science in Information Technology (BSIT), and Bachelor of Science in Accountancy (BSA).

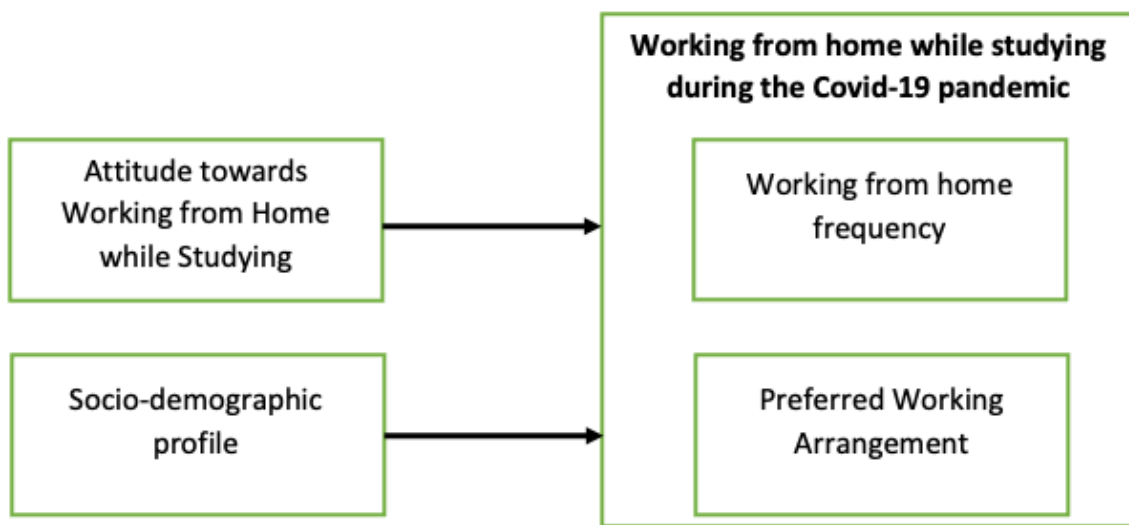
It is for this reason that the researchers conducted this study to document the employment status, and attitude of QCU students toward working while studying during the Covid-19 pandemic. The findings of this study can be incorporated into curriculum reviews, which will serve as the foundation for the reform and improvement of the college's various programs. Specifically, this study sought to:

1. Determine the employment status of QCU students enrolled during the 2nd semester of the academic year 2021-2022;
2. Identify the work arrangement of working students enrolled in QCU;
3. Find out the attitude of the respondents toward working from home while studying;
4. Find out if there is a significant difference between the students' attitude toward working from home while studying and their demographic profile

The study's conceptual model was based on the one used by Ton et al. (2022), which adopted the critical factors for making teleworking a success as argued by Kowalski and Swanson (2005). Ton et al. (2022) hypothesized that because of the sudden developments and widespread adoption of teleworking (especially during the Covid-19 pandemic), individual experiences vary and future intentions are unrelated to these experiences because there are probably many other factors that influence these intentions. Both the experience and frequency of teleworking are found to be influenced by the individual and their living or family situation

(Ton et al., 2022). Prior to Covid-19, teleworkers tended to be more youthful and well-educated (López-Igual and Rodriguez-Modroo, 2020). People's behavior when teleworking may be influenced by their attitude toward it (Ajzen, 1991). However, most studies on work-from-home or teleworking are focused on adult employees. The present study offers an alternative take based on the experience of working students. As a result, the researchers believe that studying the socio-demographics of the respondents that cover views about working from home as well as individual and home environment factors should be considered in the framework.

Figure 1. Conceptual framework of working from home among students during Covid-19



Source: Own authorship.

Methodology

This study employed a quantitative approach and descriptive design through an online survey among all graduates of QCU, which used Google Forms as the primary data collection tool. The online survey was used since the data collection was done during the pandemic when face-to-face classes are still discouraged as the National Capital Region is still under Alert Level 1 status.

All enrolled students of QCU were included in the study. A total of 7,068 responses were received throughout the survey period. After removing the incomplete and invalid responses, 7,050 responses were included in the data analysis, which is approximately 67.66% of the 10,446 enrolled students in QCU as of AY 2021-2022.

