College Students’ Employability: Implications of Part-Time Job during College Years

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Abstract. In today’s hard economic times, academic issues such as increased in college students’ mean age, student drop outs due to financial difficulties, and increased in average students’ lending has started to plague universities even in developed countries. In Taiwan, most of the college students are either enrolled in the morning or in the evening sessions, wherein, the evening sessions are opened specially for the on the job students. However, upon asking, many of the morning session students are actually working part-time. It is hypothesized that properly managed part-time jobs would have a positive effect for the students, in terms of job preparation and value adding experiences. In light of these issues, the current study shall seek to determine the key factors that students consider while looking for a part-time job. Furthermore, the study also seeks to determine the practical effects of having part-time job while still studying. A survey was developed and administered to 450 college students in a Technical and Vocational University in Taiwan. Statistical analysis shows that students’ part-time job selection is much dependent on two key factors, namely: Job matches my future and Job is able to help my future career. Further implications are also given to provide a much bigger outlook on how students plan their career.

1. Introduction

Part-time (PT) job has long been a part of the university student experience. Observation shows that most students tend to work in industries such as retailing, service industry, and restaurants where the demand for labor has always been available. Employers in these industries need cheap and flexible labor in order to remain viable \([1]\), while the students wishing to find a PT job fulfill this requirement.

From the perspective of the student, PT work is often an introduction to the world of work and their experiences assist with both personal and career development. However, there is another perhaps less immediately noticeable reasons for working part time whilst studying. McKechnie, Hobbs, and Lindsay \([2]\) considered that if students could directly relate their experiences of working PT, which in turn, improved their academic knowledge and learning motivation. It might therefore be suggested that students involved in school programs that promote internship, which are in a sense, vocationally specific. Consequently, a number of researchers have concluded that a combination of financial need and the opportunity to gain experience shall ultimately enhance their career opportunities.

Therefore, the current research aims to determine the extent and type of PT employment among this group of students. This research also determines the reasons for engaging in PT employment, identifies both the advantages and disadvantages of engaging in PT employment while studying, and attempts to solicit an indication of how PT employment might impact on students’ studies. The
research concludes with suggestions that allow the main parties involved in student PT employment to gain maximum benefit from this activity.

1.1 Research questions
The study involves 450 students of a technical vocational university in Northern Taiwan. Initial research questions are as follows:

- What are the common determinants in college students’ PT job selections?
- What are the college students’ perceived benefits of having a PT job?
- Is there any significant difference between the college students’ PT job selections and their course of study?
- What are the determining factors for the college students to remain in their PT job after graduation?

1.2 Limitation of the study
This study is limited to the 450 participants of a Science and Technology University in the Northern area of Taiwan. Hence, results of the study shall be limited to these participants. However, generalization can also be made to individuals (and students) who have similar backgrounds and competencies.

2. Literature review

2.1 Definition of PT job
According to Dutta [3] a PT job refers to an employment position or job posting wherein lesser hours are put in per week by an individual than a full-time job. Students, elderly citizens and others avail of part-time job opportunities to earn primary incomes. Low-wage workers take up these jobs to supplement primary incomes. Other workers with no full-time jobs also seek part-time jobs. These workers or professionals generally don't enjoy the many employment benefits and rewards that are available to full-time employees.

2.2 Benefits of part time job in students
Taking on a part-time job while pursuing a degree is hard work, but the benefits are typically greater than the amount of a paycheck. Students who work during their college careers may have better time-management skills than their counterparts. They must understand responsibility and apply it to their daily lives. They earn money that can be used for fun or for tuition, while gaining experience in the workplace that will be attractive to future employers after graduation [4].

2.3 Negative effects of part time job in students
A part-time job can also affect a student’s studies negatively if it causes the child to be sleep-deprived. It can be difficult to concentrate in school if you are tired. If working the job makes you stay up later than is optimal, you might be tired when you go to school. Then you might not learn as much and this can affect your grades. Even if the job itself does not go late, it can still be a problem if it pushes your other activities later so that you need to stay up later in order to get everything in.

2.4 Students’ part time job selection
Part-time jobs for college students provide a good way for students to earn extra income while they study. The students can be help by building their resume. Many college students choose to work in the service or food industry. Since, they can avail of the free meals. There are actually many different types of jobs and job responsibilities available in the industry. The students need only to look carefully.
3. Research methodology

This research is designed as a case study. Participants of the study include 450 volunteer students from a science and technology university in northern part of Taiwan. Statistics also shows that there are 224 female and 226 male student participants with around 427 or almost 95% of them are between 18 to 22 years old.

