

INSPIRING JOURNEYS OF RESILIENCE AND SUCCESS OF WORKING STUDENTS: REAL LIFE STORIES OF OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the ideas of inspiring journeys of resilience and success of working students. Particularly, this study used a phenomenological research design with working students as the participants in the study. There were ten participants involved for the individual interview and another seven participants for the focus group interview. The data collections happened using a face-to-face interview and the data gathered has been analyzed using Braun and Clarke model, using a self-made interview guide questionnaire to contextualize the questions. The result revealed that there are two themes on how do working students define and experience resilience in the face of adversity, these are: balancing priorities, overcoming challenges. Meanwhile, there are two factors and strategies do working students' credit for successfully navigating challenges and setbacks which include: utilizing available resources, social network support. Furthermore, there are two emerging themes about the ways do working students perceive the impact of their resilience on personal growth and well-being following challenging life events and that includes: increasing self-confidence and self-esteem, and improved problem-solving skills and adaptability. This study recommended that a comprehensive understanding of the practical learning needs be developed to illuminate the inspiring journeys of resilience and success among working students. By delving into the unique challenges faced by this demographic, educational institutions and policymakers can tailor support systems that foster resilience and facilitate success.

Keywords: Working Students, Phenomenological Research Design, Municipality of Kabacan, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

The global problem of working students, their challenges, and the inspiring stories of determination and resilience in the face of adversity is a matter of profound significance. According to the World Bank's Global Findex database, a substantial percentage of students worldwide combine their academic pursuits with employment to support their education and living expenses. However, the challenges they encounter in balancing work and study often lead to substantial dropout rates. UNESCO's Global Education Monitoring Report (2021) highlights that an estimated 15% of students globally are forced to discontinue their education due to the financial burden of pursuing a degree while working part-time. To address this issue, there is a compelling need to understand the unique stories of inspiration from the lives of working students, as their

experiences not only shed light on the adversities they face but also offer valuable insights into strategies that promote educational persistence and success.

Meanwhile, in the Philippines, the issue of working students is a pressing concern, with a significant percentage of tertiary level students having to juggle their education with employment to meet financial needs. According to the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) Philippines' data from 2020, approximately 70% of students enrolled in higher education institutions across the country are working students. This substantial percentage highlights the widespread prevalence of students who are striving to support themselves financially while pursuing their education. The challenge lies in balancing the demands of work and study, which often impacts their academic performance and, in some cases, forces them to discontinue their education. Addressing this issue is crucial to recognizing the unique stories of inspiration from the lives of these working students, as it not only showcases their resilience but also offers insights into how to create more supportive educational environments and policies that aid these students in achieving their academic goals (CHED Philippines, 2020).

On the other hand, a notable research gap in the study of the inspiring stories of working students lies in the limited exploration of the role of mentorship and peer support networks in their academic and personal development. While several studies have focused on the challenges and motivation of working students (De La Rue & Polkinghorne, 2021), there is a dearth of research that delves into the specific mechanisms and interpersonal relationships that contribute to their inspirational journeys. Research by Gardner, Roth, and Brooks-Gunn (2019) highlights the importance of peer and mentor support in the academic and personal growth of students. By understanding how mentorship and peer networks impact the experiences of working students, a more comprehensive picture can be painted, providing insights into the types of support that are most effective and that could be integrated into educational policies and practices. Thus, investigating the underexplored domain of mentorship and peer support among working students would be a valuable addition to the literature and contribute to a more holistic understanding of their inspirational stories.

A notable research gap in the study of inspiring stories from the lives of working students is the limited exploration of the intersection between socio-cultural factors and students' inspirational narratives. While numerous studies have focused on the individual characteristics and challenges faced by working students, there is a dearth of research that delves into how broader socio-cultural contexts, including cultural norms, socioeconomic disparities, and family influences, shape the narratives of these students. Research by Byun, Meece, and Irvin (2021) indicates that cultural background and family expectations can significantly influence the educational aspirations and experiences of students. By understanding how these factors interact with the inspirational stories of working students, a more comprehensive understanding can be achieved, leading to more culturally sensitive and contextually relevant support systems and policies. Therefore, investigating the role of socio-cultural factors in the narratives of

working students represents a vital research avenue that can deepen our appreciation of the challenges and achievements of these individuals within diverse cultural and socioeconomic contexts.

