

The Relationship between Economic Status, Employment, and Academic Achievement of Female Students Aged 20 to 25 at Islamic Azad University, South Tehran Branch

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Abstract

The economic and social transformations in recent years and the increasing demand for human resources have led to greater employment among students. This shift has resulted in students spending more time on social and economic activities outside the university environment, affecting their academic conditions and quality. This study examines the relationship between economic status, employment, and the academic progress of female students aged 20 to 25 at Islamic Azad University, South Tehran Branch, in the year 2025.

This descriptive-correlational study involved all female students aged 20 to 25 at the university. Forty employed and forty unemployed female students were selected using convenience sampling. The research tools included the Social-Economic Status (SES) Questionnaire by Ghodrattnama (2013), the Students' Work and Job Issues Questionnaire by Kolaki (2010), and the Academic Achievement Questionnaire by Fame and Taylor (1990). The data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics (Pearson correlation coefficient).

The findings indicate a significant and direct relationship between economic status and academic achievement among both employed and unemployed students, suggesting that improved economic conditions enhance academic progress. Moreover, there is an inverse relationship between employment and academic achievement among employed students.

Keywords: Economic status, academic achievement, employment

Introduction

One of the primary resources of any university is its highly motivated and diligent students, who are the future human capital of the country. Educating human resources at higher levels, capable of contributing to various economic, social, and political sectors, is a vital responsibility of universities (Tajik, 2024).

In contemporary times, educational courses have become fundamental for achieving comprehensive progress. Therefore, the orientation towards academic goals is a key indicator in evaluating educational systems, aiding in the cognitive, emotional, and personal growth of individuals (Mohammadi, 1402). Academic achievement reflects the level of success students achieve in class and their learning outcomes. It measures how well a student performs in tests and exams, applying the learned concepts effectively. This progress is vital for their future success (Tammy Tanou Brown et al., 2022).

The increasing capacity of universities to admit students has led to a rise in student populations, with many aiming for higher degrees beyond the basic university certificate (Hassani, 2024).

Various factors, such as economic conditions, income levels, educational facilities, and university resources, influence the motivation to pursue higher education (Kooshanfar, 2023).

Economic status is a crucial factor affecting young students' academic progress (Moein, 2023).

It encompasses various financial aspects that impact an individual's life, influencing their access to resources necessary for education. According to data from the Iranian Statistics Center, about 40% of the country's unemployed are university graduates. The Ministry of Science's latest statistics from 1401 indicate that only 5.04% of bachelor's graduates, 15% of master's graduates, and 30% of doctoral graduates have entered the job market. The Deputy of Technology and Innovation at the Ministry of Science, Research, and Technology recently stated that there are currently 3.134 million unemployed individuals in the country, including about 1.314 million university graduates (Kheiruddin, 2022; IRNA news agency).

Students often work alongside their studies to manage their expenses, potentially affecting their academic performance. Balancing work and education can lead to physical and mental stress, reducing their study time and concentration in class. Students can, in addition to attending classes, take on a job outside of the university that is free from any distractions and aligns with their abilities and talents. For such individuals, choosing a job that parallels their field of study not only earns them money but can also aid in their academic progress. (Aghdasi, 2023).

Today, considering the increasing needs of society and the involvement of individuals in various roles, such management is crucial for individuals and organizational staff to live with less psychological stress and health issues, while achieving greater productivity and commitment. Therefore, this highlights the significant importance of studies related to the conflict and balance between these life domains (work and study) (Mokandari, 2023).

Work-study conflict occurs when the time required for work prevents participation in academic activities, or when pressures from work hinder proper academic performance. Examples of simultaneous conflict between study and employment are as follows:

1. Excessive fatigue.
2. Mental pressure, anxiety, and severe psychological stress.
3. Decreased motivation for work and continued education.
4. Failure to complete assignments.
5. Lack of sufficient time to fulfill job and study responsibilities.
6. University tuition costs
7. Transportation problems and expenses
8. Lack of support from the workplace
9. Lack of support from higher education institutions
10. Emergence of family problems (Abdollahi, 2020).

