

Part-Time Employment in High School Years: Educational, Social, and Psychological Effects

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(ABSTRACT)

This study focuses on the effects of part-time employment of high school students during the school year. While there are many benefits to be derived from part-time employment, many researchers have concluded that working intensely (over 20 hours per week) during the school year has deleterious academic, social, and psychological effects on high school students' achievement (Bachman & Schulenberg, 1983; Mortimer & Finch, 1986; Steinberg & Dornbusch, 1991; Wright, Cullen, & Williams, 2002). This study alluded to the theory of social embeddedness (Granovetter, 1985) and the primary orientation model (Warren, 2002) which suggested that high intensity work reduces time to focus on and become involved in other activities. There is also application to the ecological theory of human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1986) which stated that social contexts such as school, family, and work should all have connections to provide significant influences on adolescents' development.

In this study, it was hypothesized that intense work involvement would be related to less engagement in school and school activities. It was further hypothesized that intensity of work will be negatively related to family and peer relationships.

The data for the study were obtained from three school divisions in southwest Virginia. A sample of N=1,402 high school students in grades 9-12 was used. Students completed the Work, School, and Social Experiences of High School Students Survey, which was adapted for the study by the researcher. The data were analyzed using SPSS 14.0. The researcher employed descriptive and regression based analysis procedures to answer the research questions, and to determine the relationships among variables of interest.

The results indicated that intense part-time employment by high school students has negative effects on grades, family relationships, and peer relationship and often contributes to increased stress in the lives of these students. Part-time employment affects all aspects of students' lives and is far nuanced and needs continued attention and supervision from parents, educators, and teachers.

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family, dear friends, the Ministry of Education and all the students of Trinidad and Tobago. I especially dedicate this research project to my late parents; Abraham and Marjorie Ransome, my aunt and uncle, Jean and Hezekiah Kennedy and their children, and my colleagues: Dr. Joan Pedro, Dr. Launcelot Brown, and Dr. Dennis Conrad.

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Feeling gratitude and not expressing it is like wrapping a present and not giving it. - William Arthur Ward

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