

UNIVERSITY STUDENTS AND SELF-EMPLOYMENT: THE IMPLICATION FOR ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

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Abstract

Self-employment has been an increasing commonality among students of higher institutions, with minimal signs of ever decreasing in magnitude. The aim of this study was to examine the effect of self-employment on academic performance of students in tertiary institutions, with the view to ascertain the advantages or otherwise of such for policy implementations. The Federal University of Technology, Akure was used as reference case. A survey research design was adopted for the study. The data were analysed using descriptive (tables, frequencies, percentages and arithmetic mean) and inferential (Chi-square and Correlation) statistics. The research results revealed that there is no significant relationship between the students' nature of business and the hours they devote to their business ($P > 0.05$, $\chi^2 = 0.444$) and that there is no significant relationship between nature of business and academic performance of the students ($\chi^2 = 0.450$, $P > 0.05$). Furthermore, there is no significant correlation between hours devoted to business and the students' academic performance ($r = -0.694$, $P > 0.05$). As such the study concluded that the students' self-employment did not negatively affect their academics performance.

Keywords: Self-employment, University students, Academic performance, Nigeria

Introduction

Stakeholders in Nigerian educational system ranging from parents, guardians, lecturers, family members, counsellors, and many others, are so much concerned about students' achievements and academic standard (Akomolafe and Olabisi, 2011)). This is inferred from the fact that success in education is highly instrumental to the development of a nation. However, as students' progress

from admission to graduation, a complex interaction of some factors such as personal, social, academic and institutional factors tend to influence the quality of their educational experiences. The issue of poor academic performance of students in Nigeria has therefore become a source of concern to most parties involved in the delivery of quality education within the country. This unhealthy situation has led to the widely acclaimed fallen standard of

education in Nigeria (Akiri and Ugborugbo, 2009; Bamidele and Bamidele, 2013).

Also attributable to poor academic performance of university students may include scarcity of money and other resources for college students which may make it imperative for self-employment which has become more of a necessity rather than an after-school activity. Numerous evidences suggest that in recent times more students are now working while studying, reducing the time available and quality of their efforts towards their studies, resulting in missed classes or lack of preparedness for classes (Furr and Elling, 2000). This trend raises questions about the potential implications of self-employment on academic performance. As such, this paper examined the intersection of university students and self-employment, shedding light on the implications for academic success by asking the following questions.

Research Questions

- i. How many hours do self-employed students devote to their business per week?
- ii. Does involvement in business deteriorate or improve their academic performance, affect their reading hours, affect their cognitive level during the process of working?
- iii. What is the effect of nature of work on academic performance?

1.4 Research Objectives

The objectives are to:

- i. Assesses the number of hours self-employed students devote to their business per week
- ii. Investigate the extent to which working hours spent on business affect academic performance of FUTA undergraduates
- iii. Evaluate the effect of nature of work on academic performance.

1.5 Research Hypotheses

H01: Self-employed students do not devote hours to their business per week

H02: Working hours does not significantly affect academic performance of FUTA undergraduates

H03: Nature of work does not significantly affect the academic performance.

Literature Review

The entrepreneurial spirit is thriving among university students, fueled by a desire for independence, a changing job market, and the availability of resources for startup ventures. According to a study conducted by the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (2022), there has been a noticeable surge in student entrepreneurship, with an increasing number of students launching their own businesses or engaging in freelance work during their academic pursuits.

As money and resources become scarce for college students, starting businesses become more of a necessity rather than an after-school activity. However, it can be assumed that many self-employed students do not prepare or miss classes because of their tight schedules which might ultimately affect their grade points at the end of the session. In contrast to the assertion, several studies also find that students tend to reduce leisure time rather than study time to compensate for their working time, which would mitigate the risks of academic failure (Kalenkoski&Pabilonia, 2012).

One important reason why many students combine studies and work is that it provides them with an income, which may help them to satisfy their consumption aspirations (Baert, Rotsaert, Verhaest, &Omey, 2016). The above-mentioned researchers also investigated whether student self-employment during the semester affects the academic performance of full-time students. Considering the fact that students have a limited time budget per week to share between work, learning

and leisure, it seems clear that student self-employment comes at the expense of other activities. If working students considerably reduce the time they spend on learning, we may expect negative consequences for academic progress. This is because any changes to students' routines will lead to changes in academics, whether they are positive or negative.