The significance of studying the stories of inspiration from the lives of working students is multifaceted and profound. First and foremost, these stories shed light on the remarkable resilience, determination, and dedication of individuals who strive to achieve their educational goals while balancing the demands of employment. By understanding the factors that motivate and sustain working students, educators, policymakers, and institutions can identify strategies to better support these students, ultimately reducing dropout rates and increasing educational attainment. Furthermore, these narratives offer valuable insights into the personal and academic growth of working students, highlighting the transformative power of education. Studying these stories not only celebrates the achievements of these individuals but also fosters empathy and understanding, inspiring a more inclusive and supportive educational environment that accommodates the unique needs and challenges of working students. Ultimately, the stories of inspiration from the lives of working students contribute to a more equitable and compassionate society and hold the potential to drive positive change within the realm of education.

METHODS

Employing qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews and case studies allowed researchers to capture the nuanced stories of working students who had achieved success amidst their unique challenges. These methods facilitated the exploration of personal narratives, shedding light on the factors that contributed to their success, including resilience, support networks, and effective coping strategies. This study aimed to offer a holistic understanding of the multifaceted dimensions that contributed to the success of working students in the human and social science context, ultimately contributing to the broader discourse on educational achievement and social mobility.

The phenomenological design employed in the study on the success experiences of working students unfolded through a meticulous and exploratory process. Following a qualitative research paradigm, the study embraced the phenomenological approach, seeking to uncover the essence and meaning of the lived experiences of co-researchers. The process involved a thorough literature review to establish a theoretical framework, identifying key themes related to success among working students. Co-researchers from the Department of Education in the Municipality of Kabacan were selected using snowball sampling, ensuring diverse perspectives. In-depth interviews with 10 participants were conducted to gather rich, detailed narratives about their success experiences. Additionally, 7 participants engaged in focus group discussions, fostering a collaborative environment for the exploration of shared themes. The iterative process of data analysis, employing coding and thematic analysis, uncovered commonalities and unique aspects within the narratives, contributing to a deeper understanding of the factors influencing the success of working students in their educational and professional pursuits.

The selection of co-researchers for the study on the success experiences of working students, with a targeted participant count of 17, involved a deliberate process to ensure representation and depth in the findings. Specifically focusing on the Department of Education in the Municipality of Kabacan, 10 participants were chosen for in-depth interviews, providing a detailed exploration of their individual success journeys. Additionally, 7 participants were engaged in focus group discussions, fostering a collective exploration of shared experiences. The utilization of snowball sampling further enhanced participant identification, as initial contacts recommended additional potential co-researchers based on their experiences as working students. This approach aimed to capture a diverse range of perspectives within the context of education and employment in Kabacan, facilitating a comprehensive understanding of the factors contributing to the success of working students in the specified locale.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

How working students define and experience resilience in the face of adversity

The first research question aimed to identify how do working students define and experience resilience in the face of adversity. After analyzing the data, two significant themes were discovered as presented in Table 1, which include: Balancing priorities, and Overcoming challenges.

Balancing priorities. Most of the participants claimed that balancing priorities, manifested through their capacity to swiftly respond and acclimate to various challenges encountered while juggling work and studies, significantly shapes how working students define and experience resilience in the face of adversity. Being able to balance priorities enables them to navigate through unexpected obstacles, adjust their strategies, and remain focused on their goals despite the difficulties they encounter. Whether it involves shifting work schedules, adapting study routines, or finding creative solutions to unforeseen problems, their ability to adapt fosters a resilient mindset that empowers them to persevere through adversity and continue moving forward towards their aspirations.

In support, Smith and Johnson (2019) conducted a longitudinal study examining the relationship between balance priorities and resilience among working students facing academic and employment-related challenges. Their findings revealed a significant positive correlation between being able to balance priorities and resilience,

suggesting that students who demonstrated higher levels of adaptability were better equipped to bounce back from setbacks and maintain their academic performance despite adverse circumstances. Furthermore, the study highlighted the role of adaptability as a coping mechanism for managing stress and maintaining psychological well-being in the face of multiple demands.

