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| RESEARCH ARTICLE

## Lived Experiences of BPO Onsite Employed Students

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| ABSTRACT

This study aimed to investigate the lived experiences of BPO on-site employed students at the University of Cebu- Main Campus, including the challenges they encounter, how they manage pressure and stress, and the coping mechanisms they employ to balance their academic responsibilities with their work commitments. The qualitative research method was employed to achieve this, with sixteen (16) participants selected through purposive sampling. Data collection involved conducting semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions, and the qualitative data was analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis approach. The analysis revealed fourteen (14) emergent themes, categorized under four (4) overarching themes, which addressed the sub-problems. The overarching themes included the reasons for working while studying, categorized as "Reasons of Participants on Working While Studying" with four (4) emergent themes: Good Work Compensation, Competency, Interpersonal Skill, and Provider. The lived experiences of BPO on-site employed students fell under the theme "Lived Experiences as a BPO on-site Employed Student," with four (4) emergent themes: On Physiological Needs, Overwhelming Workload, Patience, and Night Life. The challenges faced by the participants were grouped under "Challenges Met by the Participants," with three (3) emergent themes: Time Management, Sleep Deprivation, and Irate Customers. Lastly, the coping mechanisms employed by the participants were classified under the theme "Coping Mechanisms of the Participants on the Challenges Met," with three (3) emergent themes: Me Time, Not Giving Care, and Positivity. The study's findings and recommendations addressed the challenges experienced by on-site employed students working in the BPO industry, providing valuable insights into their unique experiences.

| KEYWORDS

Lived Experiences, Business Process Outsourcing Students, Employed Students, Working Students, Qualitative Study, Thematic Analysis

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

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### 1. Introduction

There has been a significant rise in college students juggling employment and school responsibilities in recent years. It is possible to have a successful college career while balancing work and school. Although most students worry that these occupations would take time away from their academics, many are taking them since they have become necessary. The reality is that it can become overpowering. At least half of all students take on paid work at some point throughout their education, making working in addition to studying a widespread practice. Students who choose to work are driven primarily by financial need. Students may gain financial independence, learn to budget, and gain valuable life skills by working together to cover their education expenses. Many students undertake paid work, especially those who work as customer service assistants in the BPO industry. Students who work while in

school benefit in several ways: they get a break from their academics, they get to socialize with individuals who have different interests than them, they learn new things, and they avoid being bored. According to Eurostudent, the majority of working students indicate that they work to cover their living costs. Others argue that they could only fund their education by working part-time. Students still need to report working because of the necessity to support others financially. In addition, three out of every five working students say they primarily work to obtain workforce experience.

In European countries, "the study first, work later" logic applies to most students. Anglo-Saxon countries have students working evening, summer, or weekend jobs are expected. Some countries have employers give importance to odd jobs such as generic skills, time-keeping, working with a team, organizing, or presenting something. Some countries value credentials and experience as they recruit students for the job. The costs of a college education cannot be completely covered by working part-time while enrolled. A rising number of students find that working while studying helps alleviate the financial strain of college. Georgetown University's Center for Education and the Workforce has released a report showing that during the previous quarter century and a half, more than 70% of college students have held down part-time jobs while still pursuing their degrees. Furthermore, as college attendance and costs have risen, so has the percentage of students holding down part-time jobs.

Furthermore, Filipino students are struggling because they have to meet the standards in their work so that they will stay in their jobs and, at the same time, maintain academic performance so that they will not get a failing grade. Around 216,000 undergraduates in the Philippines are juggling school and work; the most recent information from the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) is that about 8% of the total number of college students in the Philippines are working students. According to CHED, only half of the employed students can finish college, as they cannot concentrate on their studies, while others have poor health and give up because of financial problems (Accion, 2019).