In general, it can be said that currently, most countries are somehow involved with the issue of employment, especially the employment of graduates. However, the presence of certain problematic factors in finding a job and the graduates' lack of awareness about market needs and necessary skills has made this issue more complex, particularly in developing countries like Iran. Obtaining academic degrees grants individuals social and economic credibility and facilitates the employment of students.

Therefore, for a young person to have a superior social and economic position, they inevitably need to dedicate the second decade of their life to education. This is also true for young women; higher education is crucial for women to enhance their social status (Moody, 2023).

Today, the activities of girls and women are no longer limited to household tasks; they have engaged themselves in various professions. Globally, girls and women constitute about 50% of the workforce. In Iran, according to the Statistical Center's report in the summer of 2017, the employment share of girls and women was 13.2%, which is significant in employment. In recent decades, the entry of girls and women into the labor market has been accompanied by various discussions about this role (Dehghanizadeh, and Vaziri, 2021).

The employment of girls and women has numerous direct and indirect benefits and drawbacks. Employment and having a job increase the economic resources of girls and women, which likely leads to improved mental health for families and increased happiness. In addition to the financial benefits, having a job outside the home expands the social networks of girls and women, providing them opportunities to achieve personal satisfaction and social understanding (Babakashizadeh, 2023).

In addition to the direct effects of employment, indirect impacts are also notable, including enriching family experiences due to the improved mood of

employed girls and women, better social status compared to housewives, contributing to family expenses, and a lower risk of domestic violence and emotional abuse (Taghizadeh Fanid, 2024).

However, the increase in the female workforce is not without challenges. The physical and psychological stress and anxiety caused by the dual burden of responsibility for employed girls and women can lead to reduced happiness or lower life satisfaction (Sharifimanesh, 2023).

This increased burden is likely heavier in traditional societies where deep-rooted gender roles exist. For example, in countries like Iran, strong traditional values assign household duties and the responsibility of caring for children or elderly parents to girls and women (Torsian, 2015). In these same traditional societies, due to the gender role gap, working women are often paid less than men. For instance, Khitarishvili in 2017 found research evidence supporting the concept of added work, where girls and women are sometimes compelled to take on jobs outside the home, although in societies with efficient financial and economic markets, female employment might not be as necessary (Mazini, 2019).

Based on these discussions, it is unclear whether entering the labor market always leads to academic advancement for female students. Certainly, there is no consensus in previous research on whether student employment has a positive or negative impact on academic conditions. According to Shertzer (1984), student employment negatively affects academic success. He believes that working requires physical and mental energy, and if students are employed during their studies, a significant amount of energy that could be used for learning is spent on working, thereby affecting their GPA. On the other hand, Mohammadi (2022) demonstrated in a study that employment has a direct and positive relationship with academic vitality and engagement. Additionally, research indicates that empowering female students both psychologically and financially can reduce academic burnout (Liu and Kao, 2022).

Thus, employment is a necessity in everyone's life, but to maintain the current status and progress, it is essential to focus on enhancing knowledge and education. The demands of daily life require individuals to pursue education alongside their jobs. Managing both work and education, along with attending to other personal matters, necessitates a balance between these aspects to maintain their efficiency and effectiveness. Simultaneously engaging in work and study can lead to conflicts and challenges that disrupt the natural order of these activities, causing an imbalance. Therefore, this research aims to compare the effects of economic status and employment on the academic progress of female students aged 20 to 25 at Tehran South Azad University.

Methods

The present research design is of a descriptive-correlational type and falls into the category of correlational studies in terms of nature and method. Regarding its application, it is considered part of applied findings, and based on its theoretical foundation, it is classified as quantitative research. The statistical population of this study includes all female students aged 20 to 25 at Tehran South Azad University. From this population, 40 employed female students aged 20 to 25 and 40 unemployed female students aged 20 to 25 were selected through convenience sampling.