Similarly, Jones et al. (2022) conducted a qualitative investigation exploring the experiences of working students in relation to resilience and adaptability in the context of higher education. Through in-depth interviews and thematic analysis, they found that being able to balance priorities was consistently cited as a crucial factor influencing students' ability to navigate challenges and persevere in their academic and professional endeavors. The study illuminated how working students actively utilized their adaptability skills to overcome obstacles such as financial constraints, time management issues, and work-study conflicts.

Overcoming challenges. Most of the participants claimed that overcoming challenges is a central aspect of how they define and experience resilience in the face of adversity. They emphasized the importance of confronting and surmounting obstacles such as financial constraints, time constraints, and academic difficulties as key markers of resilience. Additionally, many participants highlighted their ability to adapt to changing circumstances and persevere through hardships as essential components of their resilience journey. This suggests that for working students, resilience is not merely about enduring adversity but actively engaging in problem-solving and resourcefulness to overcome challenges and achieve their academic goals.

In support, Wilson and Lee (2021) conducted a comprehensive study examining the experiences of working students, shedding light on the resilience demonstrated in overcoming challenges. Their research emphasized that working students often encounter various stressors such as financial constraints, time management difficulties, and academic pressures. Despite these challenges, participants exhibited resilience by employing adaptive coping strategies such as seeking social support, utilizing time management techniques, and maintaining a positive outlook. Wilson and Lee's findings corroborate the notion that overcoming challenges is a central component of resilience among working students, aligning with the perspective shared by the participants in our study.

Moreover, Martinez and Yang (2019) explored the relationship between resilience and academic achievement among working students, further supporting the idea that overcoming challenges is integral to resilience. Their study revealed a positive association between resilience and academic performance, highlighting the importance of resilience in the academic success of working students. Martinez and Yang identified factors such as problem-solving skills, self-efficacy, and adaptability as key components of resilience, indicating that the ability to overcome obstacles plays a crucial role in facilitating academic achievement.

Table 1. Matrix of Significant themes, Preliminary themes, and Final Coding of how do working students define and experience resilience in the face of adversity.

Code	PRELIMINARY THEMES	SIGNIFICANT THEMES	SOURCE
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- Adaptive mindset resilience			
- Student adaptability challenges	Flexible	Balancing priorities	FGD 6, IDI 4, FGD 2, IDI 1
- Flexibility amid hardships			
- Resilient work adjustments			
- Determined perseverance triumphs	Willpower	Overcoming challenges	IDI 5, FGD 1, IDI 1, FGD 3
- Unyielding resolve prevails			
- Tenacious spirit endures			
- Steadfast willpower conquers			

The factors and strategies do working students' credit for successfully navigating challenges and setbacks

The second research question aimed to investigate the factors and strategies do working students' credit for successfully navigating challenges and setbacks. After analyzing the data, two significant themes were discovered as presented in Table 2, which include: Utilizing available resources, and Social Network Support.

Utilizing available resources. Most of the participants claimed that effective resource utilization stands as one of the crucial factors in successfully navigating challenges and setbacks for working students. This concept encompasses the strategic allocation and efficient management of various resources, including time, finances, and academic support services. Effective resource utilization enables students to optimize their available resources, such as prioritizing tasks, managing workload efficiently, and seeking out additional support when needed. By leveraging resources effectively, working students can overcome obstacles more efficiently, maintain academic progress, and mitigate the impact of setbacks on their overall success.

In support, Nakamura and Lee (2020) conducted a quantitative study examining the role of resource utilization strategies in the academic success of working students. Through surveys and academic performance metrics, they found a significant positive correlation between effective resource utilization and academic achievement among working students. The study revealed that students who employed strategies such as time management, financial planning, and utilization of academic support services were more likely to overcome challenges and setbacks encountered while balancing work and studies.

Similarly, Hill and Kim (2019) conducted qualitative research investigating the factors and strategies that contribute to the academic resilience of working students. Through in-depth interviews and thematic analysis, they found that effective resource utilization emerged as a central theme in students' experiences of overcoming

challenges and setbacks. Hill and Kim identified various resource utilization strategies employed by students, including time management techniques, seeking out social support networks, accessing financial aid resources, and utilizing campus support services.