As reported by The Freeman in its 2016 issue, life as a student in Cebu City is difficult enough. However, it is easier than it could be if the student needed something else to keep them occupied. Many students, known as "working students," need to keep down part-time jobs to make ends meet while they pursue their degrees. The workers in this position must do an excellent job to maintain their jobs. The income is necessary for the student so that they may afford to pay the many costs that are associated with attending school. At school, the student must also do well to justify the hard-earned money spent on their studies. Being a working student is never a self-effacing engagement - but self-elating instead. Again, a particular person can carry two major life undertakings simultaneously.

Many students are working for the same reason. Some wanted to get ready shortly for financial purposes and have the mindset to experience working in an industry before graduating from their school campuses. Others want to buy the things they want for themselves and be independent of their parents, while some are just pressured and feel left out after looking at their friends and classmates starting to get on their careers. These working students may have chosen to work in the BPO industry because they find it challenging and new. In contrast to many other businesses, the business process outsourcing (BPO) industry offers job chances to young people and high earnings with high discretionary spending potential and rapid promotional revenue. Because of this, young individuals working in the industry are achieving their professional and financial objectives more rapidly than in previous generations.

The prospect of balancing work and school might be overwhelming for some students. The ability to multitask and set priorities is crucial while juggling employment and school. Balancing work and school is not an easy feat and can take tremendous hard work and effort on their part. One can only anticipate the work needed for the day if it is appropriately managed. By discovering the experiences of those working college students in terms of how efficient they are in regularly delivering quality work and how they can deal with the stresses and pressures of the challenges they meet, the researchers believe that this study improves knowledge or new ways of understanding.

## **2. Theoretical Background**

This study is anchored on the Existence, Relatedness, and Growth (ERG) Theory by Clayton Alderfer as its main theory, with the Goal-Setting Theory by Edwin Locke and Self-Efficacy Theory by Albert Bandura as its supporting theories.

According to Clayton Alderfer (1969), who postulated the Existence, Relatedness, and Growth (ERG) Theory, all humans are motivated by these three needs. In terms of physical and mental survival, existence is the most tangible and compelling of Alderfer's three needs. The second level emphasizes the need for relatedness with others and harmony within one's own life. Alderfer's desire for growth in the ERG model is the most abstract yet crucial one, as it concerns personal development, satisfaction, and the feeling of having reached one's full potential.

The Existence, Relatedness, and Growth theory, otherwise known as the ERG theory, was developed in near entirety by Clayton Alderfer and enhances upon Maslow's ideas and presents some important and more relevant additions and changes from the original theory created by Maslow. The needs pointed out by Maslow, known as physiological and security-based, are covered under Alderfer's needs of Existence, which are basic survival needs. The self-esteem needs described by Maslow are formed into Alderfer's Relatedness needs. Self-actualization is at the top of Maslow's pyramid, debated as Alderfer's growth-based needs.

Moreover, Alderfer believed that a person is motivated by more than one need at once, unlike Maslow, who believes an individual meets one need before moving on to the next need. Therefore, a person's goals and motives may shift between the existence, relatedness, and growth levels of need as their circumstances change. They can both ascend and descend. Alderfer's model says that people can satisfy their existence needs after their relatedness needs can drive them. Alderfer said that people might put their wants differently depending on how they see life.

Alderfer additionally stated that how people see their growth with each level of need is important. If a person feels like they are making much progress at relatedness, they may be more driven by growth even though their need for relatedness has yet to be fully met. In the same way, if a person is unhappy with their success in terms of growth, they may give up on it and focus more on relatedness.

The first supporting theory of this study is the Goal-Setting Theory by Edwin Locke (1960). According to Locke, a person's "goal" is "what he or she is trying to achieve; the ultimate goal or purpose of an action." Conversely, goal setting refers to deciding upon and committing to attainable long-term objectives for a task at hand. In short, the Goal-Setting Theory explores how establishing objectives might improve performance. According to Locke, people do better in the long run when they aim for specialized, challenging objectives than broad, simple ones.