3.1 Study process

- Developing the research topics. In the beginning, the researchers discussed the topic and decided how the project will take shape.
- Involves the construction of the data collection tool. The researchers search for work-related information including the nature and impact of the PT job and then collate the information. Then after, a revise survey tool was design based from the various relevant literature read.
- Finalizing the research tool. The following questions were asked. Why do you choose this job? What kind of work benefits do you have? Other PT job details and related questions.
- After collection of the questionnaires, data were tabulated using the statistical software.
- Writing the research reports. With the data collection and survey, the researchers analyzed the data and develop some suggestions based on the results of the analysis.

4. Results and discussions

This study is focus on the understanding of the effects brought about by having a PT job during college. Results are presented into four sections: 1.) The common determinants in college students’ PT job selections; 2.) The college students’ perceived benefits of having a PT job; 3) Significant difference between the college students’ PT job selections and their course of study; and 4) The determining factors for the college students to remain in their PT job after graduation.

4.1 The common determinants in college students’ part-time job selections

Before analyzing the common determinants in college students’ PT job selections, a summary of the nature of their jobs are first accomplished. Table 1 shows the breakdown on the different work industry and their corresponding work duration. Results show that almost 44% or 197 of the students work in the service industry. These are jobs that are related to services, such as: sales attendants, delivery services, and many others. This is followed by working in the food industry with 31% or 141 students. Work such as fast food attendant (McDonalds, Starbucks, and many others), beverage stores, and restaurants. This is then followed by administrative or office works, home tutoring, and helping with their family business.

Table 1 also shows the duration of the students’ PT job. Results show that almost half of the participants are working less than 6 months, while around 30% have been working for more than 1 year with the remaining 21% working within 1 year and 6 months.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work</td>
<td>Food industry</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>31.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Service industry</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>43.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Administrative/office work</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>8.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Home tutor/teaching</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>7.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Own business</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>7.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration</td>
<td>Within 6 months</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>49.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6 months to a year</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>21.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More than 1 year</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>29.60</td>
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Table 1. Participants’ part-time job (N=450)
In order to determine the common determinants in college students’ PT job selections students are asked to select (or provide if the reason is not stated in the survey) their reasons for PT job selection. The most common reason is a job located in a convenient location with 277 or 62%; more likely, a PT job in the school. There is actually a lot of potential work opportunity inside the school itself, such as: departments’ assistants, teacher assistance, research assistance, library assistance, and many others. Besides the work opportunity inside the school, the immediate school vicinity has also various types of stores which need PT workers. This is followed by the notion of saving money, such as: as long as the salary can make up for my daily living allowance, compensation/salary is good, and as long as the salary can help me save for my school tuition. These are followed by friends working in the same job with 97 or almost 22% and career related with 69 or 15%.

Results are a kind of disappointment since the students value more the convenience and compensation in the expense of having a PT job related to their study course or career. Follow up questions that are asked regarding the reasons for job selection have revealed that most students are thinking of the as of the current moment or current situation, as against to think of their future.

For the sources of job information, majority of the job with 169 or almost 38% of the works are introduced by their classmates and friends. Students tend to become more willing to work in a place wherein they have a classmate or friend who is already in the company. This is followed by relatives with 141 or 31% and online job website with 89 or 20%.

4.2 The college students’ perceived benefits of having a part-time job

For the perceived benefits of having a PT job, students are asked to select and provide if the choice is not provided in the survey. The top most benefit surprisingly is the opportunity to have an employee discount on purchases with 171 or 38%. This is followed by free lunches with 169 or almost 38%, then spring break dinner or raffle party with 119 or 26%, yearend bonuses with 92 or 20%, and many other freebies.

For the perceived fruitful experience in a PT job, the highest experience is the opportunity to encounter/talk with lots of people with 350 or almost 78%. This is then followed by the experiences to work in either a big corporation or a small company. Follow up questions suggested that some students are keen to understanding how to startup a small business, while some is more comfortable working in a stable large corporation.

As for the things learn while having a PT job, the most common issue is the opportunity to learn how to adapt to a new situation or environment with 302 or 67%; while, having the experience to develop interpersonal communication skills with 277 or almost 62%. A surprising answer is the learning how to behave and act appropriately with 201 or almost 45%. This is quite important as for many educators are afraid that after the students graduate they are not able to learn how to act appropriately.

4.3 Significant difference between the college students’ part-time job selections and their course of study

Analysis on the difference between college students’ PT job selections and their course of study will be able to show whether students’ job selection is related to their college major. Since the variables are consists of two or more categories, hence, a Chi-square test is accomplished to explore the relationship between gender and work choice. Chi-square results show that there is a significant difference among the students work choice and gender with the Pearson Chi-square of 15.67 in p=0.008 with degrees of freedom equal to 5. This means that the number of male and female students working in the different industry differs significantly with each other. This result signifies that the students’ gender matters with regards to the selection of PT job.