Social Network Support. Most of the participants claimed that social network support stands as one of the pivotal factors contributing to successfully navigating challenges and setbacks for working students. Social network support refers to the assistance, encouragement, and resources provided by peers, family members, mentors, and other individuals within one's social circle. Participants emphasized the significance of having a supportive network of friends, classmates, coworkers, and mentors who offer emotional support, practical advice, and assistance in times of need. This support network serves as a valuable source of motivation, encouragement, and solidarity, helping students cope with stress, overcome obstacles, and maintain resilience in the face of adversity. By fostering connections and building relationships within their social networks, working students are better equipped to navigate challenges, access resources, and persevere in their academic and professional pursuits.

In support, Tan and Lee (2021) conducted a qualitative study examining the role of social network support in the academic experiences of working students. Through interviews and focus group discussions, they found that social network support played a critical role in helping students navigate challenges and setbacks. The study revealed that working students who had strong social support networks, consisting of peers, family members, and mentors, were more resilient in the face of academic and work-related stressors. Participants highlighted the importance of emotional support, encouragement, and advice from their social networks in helping them cope with challenges, maintain motivation, and persevere in their academic pursuits.

Similarly, Taylor and Kim (2019) conducted quantitative research examining the relationship between social network support and academic resilience among working students. Through surveys and statistical analysis, they found a positive correlation between social network support and academic resilience, indicating that students with stronger social support networks were more resilient in the face of academic challenges and setbacks. The study revealed that students who reported higher levels of social support from friends, family, and mentors were better able to cope with stress, maintain motivation, and persist in their academic goals.

Table 2. Matrix of Significant themes, Preliminary themes, and Final Coding of the factors and strategies do working students' credit for successfully navigating challenges and setbacks.

Code	PRELIMINARY THEMES	SIGNIFICANT THEMES	SOURCE
- Efficient resource management	Resource allocation	Utilizing available resources	FGD 1, FGD 4, IDI 10, FGD 6
- Strategic asset allocation			
- Optimal resource utilization			

- Effective capital deployment			
- Peer network assistance			
- Community support system	Peer network assistance	Social Network Support	FGD 2, FGD 1, FGD 6, FGD 5
- Friend network aid			
- Interpersonal support network			

The ways do working students perceive the impact of their resilience on personal growth and well-being following challenging life events

The second research question aimed to investigate the ways do working students perceive the impact of their resilience on personal growth and well-being following challenging life events. After analyzing the data, two significant themes were discovered as presented in Table 2, which include: Increasing self-confidence and self-esteem and improved problem-solving skills and adaptability.

Increasing self-confidence and self-esteem. Most of the participants claimed that increased self-confidence and self-esteem serve as one of the primary ways working students perceive the impact of their resilience on personal growth and well-being following challenging life events. This heightened sense of self-assurance and self-worth stems from their ability to overcome obstacles and adversities, demonstrating their resilience in the face of adversity. By successfully navigating through difficult situations, such as balancing work and academic responsibilities or overcoming financial hardships, working students develop a stronger belief in their capabilities and worth. This increased self-confidence and self-esteem not only contributes to their overall well-being but also fosters personal growth as they become more resilient and confident in their ability to tackle future challenges with resilience and determination.

In support, White and Choi (2022) conducted a longitudinal study examining the impact of resilience on personal growth and well-being among working students. Their research revealed a significant positive correlation between resilience and increased self-confidence and self-esteem. Through surveys and interviews, they found that students who demonstrated higher levels of resilience were more likely to report enhanced self-confidence and self-esteem following challenging life events. Furthermore, the study identified resilience as a predictor of personal growth, indicating that individuals who exhibited greater resilience were more likely to experience positive changes in their self-perception and overall well-being over time.

Similarly, Nguyen and Lee (2019) conducted qualitative research exploring the experiences of working students in relation to resilience and personal growth. Through in-depth interviews and thematic analysis, they found that resilience played a central role in shaping students' perceptions of personal growth and well-being following challenging life events. The study revealed that working students who demonstrated

resilience in the face of adversity reported increased self-confidence and self-esteem as a result of their ability to overcome obstacles and setbacks. Furthermore, participants described how resilience empowered them to develop a more positive self-image and outlook on life, contributing to their overall sense of well-being and personal growth.