The researchers developed a survey instrument based on various literature. The 10-question instrument was divided into three parts namely, 1) personal information, 2)

employment status, 3) work arrangement of working students, and 4) attitude towards working from home while studying.

The Instrument underwent validity and reliability testing. Two academic experts conducted a face and content validation of the instrument, while a pilot survey was conducted among 10 respondents, the following results of the internal consistency tests of the scale item Attitude towards working from while studying: $\alpha = 0.739$ (7 items). This part consists of seven items namely: 1) Academic work at this level is harder than I expected it to be while working; 2) I find it hard to cope with my academic workload while working; 3) I am not able to attend some formally scheduled classes because of other demands on my time; 4) I find it difficult to study in my home; 5) I find it hard to deal with school stress; and 6) I am not able to attend extracurricular online activities.

To increase the validity of the said items, the researchers decided to delete the first item, which resulted in a higher internal consistency at $\alpha = 0.779$ (6 items), which is deemed as acceptable. Overall, these results show that our scale items in the questionnaire have excellent internal consistency. After the necessary revisions were made, the survey questionnaire was uploaded to Google Forms and the survey link was distributed through email, Facebook, and the personal network of our academic officials and faculty members.

Data Analysis

The online survey was conducted from February 01 to March 02, 2021 (30 days) using Google Forms. The survey links were distributed through the respective faculty members and using various social media accounts, specifically through the official QCU FB page, and the various Facebook Groups of the individual academic programs. The respondents willingly submitted information and consented to the study by answering the questions, and the researchers followed strict ethical guidelines, including voluntary participation, confidentiality, and privacy. By using identity codes to replace the respondents' names during the data analysis, privacy and confidentiality rules were rigorously adhered to. The statistics supplied did not contain any personal information. Only one computer was utilized to collect and encrypt data sets that include the personal information of the respondents, and it was only accessible to the director of the Research Management Office.

IBM-SPSS v25 was used to analyze the gathered data. Frequency counts and percentages were used to analyze the gathered data. Weighted means were computed to analyze the data generated from the acquired skills and relevant skills to current employment questions.

Results

As shown in Table 1, the majority (43.22%) of the respondents are BS Entrep students, while 31.28% (2,205) are BSIT students. Meanwhile, 14.04% (990) are from the BSIE program. The Bachelor of Science in Entrepreneurship program is the largest in terms of student population in Quezon City. University.

In terms of gender, six out of ten (61.50%) respondents are female, while 37.46% are male. Around less than one percent (56) answered that they prefer not to say their gender, while only 17 mentioned that they are transgender.

Fourth year students comprised the largest number of respondents at 31.36%, followed by the freshmen students (26.53%), second year (21.52%), and third year students (20.58%).

Table 1. Demographic profile of respondents

Course (N=7,050)	f	%
BS in Accountancy	502	7.12%
BS in Electronics Engineering	306	4.34%
BS in Entrepreneurship	3,047	43.22%
BS in Industrial Engineering	990	14.04%
BS in Information	2,205	31.28%
Gender (N=7,050)		
Female	4336	61.50%
Male	2641	37.46%
Prefer not to say	56	0.79%
Transgender	17	0.24%
Year Level (N=7,050)		
First Year	1,871	26.54%
Second Year	1,517	21.52%
Third Year	1,451	20.58%
Fourth Year	2,211	31.36%

Source: Own authorship.

A big majority of the students (85%) are not working as of the time the study was conducted, while only 15% (1,056) are employed in either full time or part time capacity (Table 2).

From the 1,056 working students, a greater number are earning Php5,000.00 or below a month (31.06%). Meanwhile, 23.11% earns between Php5,001 to Php10,000, while 15.81% are earning Php10,001 to Php15,000. Around 17% did not mention their monthly income. The Philippine national minimum wage is Php570.00 a day or around Php11,970.00 monthly for non-agriculture and Php533.00 for service/retail establishments employing 15 workers or less or manufacturing regularly employing less than 10 workers (National Wages and Productivity Commission, 2022). Working students in QCU are most likely working on a part-time basis or are employed in small establishments (Table 2)..