Tools

Data collection was carried out at two levels: field and library. At the library level, relevant sources were studied, and at the field level, the following questionnaires were used: the Social-Economic Status (SES) questionnaire by Ghodratnama, the Student Work and Job Issues questionnaire by Kalaki, and the Academic Achievement questionnaire by Fam and Taylor.

The Social-Economic Status (SES) questionnaire by Ghodratnama: This questionnaire consists of 11 questions with a 5-point Likert scale, designed and developed by Ghodratnama in 2013. It includes four components: income level, economic class, education, and housing status. Islami and colleagues (2013) confirmed the content and face validity of the questionnaire with the approval of 12 sports specialists. Additionally, reliability was calculated using Cronbach's alpha, which yielded a value of 0.83.

The Student Work and Job Issues questionnaire by Kalaki: This questionnaire consists of 11 questions with three dimensions and a 5-point Likert scale, created by Hassan Kalaki and colleagues. The purpose of this questionnaire is to evaluate various aspects of student work and job-related issues. The dimensions of the questionnaire are: inability to find a job, poor performance of employment institutions, and an unsuitable labor market. In the study by Kalaki and Niyazkhani (2010), the content and face validity were assessed and confirmed with a validity coefficient of 0.74. The Academic Achievement questionnaire by Fam and Taylor: In this study, academic achievement is measured by the grades that each student receives based on their semester GPA from the Fam and Taylor Academic Achievement questionnaire (1990).

This questionnaire, adapted from the research of Fam and Taylor in the field of academic achievement, was modified for the Iranian context (Fam and Taylor, 1990, as cited by Mahani, 2009)

and consists of 48 items. Moradian (2013) obtained a validity coefficient of 0.82 using Cronbach's alpha. In this study, the reliability of the questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach's alpha and yielded a value of 0.92, indicating good reliability.

Findings

Data analysis was conducted at two levels: descriptive and inferential. At the descriptive level, frequency, mean, and frequency tables were used, followed by Pearson correlation and the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for data analysis.

Table 1. Distribution and percentage
Of age of the participants

Group		20-21	22-23	24-25
Working female students	Abundance	9	28	3
	Percentage	22.5	70	7.5
Unemployed female students	Abundance	13	14	13
	Percentage	32.5	35	5.32
The Whole	Abundance	22	42	16
	Percentage	27.5	52.5	20

As shown in Table (1), in the employed student group, 22.5% of students are in the 20-21 age range, 70% in the 22-23 age range, and 7.5% in the 24-25 age range. In the non-employed student group, 32.5% are in the 20-21 age range, 35% in the 22-23 age range, and 32.5% in the 24-25 age range.

Table 2. Descriptive findings

	Group	Min	Max	Average	SD
Employment Status	Working Female Students	32	55	48.65	6.14
	Unemployed Female Students	11	21	12.55	3.44
Economic Situation	Working Female Students	16	55	37.05	5.37
	Unemployed Female Students	11	15	12.80	2.40
Academic Progress	Working Female Students	48	110	76.74	12.24
	Unemployed Female Students	68	210	175.1	19.16

The results in Table (2) show that the mean employment status for employed girls is 48.65, the mean economic status is 37.05, and the mean academic achievement is 175.16. For non-employed girls, the mean employment status is 12.55, the mean economic status is 12.80, and the mean academic achievement is 76.74. By comparing the means, it can be concluded that employed girls have better employment and economic status compared to non-

employed students, but the academic achievement of non-employed female students is better than that of employed female students.

Table 3. Kolmogorov-Smirnov test results
Of research variables

Variable	Amara Kolmogorov - Smirnov	level of significance
Employment status	0.096	0.177
Economic situation	0.065	0.208
Academic progress	0.172	0.104

According to Table (3), the significance level of the research variables is greater than 0.05, indicating that they follow a normal distribution. Therefore, parametric tests can be used to examine the relationships between the variables. In other words, since the distribution of scores on each scale is normal, parametric statistical methods were employed.