Therefore, increased self-employment among college students has raised some issues. Some of these issues in the literature concern matters such as the number of hours devoted, whether the students' businesses pertain to their majors, and the students' workloads. As more students are self-employed, they face having to balance their academic requirements, extracurricular activities, and business responsibilities to maintain their lifestyles (Furr&Elling, 2000). The intersection between academics and self-employment presents a unique challenge for students. Striking a balance between coursework, exams, and the demands of running a business or managing freelance projects requires effective time management and multitasking skills. The ability to juggle academic responsibilities with entrepreneurial pursuits can be both rewarding and demanding. While self-employment can foster valuable skills such as leadership, problem-solving, and resilience, it also raises concerns about its potential impact on academic performance. Smith and Johnson (2022) found that students engaged in self-employment reported higher levels of stress and time constraints, which, in turn, affected their academic outcomes. However, the study also highlighted that students who effectively managed their time and set clear priorities demonstrated no significant decline in academic performance

Recognizing the growing trend of student entrepreneurship, universities are adapting their support systems to provide resources for aspiring student

entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurship incubators, mentorship programs, and flexible academic schedules are becoming more prevalent, aiming to help students successfully navigate both their academic and entrepreneurial journeys. As such, this study examined the effect of self-employment on the academic performance of undergraduates of the Federal University of Technology Akure, in the School of Logistics and Innovation Technology (SLIT) ranging from 400 level to 500 level students.

Methodology

The study was conducted by using both a descriptive and correlational research approach to evaluate the relationship between academics and self-employment among undergraduates. A descriptive and correlational research approach was used to examine the nature of student employment and academic achievement at the research site. The target population of this study was focused on 400 level final year students and 500 level final year students from the School of Logistics and Innovation Technology (SLIT) with a number of 539 in total. For the purpose of this study, purposive sampling technique was employed. The researchers used their judgment to select a sample that is most useful to the purposes of the research, by giving out the questionnaires to those that are working or run one business or the other to respond to the research questions. In order to select an appropriate sample size, the researcher targeted 100 business students out of the 539 students since the study was focused on self-employed students only. Therefore, the sample size used for the research was 100 respondents.

Result and Discussion

Hours devoted to business per week and academic performance

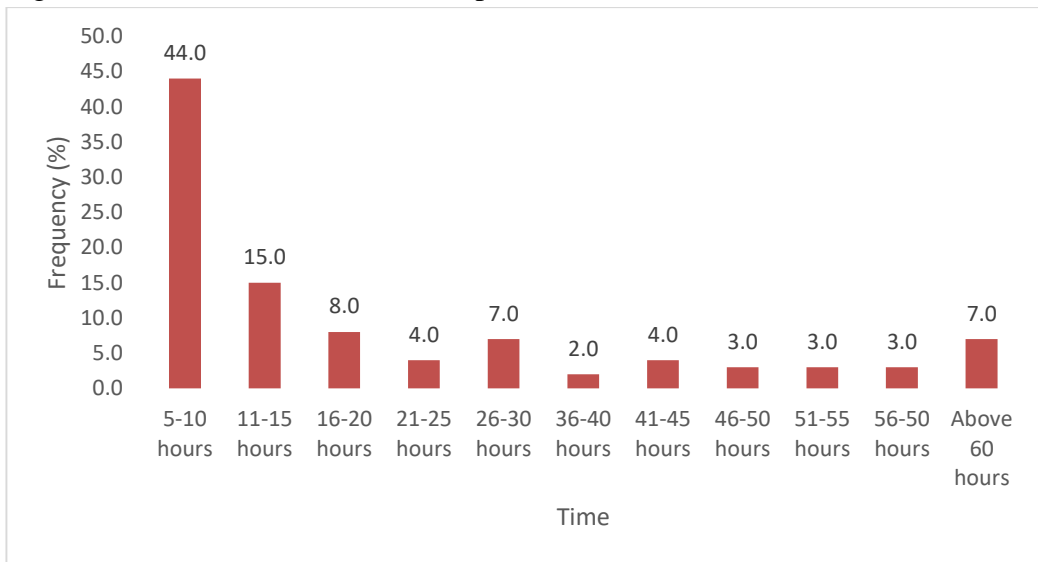
Figure 1 reveals that majority of the respondents (44%) spend between 5-10 hours per week on their businesses.