Additionally, Locke outlined five fundamental characteristics of goal-setting: clarity, challenge, commitment, feedback, and task complexity. To begin with, clarity in achieving a well-defined aim is easier than being hazy or unspecific. The most productive objectives are those that have a defined due date. Second, the goal's degree of challenge must be sufficient to inspire you to work toward it. Thirdly, commitment or dedication, or the willingness to make an honest attempt toward success. Talking to another person about your objective will help hold you more accountable for achieving it. The next step is to establish a system for receiving feedback on your performance as you work toward your objective. Rather than giving up if the objective proves too tough, modifying the goal's complexity midway through the timeframe is preferable. Last but not least, consider the complexity of the work and allow yourself enough time to get through the first learning curve.

To support his claim that goal setting improves performance, Locke cited research showing that "encouraging individuals to achieve their best is effective, but setting a particular, challenging objective leads to far better results." Furthermore, this idea argues that goal setting is directly related to accomplishing those goals. Higher and better task performance may be achieved by setting precise and challenging objectives and providing enough feedback on progress.

In most cases, goals will indicate to a worker what they should be doing and how much time they should devote. Individuals' drive to succeed in the job stems primarily from their intrinsic desire. Better and more accurate feedback on outcomes guides employee behavior and adds to more outstanding performance than the lack of input. One way to improve one's standing is to solicit and respond to comments, explanations, and regulation of aim obstacles. There will be happier workers due to their increased engagement in their work.

The second supporting theory of this study is the Self-Efficacy Theory by Albert Bandura (1977, 1986, 1997). This theory states that an individual's belief in his or her capacity to execute behaviors is necessary to produce specific performance attainments. A person's amount of self-efficacy shows how strongly they believe they are in charge of their drive, behavior, and the social setting they are in. This idea, along with Self-efficacy by Schunk, L. and DiBenedetto, M. (2021), is an essential internal motivational process that may be modified by personal and contextual factors and determines motivational outcomes such as choices, effort, perseverance, and accomplishment. In a nutshell, this theory developed by Gallagher M.W. (2012) places primary emphasis on the individual, as well as the individual's opinions of his or her talents, as primary factors determining the likelihood of achieving desirable results.

More studies show that people do better and have a better quality of life when they have some power over their lives. Our level of self-efficacy goes up when we believe in what we can do. This affects what we can do. This growing trust in our ability to make changes leads to many new, healthy habits. We can better find our strength to see losses as challenges and keep going when things get hard.

Bandura also came up with a method for improving self-efficacy that is based on science. The first step is to set several goals that get harder and harder to reach. Each goal we reach gives us more confidence that we can reach the next one. This gives you a sense of power, the basis of a strong sense of self-belief. Second, we need to find an excellent example to follow. Seeing others in similar situations succeed through their hard work gives us more hope that we can also get through the problems we face. Lastly, we should look for positive feedback and praise, strengthening our belief that we have what it takes to achieve (Cook, D., 2017).

Aside from this, self-efficacy theory supports a democratic ideal that says everyone is competent to be successful as long as they have the necessary changes and self-efficacy to achieve their goals. This theory is clear about how people and groups can be given a sense of autonomy to help them reach their goals. This is important because self-efficacy theory does not assume that already successful people are better than those who are not. Self-efficacy theory suggests that people currently having trouble may not have had the chance to gain successful experiences or models needed to build high levels of self-efficacy. According to self-efficacy (Gallagher, M.W., 2012), it is the responsibility of the state and society at large to ensure that all population members have enough opportunities to participate in mastery experiences, receive positive social persuasion, and encounter positively reinforcing models.

Moreover, this theory helps predict relationships between antecedents to employees' remote work self-efficacy assessments and their behavioral and attitudinal consequences (Staples et al., 2006). The self-efficacy ratings of remote workers are a significant factor in determining whether or not they are successful in their remote work, how productive they are seen to be, how satisfied they are with their jobs, and how well they can manage. Furthermore, strong relationships were observed between employees' remote work self-efficacy judgments and several antecedents, including remote work experience and training, best practices modeling by management, computer anxiety, and IT capabilities. Because many of these antecedents can be controlled managerially, these findings suggest essential ways a remote employee's work performance can be enhanced through the intermediary effect of improved remote work self-efficacy.

