

From Juggling Responsibilities to Owning a Business: A Case of a Working Student Performing Dual Roles

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Abstract

Poor role fulfilment among working students is a concern in schools and communities. Guided by William J. Goode's Role Strain Theory, I explored the challenges, coping strategies, and insights of a working student through qualitative case study approach. Data collected from interviews were thematically analysed. The finding revealed that the student encountered physical, cognitive, emotional, and social stress in managing her dual roles and coped through self-discipline, prioritization, emotional regulation, social support, and restorative practices. At the moment, the case has successfully established a personal business while continuing her studies. Furthermore, she gradually developed deeper realizations about resilience, perseverance, self-awareness, and personal growth. Future research may adopt quantitative methods to assess the impact of role strain and coping strategies on academic persistence and well-being, and develop measurement tools based on key themes to provide more targeted support for working students.

Keywords: From juggling responsibilities to owning a business; case study; working student; performing dual roles

1. Introduction

In this chapter, I presented the problem and its setting, the significance of the study, the research questions, the theory, the conceptual lens, and my assumptions.

1.1. The Problem and Its Scope

I learned that poor role fulfillment among working students has become a growing concern in education and communities worldwide. Many students who simultaneously perform academic and employment responsibilities experience difficulties in fully meeting the expectations attached to their roles as learners and workers. International educational reports indicate that the increasing number of students engaged in paid employment while studying has heightened concerns about students' ability to maintain effective participation in academic responsibilities and institutional engagement (OECD, 2023). Recent studies also emphasize that role fulfillment among working students remains a relevant issue in higher education due to the continuing expansion of student employment across different educational systems (Salmela-Aro &

Upadaya, 2023). The issue has gained attention among educators and researchers because working students are expected to fulfill multiple responsibilities within a limited time and institutional demands.

In several countries, poor role fulfillment among working students continues to be documented in educational settings. In the United States, researchers observed that working students frequently report difficulty maintaining satisfactory participation in both academic and work-related responsibilities within higher education institutions (American Psychological Association, 2023). In Australia, studies noted that university students engaged in part-time employment encounter persistent challenges in sustaining academic engagement and fulfilling institutional expectations while working (Brooks & Young, 2023). Similarly, in South Korea, educational researchers highlighted that working students often struggle to balance academic participation with employment obligations, particularly in competitive academic environments (Park & Adler, 2023). These international observations indicate that poor role fulfillment among working students is not limited to a single educational system but is recognized across countries.

In the Philippines, poor role fulfillment among working students has also become a significant educational concern. Recent local studies have revealed that Filipino working students consistently experience difficulty meeting academic responsibilities while maintaining employment commitments within higher education institutions (Chavez et al., 2023). Research involving Filipino working students further emphasized that students engaged in paid work frequently encounter challenges in sustaining active academic participation and fulfilling expected student responsibilities (Canto et al., 2023). In addition, studies conducted among Filipino students in secondary and tertiary education noted that working students often report struggles in maintaining satisfactory academic engagement while performing work duties (Jadia et al., 2023). These findings indicate that poor role fulfillment among working students remains evident within the Philippine educational context.

Recent studies have documented that students who experience persistent difficulty fulfilling academic and work responsibilities are more likely to encounter academic disengagement, reduced academic performance, emotional exhaustion, and lower overall well-being (OECD, 2023). Furthermore, the inability to effectively fulfill multiple roles may negatively affect students' social functioning, psychological stability, and long-term educational outcomes (American Psychological Association, 2023). However, these studies predominantly focus on the general experiences and outcomes of working students as a broader population, leaving limited research on their challenges, coping strategies, and insights into managing dual roles, particularly within regional contexts such as Davao City. Hence, I conducted this study.

1.2. Significance of the Study

I am convinced that this study holds significant value in advancing the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal of equitable quality education by examining how a working student performs the demands of her dual roles, thereby contributing to the development of more inclusive, responsive, and supportive educational environments. This study also aligns with the mission of higher education institutions to foster holistic student development grounded in resilience, compassion, and excellence. Furthermore, I believe that the finding of this research may benefit Holy Cross of Davao College, where I presented this study, by providing empirical insights to guide the development of responsive programs, policies, and institutional support systems for working students. In addition, this study may serve as a valuable reference for future researchers exploring the relationship between education, employment, and student well-being.

1.3. Research Questions

To contribute to a deeper understanding of a working student's role fulfillment, I examined how the participant performed her dual roles. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What challenges does a working student encounter in balancing academic responsibilities and paid employment?
2. What adjustment and coping strategies does a working student employ to manage role strain and competing responsibilities?
3. What insights does a working student gain from fulfilling dual roles as both a student and an employee?

1.4. Theoretical Lens

I anchored this study on William J. Goode's Role Strain Theory (1960). This theory posits that individuals experience difficulty fulfilling the multiple expectations attached to a single social role or several competing roles.

The theory further suggests that individuals experience stress from competing role demands and develop coping and adjustment strategies to manage these pressures while maintaining role performance. In this study, Role Strain Theory serves as a framework for understanding how a working student manages the simultaneous demands of academic and occupational roles, the strategies used to cope with these challenges, and how these experiences influence the perceived ability to fulfill both responsibilities effectively.