Table 4. Results of Pearson's correlation test between
economic status and academic achievement in
working and non-working students

Variable	Economic status of working female students		
Academic progress	Pearson correlation coefficient	Level of significance	sample size
	** 0.578	0.000	80
Variable	Economic status of unemployed female students		
Academic progress	Pearson correlation coefficient	Level of significance	sample size
	** 0.678	0.000	80

** The correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

According to the results in Table (4) and based on the Pearson correlation test, there is a significant and direct relationship between economic status and academic achievement among employed female students at Tehran South Azad University. That is, with improvements in economic status, academic achievement among students increases. Additionally, the Pearson correlation test results show a significant and direct relationship between economic status and academic achievement among non-employed female students at Tehran South Azad University. This means that as economic status improves, academic achievement also increases among non-employed students.

Table 5. Results of Pearson's correlation test between
employment status and academic achievement in
working female students

Being Employed			Variable
Sample Size	Level of Significance	Pearson Correlation Coefficient	Academic Progress
80	0.000	** -0.788	

Not Working			Variable
Sample Size	Level of Significance	Pearson Correlation Coefficient	Academic Progress
80	0.000	** -0.678	

** The Correlation is Significant at the 0.01 Level

According to Table (5), and based on the results of the Pearson correlation test, there is a significant inverse relationship between employment status and academic achievement among employed female students at Tehran South Azad University. This means that among employed female students, academic achievement decreases. Additionally, based on the results of the Pearson correlation test, there is a significant and direct relationship between employment status and academic achievement among non-employed female students at Tehran South Azad University. This means that non-employed female students have higher academic achievement.

Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of the study revealed that there is a significant and direct relationship between economic status and academic achievement among both employed and non-employed female students at Tehran South Azad University. This means that as economic status improves, academic achievement among students also increases. Furthermore, there is an inverse relationship between employment status and academic achievement among employed students.

Employment and economic status are pivotal decisions that impact an individual's lifestyle, mental health, and future (Wu, 2018). In recent years, one of the prominent topics in literature has been the review of career paths; one of the key factors in success, adjustment, and job satisfaction is career adaptability (Ginora et al., 2018).

In explaining the study's findings, it can be said that today, with the increasing capacity of universities to admit students, the student population at various universities has grown. Students enter university with unique motivations and goals, and many of them aim for higher degrees, not settling for just a basic university degree. Several factors contribute to the growing desire for further education among students, including economic factors such as family income, rising economic challenges, and university-related factors such as access to educational and welfare facilities.

Economic status can have a significant impact on academic achievement. When someone faces economic difficulties, they may struggle to secure enough resources to cover their educational expenses. This can lead to reduced access to education and an increased dropout rate.

Additionally, economic status affects academic motivation and morale. When individuals are preoccupied with financial problems, they may find it difficult to focus on their studies. Stress and financial concerns can elevate levels of fatigue and decrease academic performance.

Economic status directly influences access to educational resources. Costs related to books, stationery, private tutoring, and academic assignments can be burdensome for individuals facing financial difficulties. As a result, those with weak economic status may have limited access to educational resources, leading to decreased academic progress.

Overall, economic status can serve as a significant barrier to academic advancement. However, with sufficient financial support and the creation of appropriate conditions, improvements in academic achievement can be achieved.

According to the results obtained, employed students have significantly lower academic progress compared to non-employed students. A review of past research shows that employment is one of the influencing factors on the academic progress of both high school students and university students. It is important to note that employment alone does not have an effect on academic achievement; rather, the conditions created by students' employment can lead to academic decline or lower academic progress compared to other students. Furthermore, some researchers believe that the amount of study time is another influential factor on academic achievement (Ghavami et al., 2005; Hemayi et al., 2010), and employed students tend to study less, resulting in lower academic performance.

Therefore, it can be concluded that student employment during their studies affects their academic success. Employed students generally experience lower academic success than non-employed students. In addition to causing physical and mental fatigue, employment reduces study time, rest, and engagement in academic activities, leading to diminished focus in class and less benefit from lessons, ultimately resulting in lower academic progress.

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