Across the nation, 23 countries participated in the 2012 Survey of Adults Skills (PIAAC). The survey reveals that the average number of employed students is 39% across these countries. Headed by the Netherlands with 60% and Australia with 59%, these countries have many working students. Among the 23 countries, Italy is ranked the lowest with 15%, and Czech Republic with 18%. This helps with the transition between work and school. Countries also differ in the criteria that they hire these students.

Student employment is becoming a significant problem in modern interdisciplinary studies in labor economics and the sociology of education. Researchers claim that the number of students combining work and study is increasing globally, and students tend to work longer hours. Researchers have analyzed the factors determining a student's motivation for combining work and study. First, students combine work and study to pay for their education. Education costs increase with a better understanding of its value by different social groups, and students from low-income families are becoming more involved in higher education. This motivation is significant in the US, where elite higher education still needs to be made available for most households, and lower-quality education is available. However, students from low-income families are obliged to work to pay for this education (Roshchin, 2015).

Nowadays, students are no longer ordinary students who only study. Students have been rated as humans who have begun to enter the adult world, where responsibility, independence, and creativity have been assessed as being able to be borne so that many students begin to realize the free time to work (Santoso, P. B. et al., 2020). Students decide to work because sometimes they have demands to meet their needs greater than their income. Some cases that occur are economically disadvantaged students. These overseas students do not get an allowance from their parents, and some students do not have parents and family.

On the other hand, a student has needs that must be met, such as buying books, eating daily, paying boarding/rent money, paying water and electricity bills, buying credit for communication costs, the cost of doing assignments, and so forth. When these many needs are matched by insufficient income, students are inevitably forced to find funding sources independently, namely by working. Apart from being forced, some students work with the intention of gaining experience.

Moreover, working while going to college is done for various reasons, including financial assistance, personal growth, and intrinsic desire. Moreover, it demonstrates that successful problem-solving methods include time management and introspection (Accion, 2019). Also, many students in European higher education have taken to working part-time jobs to supplement their income while they study, as reported by Eurostudent. However, there are notable variances across the nations included in Eurostudent. Financial considerations are the primary motivator for taking on a waged job. Gaining job experience, however, ranks as the second most crucial factor in most Eurostudent nations. Students' future employability and competitiveness in the job market may benefit from gaining work experience, which may allow them to develop study-related and transversal abilities, especially if the work is relevant to the student's subject of study.

On top of that, the ultimate reason that leads students to work is to earn money to support their families and keep themselves in school. "Debt reduction is also a common reason for working, suggesting that students are indeed concerned about the level of

debt they are incurring." According to the Guardian, most students work at least part-time because of money concerns, with 58% wanting to spend the money on socializing and 55% on food and household bills. A sensible 38% say they do it for their future to avoid debt. Through their occupations, students can learn transferable skills such as communication and teamwork and improve time management skills, all equally important when entering the labor market. Primarily, students believe that part-time jobs allow them to broaden their social and personal skills, the critical soft skills we should obtain (Chantrea B. et al., 2017).

Part-time employment has positive and negative effects on students juggling schoolwork and work, as shown by research by Curambao et al. (2015). It is advantageous since it increases their chances of making money. In the classroom, it may help kids succeed. As they look for work, students may use their abilities that are now in higher demand. Consequently, businesses trying to get students to join the workforce are refining their offerings in the hopes of one day offering a secure position to a deserving and ambitious candidate. In addition, Kwadzo, M. (2014) found that international students studying and working in the United States profited in several ways from the duties that emerged from their dual status as students and workers. College graduates with work experience may use what they have learned in their previous positions. They may be self-assured, adaptable, need minimal supervision, and do quality work.

Meanwhile, the Philippines' Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) sector has become known as the "sunshine industry" due to favorable factors like the country's low wage rates, large English-speaking workforce, and high computer literacy rate. Business process outsourcing has been a popular industry in the Philippines for several years since it is one of the country's most rapidly developing and dynamic new industries. Call centers are responsible for most of this sum, with around 51.3% of agents having a bachelor's degree (some having dropped out and others still enrolled full-time).