1.5. Conceptual Lens

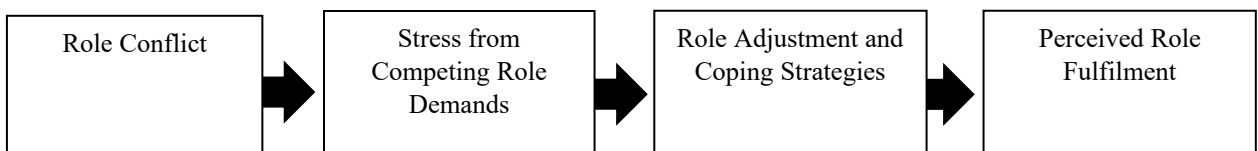


Figure 1. Conceptual Lens based on Goode's Role Strain Theory

1.6. Assumptions

I assumed that the challenges the working student encountered in balancing academic and occupational responsibilities align with William J. Goode's Role Strain Theory, particularly in explaining how she fulfills her dual roles. I presumed that the overlapping demands of school and work affect her well-being, daily functioning, and ability to perform her responsibilities effectively, and that they also lead her to develop coping mechanisms such as self-regulation, social support, rest, and cognitive reframing to manage the pressures of dual-role engagement. Although the study does not primarily focus on broader institutional or economic factors, the participants' narratives and reflective accounts provide meaningful insights into the complexities of balancing work and academics within the localized context of working students.

2. Methodology

In this chapter, I provided a clear and detailed discussion of my methodological process to establish the credibility of my study. I specifically explained my research design, sample and sampling, data-gathering and analysis techniques, and ethical considerations.

2.1. Research Design

In this study, I utilized a qualitative case study design to examine how the working student performed the combined demands of academic and employment responsibilities. I adopted a flexible yet structured approach that enabled an in-depth empirical exploration of the case within their real-life contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2023). I prioritized capturing participants' perspectives as they naturally emerged, while setting aside prior assumptions to better understand how they interpret, respond to, and make sense of dual-roles (Zelčāne & Pipere, 2023).

2.2. Sample and Sampling Technique

In this study, one working student enrolled in a university in Davao City was purposively selected as the primary participant based on the following criteria: (1) currently enrolled in a college program, (2) engaged in part-time or full-time employment, (3) at least 19 years old, and (4) willing to voluntarily share his or her lived experiences. Apart from the working student, nine significant others, including classmates, workmates, friends, and family members, were involved to provide additional perspectives on the participant's experiences. I employed purposive sampling, which is appropriate for qualitative research as it intentionally selects participants who meet specific criteria aligned with the study's objectives (Nikolopoulou, 2023). This approach allowed the researcher to gather in-depth and relevant data on the challenges, coping strategies, and insights into performing dual roles.

2.3. Data Gathering Technique

I collected data through semi-structured interviews, which allowed the case to share her experiences in her own words while giving the researcher the flexibility to explore emerging themes further. The interviews focused on the participant's challenges in balancing academic and employment responsibilities, including the coping strategies she employed, and the insights she gained from managing dual roles.

2.4. Data Analysis Technique

I applied Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step framework in this study, which involves familiarization, coding, theme generation, reviewing, theme definition, and reporting. Thematic analysis enables rigorous identification of recurring patterns and meanings in qualitative data, facilitating a comprehensive understanding of the case. To enhance the credibility and rigor of the finding, triangulation was employed by comparing perspectives from the working student and her significant others (Palmar-Santos et al., 2023). Separate coding and theme development were conducted for each data source before converging and diverging themes were integrated through an iterative analysis process.

2.5. Ethical Considerations

To ensure ethical compliance, I obtained ethical approval from the Society of Moral Integrity and Legal Ethics (SMILE), the official ethics review body of Holy Cross of Davao College, prior to data collection. I also secured informed consent from the participants after fully explaining the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks, and their rights, including voluntary participation and the freedom to withdraw at any time without consequences.

To maintain confidentiality, I assigned pseudonyms and removed identifying information that could reveal the participants' identities or backgrounds. I also stored all data and recordings, with access limited only to me as the researcher. Throughout the study, I maintained a safe and respectful environment for the participants. I kept an audit trail to systematically document my research decisions and data management procedures, ensuring transparency, accountability, and integrity in the research process.

3. Results

In this chapter, I presented the finding of my study, organized to clearly address and illuminate the research questions posed. This presentation also serves as a foundation for my discussion and for framing the implications and future direction.

Challenges Encountered by a Working Student in Balancing Academic Responsibilities and Paid Employment

One evening during the interview, I noticed the participant (IP1) leaned back in her chair, her voice slowing as she began to describe her daily routine. There was a visible heaviness not only in her tone but also in her physical presence. The depth of her exhaustion became unmistakable as she shared, almost matter-of-factly:

Physically, hmm, literally drained siya. Daghan og sleepless nights. Instead of 8 hours kay naa lang koy 3 hours mag sleep. Wala jud koy sleep every day (Physically, I am literally drained. I have many sleepless nights. Instead of 8 hours, I only get 3 hours of sleep. I really don't get proper sleep every day). (IP1, 13–17)

As the interview unfolded, it became apparent that exhaustion was not an occasional condition for her, but a constant state of living. This pattern was further reinforced when she shared how she tried to compensate for the lack of rest within the constraints of her schedule:

Ginatory nako na makatulog nalang sa breaks, lunch, and sa biyahe. Physically drained ko for the past months (I try to sleep during breaks, lunch, and while traveling. I have been physically drained for the past months). (IP1, 17–18)

Sleep, in her experience, was no longer restorative; it had become fragmented moments scattered throughout the day, never truly allowing her body to recover. This ongoing deprivation eventually manifested in physical breakdowns. During peak academic and work demands, she recalled:

2 days busy period... 2 days no sleep. Naa nay migraine, katugon na kaayo, irritated na sa palibot (Two days of busy period... two days no sleep. I already had migraines, felt very sleepy, and became irritated by my surroundings). (IP1, 90-94)

Her description of migraines, irritability, and extreme fatigue suggested not isolated incidents but part of a recurring cycle of bodily strain. Significant others likewise confirmed this noticeable depletion, noting:

Murag pirmi siya drained. Ginatry niya matulog bisan sa lunch o sa biyahe (She always looks drained. She even tries to sleep during lunch or while traveling). (SO1, 471–472)

As the interview continued, IP1 suddenly paused mid-sentence, as though searching for words strong enough to express something inherently overwhelming. Her expression shifted between frustration and resignation as she said,

murag didto naka breakdown ko. Lisud diay siya kay dili jud nimo all the time ma keep up ang both sides. Naa jud kay ma sacrifice (that's where I broke down. It's really difficult because you cannot always keep up with both sides. You really have to sacrifice something). (IP1, 23–24)

Her account illustrated that her struggle extended beyond time management; it reflected the difficulty of balancing two competing roles that constantly demanded compromise. This tension surfaced again when she shared:

Distracted ko. Naa koy ginahunahuna sakong acads. Dili ko maka-function ug maayo sa work (I get distracted. I keep thinking about my academics. I cannot function properly at work). (IP1, 51–53)

Her experiences conveyed a persistent cognitive tug-of-war—attention divided, never fully present in either role. This further echoed when she admitted:

Nagka-bad survey ko just because distracted ko and naa koy ginahunahuna sakong acads (I got a bad survey just because I was distracted and thinking about my academics). (IP1, 54–56)

Her voice carried quiet accountability, yet beneath it was an implicit recognition that the structure itself made these compromises unavoidable. Significant others echoed this observation, noting:

Murag nag-struggle siya to keep up. Dili na siya at her usual performance level (She seems to struggle to keep up. She is no longer performing at her usual level). (SO2, 788–790)

Throughout the interviews, moments also emerged when she struggled to articulate her thoughts clearly, often pausing or speaking in fragments. This became particularly evident when IP1 described her mental state:

Always feel tired and kanang lutang gani... hard for me to make decisions (I always feel tired and spaced out... it is hard for me to make decisions). (IP1, 39–40)

The term “lutang” (mental fog) carried a meaning that extended beyond fatigue—it suggested a disconnection from clarity, focus, and cognitive grounding. This disruption became more pronounced as she continued:

Mas nagja-jumble ang akong utok... unsaon nako pagbawi sa akong work or pag-make up sa classes (My thoughts become more jumbled... I don't know how to catch up with work and classes). (IP1, 58–60)

Her words mirrored her mental experience—overlapping, unstable, as if her thoughts were reflecting the chaos of her responsibilities. These cognitive difficulties were also confirmed by significant others:

Mapansin nako na lutang siya usahay. Maglisud pud siya mag-decide or mag-focus sa class (I notice she is sometimes spaced out. She also struggles to decide or focus in class). (SO1, 484–485), and

Murag mag struggle og focus sa task pag wala siyay sakto na tulog (She really has difficulty focusing on tasks when she lacks sleep). (SO2, 765–766)

These accounts highlighted that cognitive difficulties were not only experienced internally but also visible in her behavior and performance. During another point in the interview, a shift in IP1's demeanor occurred. Her tone deepened, and her posture leaned slightly forward as she spoke about emotional strain:

Mas emotionally disturbed ko sa work. Lahi-lahi nga mga customer... lisod i-pacify (I become more emotionally disturbed at work. Different customers are hard to handle and pacify). (IP1, 98–100)

At this stage of the interview, it became clear that her exhaustion had reached her emotional core. She continued, describing how lack of sleep intensified her emotional reactivity:

If ma sacrifice na akong sleep ang ma feel na jud nako ana is exhaustion. Ma-annoy dayon ko (If I sacrifice my sleep, what I really feel is exhaustion. I easily get annoyed). (IP1, 108–110), and further added, makalagot na ang mga customer... murag maapil pud ko ka-irate (customers can be irritating... I also become irritable). (IP1, 121–124)

I observed that these emotional responses appeared less like isolated incidents, but effects of prolonged strain and lack of recovery. Significant others similarly noted:

She feels stressed and overwhelmed... murag kapoy na kaayo siya emotionally (She feels stressed and overwhelmed... she seems very emotionally exhausted). (SO1, 528–530), and emotionally reserved siya... mas hilom pud siya and dili kaayo energetic (she becomes emotionally reserved... she is quieter and less energetic). (SO2, 734–736)

A pattern became evident: emotional exhaustion not only intensified irritability but also led to withdrawal, reduced engagement, and emotional numbing. One of the most striking moments in the data occurred when IP1 spoke about her social life. Her voice softened noticeably, and she paused before saying:

Naa jud times that I feel like disconnected ko with people around me. My priorities differ from them (There are times when I feel disconnected from people around me. My priorities are different from theirs). (IP1, 338–339)

In that silence, I sensed a deeper emotional undercurrent—one of quiet separation and gradual detachment. This feeling of exclusion became more explicit when she added:

Ma-left out ko... murag wala naman ko ani na belong oy (I feel left out... it feels like I no longer belong). (IP1, 321–322)

She further explained:

Behind nako sa mga ganap sa life sakong family and friends... dili nako ka relate sa ilang topic (I am behind in family and friends' activities... I can no longer relate to their topics). (IP1, 340–342)

These revealed a gradual erosion of social connection—not caused by intentional withdrawal, but by the demands of her circumstances. Significant others confirmed this experience, noting:

Naa jud moments nga she feels isolated especially if dili siya ka-relate sa conversations (There are moments when she feels isolate especially when she cannot relate to conversations). (SO1, 660–662), and murag ma-left out siya sa mga ganap (she seems gets left out of activities). (SO1, 627–628)

I began to see how dual-role engagement quietly restructures social participation, creating emotional and relational distance between the student and her social world. Even after the interview neared its conclusion, one statement lingered profoundly when IP1 paused and posed a question that seemed to extend beyond herself:

What if dili nako magtrabaho para mas ma-enjoy nako akong college life? (What if I didn't work so I could enjoy my college life more?). (IP1, 323–325)

In that moment, I sensed not just reflection, but a quiet weighing of missed possibilities and alternative paths. This was accompanied by emotional fatigue and declining motivation:

Maka affect siya kay ma-drain man pud ka and ma sad ka... usahay mawad-an kag motivation (It affects me because I get drained and sad... sometimes I lose motivation). (IP1, 356–357)

Significant others echoed this sentiment, noting:

Feels sad and sometimes disappointed. Gusto unta siya muapil pero dili kaya sa schedule (She feels sad and sometimes disappointed. She wants to join but cannot because of her schedule). (SO1, 653–654)

As I listened to her narratives, I deeply felt the exhaustion embedded in her daily life. Her slowed speech, long pauses, and drained expression revealed a constant state of physical, cognitive, emotional, and social strain from balancing work and academics. She shared stories of sleepless nights, mental fog, emotional exhaustion, and isolation, where fulfilling one responsibility often meant sacrificing another. Yet despite these struggles, I also noticed how she gradually shifted toward the ways she tried to endure and adapt, revealing coping strategies that helped her continue functioning and move forward amid the demands of her dual roles.

Adjustment and Coping Strategies of Employed by a Working Student to Manage Role Strain and Competing Responsibilities

As the interview progressed, the participant's routine was described not as chaotic, but as deliberately structured. It was narrated how she would ensure that everything was completed before allowing herself to rest. I began to see not just a student under pressure, but a person actively constructing order within disorder. As one significant other shared,

kinahanglan buhaton niya tanan before siya mag-rest (she needs to finish everything before she can rest). (SO5, 2064–2066)

I realized this reflected more than time management—it showed a deeply internalized discipline in which rest was not immediate relief but was postponed until responsibilities had been fulfilled. As I continued listening, I realized that her coping was rooted in cognitive resilience that transformed overwhelming demands into manageable segments. When faced with competing responsibilities, she did not allow herself to become consumed by everything at once. Instead, she narrowed her focus:

Temporarily focuses on one responsibility at a time (She temporarily focuses on one responsibility at a time). (SO6, 2266–2268)

This ability to single-task amid multiple pressures revealed a strategic mental reorientation. What struck me further was her internal dialogue. There was a quiet but powerful negotiation happening within her. She shared,

I have inner conversations with myself. Gina convince lang nako akong self so I can push through (I have inner conversations with myself. I just keep convincing myself so I can push through). (IP1,

2575–2576)

In that moment, I realized that coping was not only behavioral—it was deeply internal and psychological. The participant continuously encouraged herself, regulating her emotions through self-talk and reflection that allowed her to continue despite exhaustion. This internal regulation became even more evident in the way she reframed difficulties. Rather than dwelling on problems, she consciously shifted perspective:

I just have to find a solution... ma-solve rani nga problem (I just have to find a solution... this problem will still be solved). (IP1, 2550–2553)

I noticed a deliberate refusal to surrender to stress. Instead of allowing problems to become emotionally overwhelming, she approached them through a solution-focused mindset. In many ways, coping became an act of mentally reorganizing difficulties into something temporary and manageable.

As the interviews deepened, I also began to notice that the participant's coping did not exist entirely within herself. There were subtle yet significant references to other people—friends, family members, and trusted individuals who quietly formed part of her support system. One account vividly described,

friends... apil pud iyang family... sila pud kabalo unsaon siya pag-cheer up... dako jud kaayo'g impact (Friends also her family. They know how to cheer her up. It really has a big impact). (SO4, 2138–2142)

Her resilience was not built in isolation. Even though much of her coping appeared internal, it was sustained through connection and emotional support from the people around her. What intrigued me was that despite being described as reserved—

dili jud siya mahilig mag-open up (she is not really the type who easily opens up). (SO4, 2128–2131)

She still intentionally maintained social interaction. There was an effort to reconnect whenever opportunities emerged:

Manghagad jud na siya laag if naa siya vacant time (She would still invite us to go out when she has free time). (SO4, 2120–2122)

I observed that these social engagements were not random or casual. They served as outlets for emotional release and reconnection, allowing her to momentarily step away from the pressures of work and academics. Coping, in this sense, became relational—it involved balancing independence with connection. This became even more evident during moments of overwhelm. One significant other shared,

she seeks help from me or our friends... takes some time to rest and recharge (she seeks help from me or our friends... and takes some time to rest and recharge). (SO6, 2316–2319)

In that instant, I realized that seeking help was not a sign of weakness for the participant, but a strategic response to emotional and mental exhaustion. Rather than carrying everything alone, she allowed others to become part of her coping process. At the same time, there were moments when she withdrew into silence, and other moments when she actively engaged with others:

She is either staying quiet to recharge or she would talk to us and participate in activities (she is either staying quiet to recharge or she would talk to us and participate in activities). (SO6, 2280–2282)

I found myself reflecting on this oscillation between solitude and connection. It revealed a dynamic coping process in which the participant instinctively balanced personal space and social support based on her emotional capacity. As I sat longer with the transcripts, I observed another shift in the participant's coping—

from the cognitive and relational into something more embodied and instinctive. It was no longer only about regulating thoughts or seeking support. It became about resting, replenishing, and physically recovering from exhaustion. One narrative remained particularly vivid:

I let it mawala muna ang fatigue... need nako mag rest muna before study time... dili nako siya mabuhay og tama if diko mag rest (I let the fatigue go first... I need to rest before study time... I cannot do things properly if I do not rest). (IP1, 2658–2662)

Rest was not simply a preference for her—it had become necessary for recovery and functioning. Rather than resisting exhaustion, she acknowledged it through deliberate pauses. Beyond rest, she engaged in leisure activities that briefly allowed her to escape the weight of her responsibilities. One significant other shared that she coped:

Watching anime and movies, reading books (Watching anime and movies, reading books). (SO5, 2158–2160)

As I listened, I realized that these activities were more than simple entertainment. They were intentional steps away—brief interruptions that created emotional distance from stress and allowed her moments of calm and relief. What struck me most profoundly, however, was the recurring role of food in her coping process. Across multiple narratives, eating repeatedly emerged as a way of managing stress and emotional exhaustion. The participant candidly admitted,

pag kanang disappointed ako, ikaon lang nako (when I feel disappointed, I just eat). (IP1, 2557)

She further elaborated,

magkaon ko... 'deserve ko ni'... it helped me... navigate my stress (I eat... "I deserve this"... it helped me navigate my stress). (IP1, 2771–2773)

As I reflected on these accounts, I noticed that food carried multiple meanings. It functioned simultaneously as comfort, reward, emotional release, and physical sustenance. This became even clearer when she explained,

maka gain man jud kog energy... mabuhay nako akong buhatonon basta busog kayko (I gain energy... I can accomplish my tasks when I am full). (IP1, 2764–2766)

I felt the quiet weight of her daily struggles and heard how coping became an intentional process of survival and adjustment by listening to her narratives. Her experiences revealed discipline in prioritizing responsibilities over rest, resilience in encouraging themselves through inner conversations, and determination to focus on one task at a time despite overwhelming demands. I also noticed that her coping was sustained not only through self-regulation, but also through support from friends and family, moments of silence, leisure activities, rest, and even food as forms of emotional and physical recovery. As the interview deepened, she gradually shared how she fulfills these roles.

Insights Gained by a Working Student in Fulfilling Dual Roles as a Student and Employee

I recall a reflective moment in the interview when the working student spoke about education with striking conviction despite already earning money from work and eventually building a small business of her own. There was a sense of determination in her voice as she explained,

Important insight is dili jud i-give up ang acads... kahit nagasweldo na, naa nay Negosyo, naa nay kwarta... dili jud gihapon ihunong ang kuan skwela... dili lang dapat mi maging stagnant... naa pay mas dako jud na opportunity na moabot in the future if ipadayon nimo imong acads (Important

insight is: don't give up on your studies even if you are already earning a salary, have a business, and have money, you still should not stop schooling. We should not become stagnant. There are still greater opportunities that may come in the future if you continue your studies). (IP1, 450–459)

As I reflected on this statement, I realized that her exhaustion and sacrifices did not weaken her commitment to education; instead, they deepened her understanding of its value. While work and business provided immediate income, she viewed education as a pathway to long-term opportunities. Her experiences showed that perseverance in academics meant refusing to remain stagnant despite difficulties.

This realization became even more evident in another account:

Balancing work and studies are very challenging, but possible with discipline and support... dili jud dapat i-give up ang acads... even if lisod, it will open more opportunities in the future (Balancing work and studies is very challenging, but possible with discipline and support. You should not give up on academics even if it is difficult, it will open more opportunities in the future). (IP1, 701–704)

I noticed that she did not deny the difficulty of balancing work and school. Instead, she acknowledged the struggle while simultaneously affirming that persistence remained possible through discipline and support. As I continued listening to the narratives, I began to observe another recurring insight—that resilience often means continuing even when one is physically and emotionally exhausted. One significant other described,

bisag kapoy siya, ginapadayon gihapon niya ug ginaprioritize jud niya iyang studies... committed siya sa iyang goals (even if she is tired, she continues and prioritizes her studies... she is committed to her goals). (SO6, 925–927)

There was something deeply powerful in this statement. I realized that the case's persistence was no longer rooted in convenience or motivation alone, but in a strong sense of purpose. Despite fatigue, pressure, and limited time, she continued to “show up” for both work and school responsibilities. This became even more apparent in another reflection:

Balancing work and studies are not about being perfect, but about persistence and mindset... kulang ug tulog, daghang responsibilities, ug constant pressure but you should continue to show up every day (Balancing work and studies is not about being perfect, but about persistence and mindset... lack of sleep, many responsibilities, and constant pressure are present, but you should still continue to show up every day). (IP1, 3329–3334)

I recognized that she gradually learned to redefine success. Her experiences taught her that balancing dual roles does not require perfection. Instead, it requires consistency, determination, and the ability to keep moving forward despite exhaustion and imperfection.