A majority (42.62%) of the respondents who are working are regular worker or who were hired to perform activities which are usually necessary or desirable in the usual business or trade of the employer and usually worked on permanent status. While 12.64% are on probationary status or undergoing trial period during which the employer determines their fitness to qualify for regular employment (Table 2).

Table 2. Employment profile of respondents.

	f	%
<i>Employment Status (N=7,050)</i>		
No, I am not employed / not working	5994	85.02%
Yes, I am employed / working (full time or part time)	1056	14.98%
<i>Monthly Income (N=1,056)</i>		
Php20,001 above	36	3.41%
Php15,001 to Php20,000	99	9.38%
Php10,001 to Php15,000	167	15.81%
Php5,001 to Php10,000	244	23.11%
Below Php5,000	328	31.06%
Prefer not to say	182	17.23%

<i>Type of Employment (N=1,056)</i>		
Family Business	2	0.19%
Casual	48	4.55%
Contract of Service	2	0.19%
Contractual/Project-based	115	10.89%
Probationary	132	12.50%
Regular worker	445	42.14%
Seasonal	52	4.92%
Self-Employed	1	0.09%
Worker hired through agencies/contractors	39	3.69%
Prefer not to say	185	17.52%
Others	23	2.18%
No Answer	12	1.14%

Source: Own authorship.

Six out of ten respondents (who are employed) are working on-site, while only 24% are working from home (Table 3). When asked how satisfied they were with their work arrangement, half (50.28%) of the respondents were very satisfied and 44.32% were somewhat satisfied. Only around 5% were dissatisfied with their work arrangement (Table 4).

Table 3. Respondents' current work arrangement

<i>N=1,056</i>	f	%
Hybrid (WFH and WOS)	122	11.55%
Work from Home (WFH)	256	24.24%
Work On-Site (WOS)	678	64.20%
Grand Total	1,056	100.00%

Source: Own authorship.

Table 4. Level of satisfaction on current work arrangement

<i>N=1,056</i>	f	%
Very satisfied	531	50.28%
Somewhat satisfied	468	44.32%
Somewhat dissatisfied	50	4.73%
Very dissatisfied	7	0.66%
Grand Total	1,056	100.00%

Source: Own authorship.

Table 5. Preferred work arrangement

<i>N=1,056</i>	f	%
Hybrid (WFH and WOS)	160	15.15%
Work from Home (WFH)	394	37.31%
Work On-Site (WOS)	502	47.54%
Grand Total	1,056	100.00%

Source: Own authorship.

Relatively, almost half of the respondents who are currently employed prefer to work on-site (47.54%), while 37.31% prefer a work from home set-up. Only 15% would want to work in a hybrid set-up (Table 5).

In terms of attitude towards working while studying, a big majority (78%) of the working students generally agree that academic work is harder while working. When it comes to coping with their academic workload while working, 62% agreed while 38% is disagree. When asked if they are not able to attend some formally scheduled classes because of their demands on their time, 52.8% disagreed while 47.2% agreed. While a greater majority did not find it difficult to study at home (58.6% disagree), more than 60% found it hard to deal with school stress (Table 6).

Table 6. Attitude towards working from home while studying

<i>N=1,056</i>	Agree	Disagree
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Academic work at this level is harder than I expected it to be while working	78.2%	21.8%
I find it hard to cope with my academic workload while working	62.1%	37.9%
I am not able to attend some formally scheduled classes because of other demands on my time	47.2%	52.8%
I find it difficult to study in my home	41.4%	58.6%
I find it hard to deal with school stress	61.2%	38.8%
I am not able to attend extracurricular online activities	46.5%	53.5%

Source: Own authorship.

Discussions

While the Covid-19 pandemic has made access to educational equity in developing economies a hard problem, it also opened up several opportunities such as the option to work while studying. The entire educational system was altered by the closure of higher education facilities and mobility limitations (Ebardo & Wibowo, 2021; Brand, 2020; Joaquinetal, 2020). While government funding is accessible in developed nations, there are fewer opportunities in developing countries, thus some students have to drop out of school or look for jobs while they are still attending school (Ebardo & Wibowo, 2021; Auger et al., 2020;). Although working while studying is not a new phenomenon, the transition to distance learning in many schools such as in the Philippines gave students the opportunity to study and work from home at the same time.