Table 1 reveals the students' perception on hours devoted to their business and how it affects their academic work. The mean ranged from 4.30 to 1.47. "I have time to study personally despite the hours devoted to work" had the highest mean (4.30) followed by "I alter my work schedules when academic activities gets busier" with mean value of 4.27. "Most times, I missed

tests/examinations due to work" had the lowest mean (1.47).

Table 2 reveals the respondents' nature of work on their academic performance. Mean score ranged from 4.49 to 1.95. "I do have time to attend classes and tutorials" and "I do have time to attend to my assignments and participate in group work" had the highest mean (4.49). "The nature of my business has been detrimental to my Grade Point Average over time" had the lowest mean of 1.95.

Figure 1: Hours devoted to business per week



Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 1: Hours devoted to business per week and academic performance

Variables	Strongly agreed	Agreed	Neutral	Disagreed	Strongly Disagreed	Mean	S.D
Hours devoted to studying and class activities are always more than hours devoted to work.	41(41%)	31(31%)	19(19%)	6(6%)	3(3%)	4.01	1.059
I have time to study personally despite the hours devoted to work.	49(49%)	37(37%)	9(9%)	5(5%)	0(0%)	4.30	0.835
Most times, I utilize the hours meant for studying to work.	13(13%)	33(33%)	27(27%)	19(19%)	8(8%)	3.24	1.147
I alter my work schedules when academic activities gets busier	44(44%)	43(43%)	10(10%)	2(2%)	1(1%)	4.27	0.802
Most times, I miss classes due to work.	9(9%)	14(14%)	21(21%)	32(32%)	24(24%)	2.52	1.251

Most times, work hinders me from doing my assignments.	6(6%)	17(17%)	15(15%)	43(43%)	19(19%)	2.48	1.159
Most times, I missed tests/examinations due to work.	2(2%)	2(2%)	5(5%)	23(23%)	68(68%)	1.47	0.846
Hours devoted to work have improved my cognitive skills over time.	40(40%)	43(43%)	13(13%)	4(4%)	0(0%)	4.19	0.813
Hours devoted to work have been detrimental to my Grade Point Average over time.	4(4%)	16(16%)	21(21%)	33(33%)	26(26%)	2.39	1.154

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 2: Nature of work on academic performance

Variables	Strongly agreed	Agreed	Neutral	Disagreed	Strongly Disagreed	Mean	S.D
My business is very stressful and time consuming.	27(27%)	23(23%)	29(29%)	19(19%)	2(2%)	3.54	1.141
The nature of my business is similar to the practical area of my discipline.	15(15%)	33(33%)	18(18%)	25(25%)	9(9%)	3.20	1.231
I encounter many challenges due to the nature of my business.	23(23%)	32(32%)	32(32%)	9(9%)	4(4%)	3.61	1.063
Those challenges make me lose concentration on my academic activities sometimes.	5(5%)	15(15%)	23(23%)	33(33%)	24(24%)	2.44	1.157
The nature of my business has been detrimental to my Grade Point Average over time.	3(3%)	8(8%)	15(15%)	29(29%)	45(45%)	1.95	1.095
Pre-order business							
My business is pre-order based so I have time to carry out my task on time	21(21%)	40(40%)	1(1%)	5(5%)	0(0%)	4.15	0.783
I do have time to attend classes and tutorials	36(36%)	28(28%)	3(3%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	4.49	0.587
I do have time to attend to my assignments and participate in group work.	36(36%)	28(28%)	3(3%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	4.49	0.587
I do have time to study well for tests and examination	35(35%)	28(28%)	4(4%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	4.46	0.611
Immediate order business							
My business is immediate order based, I still have time to carry out my task on time	21(21%)	46(46%)	2(2%)	1(1%)	2(2%)	4.15	0.781
I do have time to attend classes and tutorial	31(31%)	37(37%)	3(3%)	1(1%)	0(0%)	4.36	0.635

I do have time to attend to my assignments and participate in group work.	31(31%)	32(32%)	7(7%)	2(2%)	0(0%)	4.28	0.755
I do have time to study well for tests and examination	34(34%)	34(34%)	4(4%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	4.42	0.599

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Hypotheses Testing

Table 3 reveals there is no significant relationship between the students' nature of business and the hours they devote to their business ($P>0.05$). It also reveals there is no significant relationship between nature of business and academic performance of the students ($P>0.05$). Furthermore, there is no significant correlation between hours devoted to business and the students' academic performance ($P>0.05$).