What struck me further was how her experiences also taught those around her the importance of self-regulation and recognizing personal limits. One participant reflected,

Her experience teaches the importance of resilience, time management, and knowing one's limits... okay ra mangayo ug help when needed... balance and self-care should not be ignored bisan unsa ka-busy kay it will affect all aspect sa imong life jud (Her experience teaches the importance of resilience, time management, and knowing one's limits. It is okay to ask for help when needed... balance and self-care should not be ignored, no matter how busy you are, because it will affect all aspects of your life). (SO9, 1182–1185)

I realized that her exhaustion became a source of self-awareness. Through experiences of

sleeplessness, fatigue, and emotional strain, she learned that persistence alone was not enough; balance, rest, and self-care were also necessary to function effectively. This realization became clearer in another narrative:

You really need to manage your time well... You also need to learn when to pause and when to push through (You really need to manage your time well. You also need to learn when to pause and when to push through). (IP1, 2410–2414)

She framed balance not as complete control over responsibilities, but as the ability to recognize when to continue and when to step back temporarily. In this sense, her experiences served as a reminder that resilience is not only about enduring pressure but also about understanding personal boundaries and preserving one's well-being amid ongoing demands.

As the interviews deepened, I also began to notice that she came to understand the importance of maintaining a positive mindset despite constant stress and external judgments. One participant shared,

not to really think of what people will say... always think positive... if you think too much of negativity it will really gonna affect your work and your studies (no not really think about what people will say... always think positive... if you think too much about negativity, it will really affect your work and your studies). (IP1, 2844–2850)

I realized that this statement revealed a shift in perspective. Earlier narratives showed that she often felt socially disconnected or left behind due to her responsibilities. Yet rather than allowing negativity and external opinions to consume her, she learned to focus on her goals and personal growth. Another participant explained:

Stay positive and resilient... dili magpadala sa opinions sa uban, focus lang sa goals... accept that sacrifices are part of the journey (Stay positive and resilient. Do not be affected by other people's opinions, just focus on your goals, accept that sacrifices are part of the journey). (IP1, 3567–3570)

As I listened to this reflection, I realized that her experiences taught her to normalize sacrifice as part of pursuing her aspirations. She learned that working while studying inevitably required compromises—missed social events, physical exhaustion, and emotional strain—but these sacrifices gradually became meaningful when connected to her long-term goals. Her narratives suggest that she developed a stronger sense of emotional discipline and psychological resilience through adversity.

At the same time, I began to notice another important realization emerging from the data: the balance between independence and support. She reflected,

support systems are nice... but let's also practice living independently... if we rely heavily on them, it will cause us to collapse if we don't know how to stand on our own two feet (Support systems are nice but we should also practice living independently. If we rely too much on them, we may collapse if we do not know how to stand on our own). (IP1, 1868–1873)

Her experiences taught her not only to value support systems but also to cultivate independence and self-reliance. Earlier finding showed how friends and family provided emotional encouragement and motivation during difficult periods. However, she also learned that she needed to develop her own capacity to endure challenges, make decisions, and manage responsibilities independently.

In many ways, navigating dual roles accelerated her personal growth. Constant exposure to pressure and responsibility forced her to become more disciplined, self-aware, and emotionally mature. Through these experiences, she gradually learned how to rely on others without becoming entirely dependent on them.

Another realization that strongly emerged from the narratives was the importance of appreciating opportunities despite uncertainty and hardship. She shared:

Take advantage of the situation... whenever an opportunity presents to you, you somehow take that opportunity... we don't really know what our future holds, so might as well take advantage of the present (Take advantage of the situation. Whenever an opportunity presents itself, you should take it. We do not really know what the future holds, so we might as well make the most of the present). (IP1, 1616–1625)

As I listened to the narratives, I felt admiration for her perseverance despite the exhaustion, pressure, and sacrifices she faced while balancing work and studies. I could hear determination in her voice as she emphasized the importance of continuing her education and pursuing long-term goals despite difficulties. Her experiences made me realize that success was not about perfection, but about persistence, resilience, and the willingness to keep going despite fatigue and challenges. I also noticed how her struggles taught her important lessons about self-discipline, time management, self-care, and recognizing personal limits. Through her narratives, I sensed that her hardships became meaningful experiences that strengthened her emotional maturity, independence, and personal growth.

3.1. Summary of Findings

1. The working student encounters multidimensional challenges in balancing academic responsibilities and paid employment. The participant experienced chronic physical exhaustion caused by severe sleep deprivation, resulting in fatigue, migraines, and irritability. Simultaneously managing school and work created role conflict, distraction, and declining performance in both areas. Cognitive difficulties such as mental fog, poor concentration, and decision-making problems were also evident. Emotional strain emerged through stress, frustration, and reduced motivation, while social challenges included feelings of isolation, disconnection, and being left out by family and peers. Overall, balancing dual roles significantly affected the participant's physical, mental, emotional, and social well-being.

2. The working student employed a combination of behavioral, cognitive, emotional, and social coping strategies to manage role strain and competing responsibilities. She demonstrated discipline through structured time management, prioritizing responsibilities before rest, and focusing on one task at a time to reduce overwhelm. Internally, she used self-regulation and a solution-focused mindset to maintain motivation and emotional control. Social support from friends and family also played a significant role in helping her cope with stress. Additionally, she practiced self-care through rest, leisure activities, and food, which provided emotional comfort, recovery, and renewed energy to continue fulfilling her academic and work responsibilities.