Chi-square test is also accomplished to explore the relationship between course of study and job selection. Chi-square results show that there is a significant difference among the students’ job selection and course of study with the Pearson Chi-square of 122.44 in p=.000 and the degrees of
freedom is 70. These results show that the different number of students in each of the department working at different industries is significantly different. Similarly, these results signify that the students’ courses of study matters with regards to what type of PT job they choose.

4.4 The determining factors for the college students to remain in their part-time job after graduation

In order to predict whether a student will stay with their PT job, a discriminant analysis is accomplished. The main purpose of a discriminant function analysis is to predict group membership based on a combination of the variables. Table 2 shows the results of the discriminant analysis. Note that four (4) out of six of the factors are significant (denoted by the bold values under Sig.). This means that these factors are able to determine whether the student will continue to work at the same job after graduation. However, in order to get a more precise answer, table 3 shows that only the values under structure that are above .30 should be consider. Hence, a students’ willingness to stay can be computed using a simple formula of \( Stay = (.869 \times \text{Job match my future}) + (.378 \times \text{Job is able to help my future}) \)

In addition, based on the group centroids provided in table 4. The cutoff score is .138. This means that if the value of stay is higher than .138 this means the student will stay at the current PT job even after graduation, while if the value of stay is lower than .138, the student will not stay at the job. Lastly, this formula is said to have been able to predict almost 78.70% accuracy or almost 4 out of 5 scenarios.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Yes ((n=183))</th>
<th>No ((n=267))</th>
<th>Wilks' Lamda</th>
<th>F value</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Job match my future</td>
<td>Mean 0.68, SD 0.469</td>
<td>Mean 0.14, SD 0.346</td>
<td>0.695</td>
<td>196.70</td>
<td>.000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Job is able to help my future</td>
<td>Mean 0.89, SD 0.313</td>
<td>Mean 0.64, SD 0.482</td>
<td>0.919</td>
<td>39.44</td>
<td>.000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Type of job</td>
<td>Mean 2.49, SD 1.554</td>
<td>Mean 2.12, SD 1.279</td>
<td>0.983</td>
<td>7.62</td>
<td>.006</td>
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<tr>
<td>Duration of part-time job</td>
<td>Mean 1.84, SD 0.874</td>
<td>Mean 1.78, SD 0.861</td>
<td>0.999</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>.522</td>
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<tr>
<td>Salary</td>
<td>Mean 0.80, SD 0.403</td>
<td>Mean 0.73, SD 0.443</td>
<td>0.995</td>
<td>2.42</td>
<td>.120</td>
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<tr>
<td>Related with course of study</td>
<td>Mean 0.27, SD 0.447</td>
<td>Mean 0.14, SD 0.350</td>
<td>0.974</td>
<td>12.09</td>
<td>.001</td>
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Table 3. Coefficient and structures of the function

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<tr>
<td>Job match my future</td>
<td>.869</td>
<td>.915</td>
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<td>Job is able to help my future</td>
<td>.378</td>
<td>.410</td>
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<td>Type of job</td>
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<td>.227</td>
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<td>Duration of part-time job</td>
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<td>Salary</td>
<td>.052</td>
<td>.101</td>
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<td>Related with course of study</td>
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<td>.042</td>
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Table 4. Functions at group centroids

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<td>yes</td>
<td>.873</td>
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<tr>
<td>no</td>
<td>-.598</td>
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5. Summary

This study is aimed to explore the relevance between the characteristics of PT and the majors chosen by the students in vocational university in Taiwan. To our surprise, the study came out to be greatly different as expected. For example, what are the natures of the student’s PT job or whether the relevance of their PT job is helpful to their future career?
Firstly, our sampling survey indicated that nearly 40% of the students work in service industry and 30% of them works in catering industry. All in all, approximately 70% of the students chose the food service industry. Accordingly, the survey shows that the PT environments are not exactly relevant with their learning from the university.

Secondly, it's expected that the reasons why the students do a PT job ought to be “accumulated experiences” as prior consideration, which help them acquire more related techniques for the future occupations and also help them understand the society. However, it's found from our survey that “accumulated experiences” is only accounted for 15%; as to “close to home” is accounted for almost 60%, and “high wage” is taken in second place as their choosing PT. It was quite an unforeseen consequence.

In other words, the students barely choose a major-related job or accumulate their experiences as priority for taking a job. In the survey, it is also could be found that our students do not feel threatened or strained as facing competence. Supposing we have opportunities to take a job in all studying periods, and actually students will have four years to learn relevant skills or enhance practical experiences. Nevertheless, “closer to home” is their first choice always. It seemed that we remain unconscious about what is called the reality. Spending all the time on something unnecessary is our defect or the common problem of college students in Taiwan.

By these outcomes, we recommend more speeches could be held, which get us more familiar with the intense of competitions and to realize “survival of the fittest.” In addition, instead of living a life with nothing, we are supposed to be vigilant that how the other countries make progress on their skills.

6. Acknowledgement

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References