Table 3: Relationship between natures of business, hours devoted to business and academic performance

Variables	Chi Square value (χ^2)	Sig.
Nature of business* Hours devoted to business	9.958	0.444
Nature of business * Academic performance	1.599	0.450

Variables	Correlation value (r)	Sig.
Hours devoted to business* Academic performance	-0.040	0.694

* $P<0.05$

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Discussion of Findings

Effect of Working Hours Spent on Business on Academic Performance

This study revealed that the students devote little hours of their time to their business each week making them have more time for their academic activities. This study revealed students' perception on hours devoted to their business and its effect on their academic performance. The students claimed they have time to study personally despite the hours devoted to business. They also affirmed that they alter their work schedules when academic activities gets busier. This depicts that being involved in business has made the students develop skills and be flexible enough to handle the effects of business on their academics so as not

to negatively affect their academic performance as supported by Kalenkoski & Pabilonia (2012) whose argument was that students tend to reduce leisure time rather than study time to compensate for their business time, which would mitigate the risks of academic failure.

Effect of Nature of Work on Academic Performance

This study revealed the students' perception on the effect of nature of work on their academic performance. The students claimed they usually encounter many challenges due to their nature of business. This could be due to the fact that they get to multi-task their business operations with academic activities which would take their time and be more demanding on them as they claimed their businesses are time consuming and stressful. This is in line with study by Furr and Elling (2000)

whose argument was students face the challenges of having to balance their academic requirements, extracurricular activities, and business responsibilities to maintain their lifestyles. Furthermore, for pre-order businesses, the students affirmed that they do have time to attend classes and tutorials and that they have time to attend to assignments and participate in group work. For immediate order businesses, the students affirmed they have time to study for tests and examination despite the nature of their businesses. This shows that despite being involved in businesses, the students still have time for their academic activities and this was supported by Smith and Johnson (2022) who found that students engaged in self-employment reported higher levels of stress and time constraints, which, in turn, affected their academic outcomes. However, the study also highlighted that students who effectively managed their time and set clear priorities demonstrated no significant decline in academic performance

Hypothesis tested revealed there is no correlation between nature of business, hours devoted to business and the academic performance of the students meaning that the students were putting efforts into their academics regardless of being employed or not and this is supported by studies of Kalenkoski & Pabilonia (2012) and Smith and Johnson (2022) who posited that being employed did not have a significant effect on students GPA.

Conclusion

The study revealed that there is no significant relationship between the students' nature of business and the hours they devote to their business ($P > 0.05$, $\chi^2 = 0.444$). It also revealed there is no significant relationship between nature of business and academic performance of the students ($\chi^2 = 0.450$, $P > 0.05$). Furthermore, there is no significant correlation between hours devoted to business and the

students' academic performance ($r = -0.694$, $P > 0.05$). The study, therefore, concluded that there is no correlation between nature of business, hours devoted to business and the academic performance of the undergraduates of The Federal University of Technology, Akure. The implication is that the students were putting efforts into their academics regardless of being employed or not. As such, the study, recommends that universities and government should foster an environment that supports and equips student entrepreneurs to thrive in both domains of business and academics. By understanding the challenges and opportunities presented by self-employment, universities can play a crucial role in preparing students for a future where academic excellence and entrepreneurial endeavors go hand in hand.

Recommendation

As the line between traditional education and real-world experience continues to blur, the rise of self-employment among university students is a trend that merits attention. While the implications for academic performance are nuanced, the key lies in fostering an environment that supports and equips student entrepreneurs to thrive in both domains. By understanding the challenges and opportunities presented by self-employment, universities can play a crucial role in preparing students for a future where academic excellence and entrepreneurial endeavors go hand in hand.

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