3. The working student gains valuable insights about perseverance, resilience, and personal growth while fulfilling dual roles as a student and employee. Despite exhaustion and financial responsibilities, she recognized the importance of continuing her education as a pathway to better future opportunities. Her experiences taught her that success is not about perfection, but about persistence, discipline, and maintaining a positive mindset despite challenges. She also developed stronger time management, emotional maturity, independence, and self-awareness by learning to balance responsibilities, seek support when needed, and practice independence. Overall, the hardships she encountered became meaningful experiences that strengthened her character and long-term aspirations.

3.2. Modified Paradigm

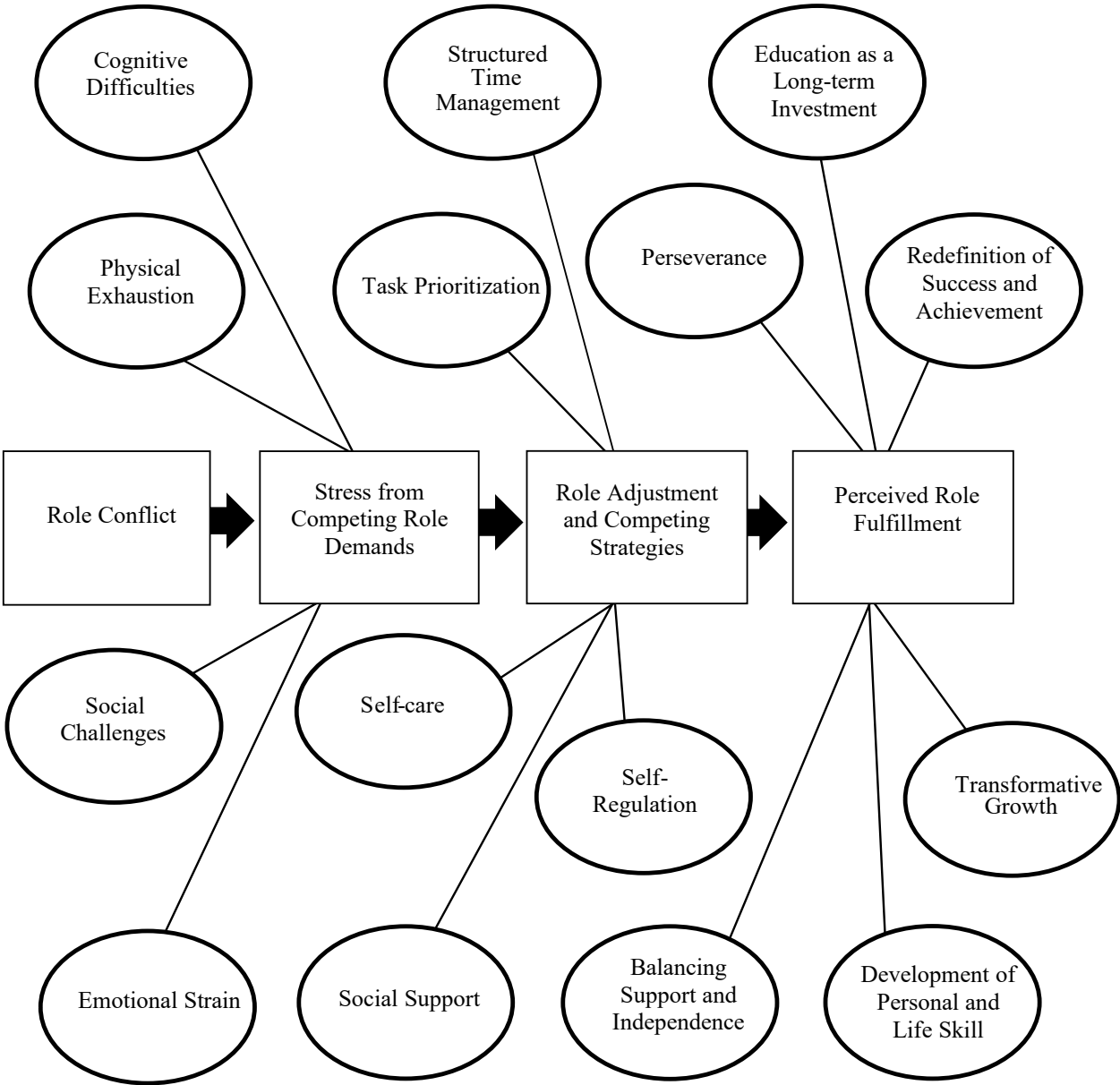


Figure 2. The Modified Paradigm of a Working Student Performing Dual Roles

4. Discussion

In this section, I presented the discussion of the finding of my study. I also presented the implications for practice and the future direction of the study.

Embodied Strain of a Working Student

My finding revealed that the working student encountered multidimensional strain affecting her physical, cognitive, emotional, and social well-being. She described chronic exhaustion caused by sleep deprivation and irregular rest, resulting in persistent fatigue and reduced energy for both academic and work responsibilities. She also encountered role conflict and overload as school and work demands competed for her limited time, forcing her to juggle tasks and leading to a decline in her performance. In addition, she reported cognitive difficulties such as poor concentration and mental “fog,” alongside emotional exhaustion characterized by irritability, mood swings, and withdrawal. Her experiences further revealed social disconnection and isolation, as limited time and energy reduced her opportunities to engage with peers, family, and social activities.