Prior to the pandemic, local researchers in the Philippines studied the experiences of working students (Astudillo et al., 2019) and the effect of working while studying on students' academic performance (Amor et al., 2020; Garado, 2019). Several studies have also been conducted locally to explore the experience of working students during the Covid-19 pandemic (Ebardo & Wibowo, 2021), and the challenges and coping strategies of working students in distance learning during the pandemic (Pedroso et al., 2022; Cos, 2021). However, none has explored the attitude of the students on working at home while studying and how their attitude and socio-demographic profile are related to working from home preference.

The Quezon City University (QCU) is the only local university of Quezon City, National Capital Region. The institution was established to provide skilled worker training in response to the city's industry and business organizations' need for people and has always pursued becoming the #1 local university of employable graduates.

Based on the results of the survey, around 15% of its students are working either full-time or part-time. According to the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), 13.2% of the 41,671,000 employed Filipinos in July 2021 are aged 15 to 24, the age bracket to which the respondents of the study belong. This is in contrast with surveys conducted in other countries such as in Japan where the number of working students has declined sharply since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic (Tsurugano et al., 2021).

Around 43% of the working students from QCU who took part in the survey are regular employees. More than half (57.86%) started working during the pandemic. Covid-19 brought a sudden change for the working population: the advice was to work from home as much as possible (Ton et al., 2022). This also opened up opportunities for other members of society such as the students to step up and take a job to support their needs, pay the tuition fees, buy school supplies, and even to provide daily needs for their family (Nurwulan and Selamaj, 2020).

In terms of work arrangement, 64% of the respondents (N=1,056) are working on-site at the time of the survey, while 24% are working from home. Meanwhile, 50% are very satisfied with their current work arrangement, while 44% are somewhat satisfied. Overall, there is high satisfaction among the respondents when it comes to their work arrangement. When it comes to preferred work arrangements, a big number of the respondents prefer to work on-site (48%), while 37% would like to work from home. A study by Drašler et al. (2021) of the attitude of students toward work-from-home and online education in Slovenia revealed that students believe that WFH offers the greatest financial advantages and commute-related savings.

However, students stand out as the group exposed to the highest amounts of stress (Drašler et al., 2021). A comprehensive review of the literature conducted by Nurwulan and Selamaj (2020) showed working while studying does not necessarily affect students' academic performance. However, depression is the most common health problem in university students. This supports the result of the study wherein a majority of the respondents find it hard to cope with their academic workload while working and find it hard to deal with school stress at the same. Thus, the main drawback of working at home while studying could be increased stress levels.

However, the respondents disagreed when they were asked if they are not able to attend some formally scheduled classes because of other demands on their time. Students had to deal

with the quick adoption of web-based platforms and the involuntary switch to online learning as a result of efforts taken to stop Covid-19 from spreading. Nonetheless, it seems that respondents are more open

The qualitative study of Ebarido and Wibowo (2021) revealed asynchronous learning is well-accepted by working university students. Students access their online courses at work and home and because of this flexibility, they are able to commit to their job responsibilities while meeting school requirements (Ebarido and Wibowo, 2021). This could explain why there is a large number of students who prefer to work from home while studying.

The study has several limitations that future researchers must consider. First, future researchers may consider applying inferential statistics and test whether there is a significant difference between the respondents' attitude and their demographic profile. The study also did not classify the respondents' answers according to the respective program where they belong, the type of job they are employed in, and whether this is related to their course or program.

Conclusions

The results of this basic research demonstrate that QCU has a small population of working students. However, despite the fact that only two out of ten respondents are working students, the school administration must still pay close attention to this issue. The development of policies that will assist these students is required. The study revealed that working students are exposed to stress and there is a significant number of them who find it hard to deal with school stress and coping with academic workload while working. Trying to balance work and studies could have devastating effect on the students in terms of academic performance and possible their health. Support should be expanded to improve the working students' difficulties. For future studies, it is also important to examine employment patterns among undergraduates and how these patterns vary over time and based on student characteristics.

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