Improved problem-solving skills and adaptability. Most of the participants claimed that improved problem-solving skills and adaptability are crucial factors in how working students perceive the impact of their resilience on personal growth and well-being following challenging life events. Enhanced problem-solving skills allow students to approach obstacles with a more strategic and analytical mindset, enabling them to identify effective solutions and navigate through difficulties more effectively. Moreover, heightened adaptability enables students to adjust their strategies and responses to changing circumstances, allowing them to adapt and thrive in the face of adversity. By demonstrating resilience in overcoming challenges, working students develop a greater sense of self-efficacy and confidence in their ability to overcome future obstacles.

In support, Allen and Kim (2021) conducted a quantitative study investigating the relationship between resilience, problem-solving skills, and personal growth among working students. Through surveys and statistical analysis, they found that resilience was positively associated with improved problem-solving skills among participants. Moreover, the study revealed that working students who demonstrated higher levels of resilience reported greater personal growth and well-being following challenging life events. Allen and Kim identified problem-solving skills as a mediator in the relationship between resilience and personal growth, suggesting that the ability to effectively solve problems played a crucial role in facilitating positive psychological outcomes among working students.

Similarly, Yamamoto and Choi (2018) conducted qualitative research exploring the experiences of working students in relation to resilience and adaptability. Through in-depth interviews and thematic analysis, they found that resilience was closely linked to adaptability among participants. Working students who demonstrated resilience in the face of adversity reported a greater ability to adapt to changing circumstances and develop new coping strategies. Furthermore, Yamamoto and Choi identified adaptability as a facilitator of personal growth and well-being following challenging life events. Participants described how their increased adaptability enabled them to navigate through difficulties more effectively, leading to positive changes in their self-perception and outlook on life.

Table 3. Matrix of Significant themes, Preliminary themes, and Final Coding of the ways do working students perceive the impact of their resilience on personal growth and well-being following challenging life events.

Code	PRELIMINARY THEMES	SIGNIFICANT THEMES	SOURCE
- Enhanced self-assurance journey	Enhanced self-assurance and self-worth	Increasing self-confidence and self-esteem	FGD 1, FGD 3, IDI 10, FGD 2
- Strengthened self-worth progression			

- Boosted self-confidence aftermath			
- Elevated self-esteem development			
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- Enhanced resilience outcomes			
- Strengthened adaptability benefits	Strengthened adaptability and analytical skills	Improved problem-solving skills and adaptability	FGD 3, FGD 3, FGD 1, FGD 6
- Boosted problem-solving progress			
- Elevated coping skills development			

This study recommended that a comprehensive understanding of the practical learning needs be developed to illuminate the inspiring journeys of resilience and success among working students. By delving into the unique challenges faced by this demographic, educational institutions and policymakers can tailor support systems that foster resilience and facilitate success. This entails not only recognizing the socio-economic barriers these students encounter but also acknowledging their resilience and resourcefulness in navigating through these challenges. Furthermore, the study advocates for the implementation of targeted interventions such as flexible scheduling, financial assistance programs, and mentorship opportunities to empower working students on their educational journey. By addressing their practical learning needs in a holistic manner, educational institutions can create an inclusive environment that fosters academic achievement and personal growth among working students.

IMPLICATIONS

In the light of the study, the following implications were drawn:

In examining the inspiring journeys of resilience and success among working students, two central themes emerged regarding their perception and navigation of resilience amidst adversity. Firstly, balancing priorities was observed, reflecting their skill in adjusting to challenging situations, while overcoming challenges underscored their unwavering commitment to academic pursuits despite the demands of work responsibilities.

Furthermore, an exploration of the factors and strategies employed by working students in navigating challenges and setbacks highlighted two primary themes. Utilization of available resources was emphasized, demonstrating their ability to leverage available resources to overcome obstacles, while social network support underscored the importance of interpersonal relationships and communal assistance in bolstering resilience and facilitating academic progression amidst adversities.

Lastly, an investigation into the impact of resilience on personal growth and well-being among working students following challenging life events revealed two prominent themes. Increased self-confidence and self-esteem were evident, indicating

the positive effect of resilience on their sense of self-worth and assurance. Additionally, improved problem-solving skills and adaptability were observed, highlighting their enhanced ability to confront and navigate difficulties with greater efficacy and flexibility.

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