This finding affirms the claim of Salmela-Aro and Upadaya (2023), who emphasized that prolonged academic and work demand contribute to chronic exhaustion, emotional fatigue, and cognitive difficulties among students balancing multiple responsibilities. Similarly, the finding supports the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2023), which reported that working students frequently experience sleep deprivation, burnout, reduced academic engagement, and diminished well-being due to competing academic and employment obligations. These studies support the present finding by demonstrating how dual-role demands negatively affect students’ overall functioning and well-being.

However, the finding contradicts the assumption of Green and Elliot (2023), who argued that student employment can strengthen adaptability, resilience, and time management skills when work demands remain manageable. While their study suggested that balancing employment and academics may foster positive developmental outcomes, the participant in the present study described persistent exhaustion, emotional strain, and social isolation that weakened rather than enhanced her overall functioning.

Coping Mechanisms in Dual Roles

In this study, I found that the working student managed role strain through a multi-layered set of coping strategies involving cognitive, relational, and embodied approaches. She demonstrated self-regulation and cognitive resilience by prioritizing tasks, breaking responsibilities into manageable parts, and using positive self-talk and solution-focused thinking to sustain motivation despite continuous academic and work demands. She also relied on emotional support from family, friends, and peers, which provided encouragement, comfort, and temporary relief from stress. In addition, she engaged in embodied coping practices such as sleeping, taking short breaks, engaging in leisure activities, and temporarily withdrawing from responsibilities to restore energy and focus. Food likewise functioned as both emotional comfort and physical replenishment. These strategies reflected a combination of self-discipline, social connectedness, and physical restoration that enabled her to temporarily manage persistent dual-role pressures.

The present finding reinforces the perspective of Park and Adler (2023), which emphasizes that self-regulatory coping becomes essential when individuals face overlapping role demands that exceed available personal resources. It also aligns with the ideas of Nguyen (2023), who found that perceived social support significantly reduces burnout and strengthens resilience among students balancing academic and work

responsibilities. Furthermore, her reliance on rest, leisure, and temporary disengagement reflects embodied and restorative coping mechanisms, consistent with contemporary research identifying sleep and leisure as crucial in reducing emotional exhaustion and sustaining daily functioning.

In contrast to these, the finding opposed the argument of Lim and Lee (2024), who argue that part-time employment among university students enhances coping capacities by improving emotional regulation, time management, and adaptive functioning. While Lim and Lee highlight the developmental benefits of combining work and study, the participant in this study described coping primarily as a survival-oriented response to persistent exhaustion and competing demands rather than a pathway toward enhanced functioning. Instead of experiencing coping as empowerment alone, she viewed these strategies as necessary adjustments that allowed her to temporarily endure ongoing pressure and maintain daily functioning under dual-role strain.

Resilience and Personal Growth

The finding of this study highlighted that the working student, through her experiences, develop meaningful insights centered on resilience, balance, and personal growth. The participant's narratives reveal that her understanding of education is strengthened by continuous exposure to financial pressures, academic demands, and work responsibilities, in which perseverance becomes central to her daily functioning. Her experiences show that education is viewed as a long-term investment rather than an immediate burden. Over time, she develops resilience, discipline, and time management skills, recognizing that success is defined more by persistence and adaptability than by achieving perfect balance. She also becomes more self-aware of her personal limits, learning the importance of rest, seeking help, and preventing burnout. Within this process, she learns to balance independence with social support, realizing that both self-reliance and external assistance are essential. The working student comes to redefine success as endurance and adaptability, reframing her struggles as part of meaningful personal development.

This finding reiterates Mašková (2023), who argued that individuals experiencing sustained academic and work-related pressures often develop self-regulation, persistence, and problem-focused coping strategies that enable them to continue engaging in their responsibilities. Similarly, the finding echoes Sari's (2023) observation, which emphasizes that working students often enhance their time management, emotional regulation, and goal-oriented persistence as they navigate competing academic and employment demands. These studies collectively highlight that dual-role engagement can foster resilience, discipline, and adaptive coping mechanisms that support personal and academic development over time.

Conversely, the finding challenge the conclusions of Dioso et al. (2024), who argued that working students facing high work-study demands often experience fatigue, reduced recovery, and diminished functioning despite their coping efforts. While Dioso et al. (2024) suggest that excessive demands may limit students' ability to maintain optimal performance, the participants in this study demonstrated that sustained challenges can also lead to a positive redefinition of success, in which endurance, adaptability, and personal growth emerge as key outcomes. The significance of my study lies in showing that coping under dual-role demands is not only a response to strain but also a transformative process that fosters resilience and deeper self-understanding.

4.1. Implication for Practice

Upon reflecting on the finding of this study, educational institutions, employers, and guidance offices may collaboratively develop structured support programs for working students. In particular, guidance counselors and school administrators may conduct a needs assessment and design intervention programs to

address the multidimensional challenges faced by students engaged in dual roles, better understand their lived realities, and provide targeted support that enhances their academic engagement and well-being. These interventions may include flexible academic accommodations, mental health and wellness programs, time-management workshops, and accessible counselling services that are responsive to the demands of work and study.

4.2. Future Directions

Future studies may shift from qualitative exploration to statistical validation by examining the relationship between dual-role strain and outcomes such as academic performance and workplace productivity. It may also compare the effectiveness of coping strategies in reducing burnout. In addition, an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) may be conducted to develop and validate a standardized Dual-Role Navigation Scale, confirming key constructs such as cognitive and structural strains among working students.

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