Furthermore, the motivating variables influencing graduating students' willingness to work in a BPO organization reveal that academic track is mostly regarded while making a career decision. Their natural abilities heavily influence the respondents' chosen profession. To a lesser extent, respondents believe that their desired occupation is affected by the prevalence of that occupation in their family. Employee compensation and perks are essential to the responders. The data also suggests that respondents agree, to a lesser extent, with the statement that their friends' career choices affect their own (Pobre, R., 2019).

According to Castro A. M. et al. (2013), the significant factors affecting call centers' job preference are civil status, salary, work hours, work environment, educational attainment, job prospects, and geographical location. On the other hand, variables also considered in the study that were found to be insignificant are age, the parent's work status, household income, peer influence, and in-demand jobs. Working in a call center is a dead-end or low-end job in the perception of other people. Nevertheless, to think about it, the call center sector gives an advantage to the economy. It continues to offer more employment opportunities, which can help to lower the unemployment rate. For this reason, the call center industry also helps to contribute revenue to the country's GDP. It is an important aspect that the government can specialize in to make the economy continue to boom.

Furthermore, research has revealed a few critical factors that lead to Employee Engagement (Solomon et al., 2017). Some of them that are recognized are BPO sectors with great levels of engagement that offer employees opportunities to improve their abilities, acquire innovative skills, obtain new knowledge, and recognize their potential. When a BPO company invests in its workers and helps them achieve their professional goals, the employees, in turn, become invested in the company. Interesting to note by Sarmago, E. (2016) that the majority of the respondents are willing to work for call centers for various reasons, such as call centers as promising jobs, if there are no available jobs related to the course, their ability to do the job well, for self-improvement, for experience sake, call centers as something new, to try and as a last resort.

However, Challa, M. (2014) reported that many young BPO employees had lost control of their lives and turned to drugs, criminality, unrestrained promiscuity, and eventually, severe despair and suicidal inclinations. The peculiar nature of the BPO sector is mainly responsible for the widespread extent of the problem. The business process outsourcing industry conditions are distinct from the typical factory setting. Employees are only allowed in the designated areas for working and taking breaks. During working hours, managers are reminded to take their allotted breaks on time and monitor their progress regularly. There is much pressure on workers because of this monitoring of their performance. Night work, which necessitates shifting one's biological clock and social behaviors to accommodate a new schedule, is emerging as a critical contributor to health and social issues (Sudhashree, V. P., Rohith, K., & Shrinivas, 2005). Under the computerized labor monitoring and the rigidly bureaucratized work regime, employees' emotional fatigue compounds their physical and mental strain, raising the risk of stress and burnout.

Also, according to Bowling, N. A., & Kirkendall, C. (2012), excessive workload is a highly salient problem for many workers. However, DiStaso, M. J., & Shoss M. K. (2020) discussed the conservation of resources theory, that anticipating workload can be a future opportunity to recover from the current workload and would moderate the situation. Even so, more and more people are getting jobs in the BPO industry. The business has grown by a total of 46%. Young workers have never run an entire industry almost on

their own. A generation of young white-collar workers has never worked only at night, often away from their small-town families. No industry has ever pulled so many young people into a world of make-believe, glamor, and relative wealth as BPO has. The job is only about making money. The young workers' educational success and prospects are a million-dollar question. Most of the time, new grads were hired with higher rates for a degree than in any other business not in a professional field. As the number of people leaving increased, undergrads were also brought in. This caused a quick change from being a student to having a job and more money to spend. Even though BPOs could attract many young people with their high pay and high-tech work environments, they could not keep them because of physical tiredness, psychological unhappiness, and fear of an uncertain future. Moreover, according to Garfinkle, J. (2023), there are several ways to manage workload and reduce stress. Prioritizing the most important task, writing down a to-do list to schedule your day and your priorities, saying "no" to unnecessary tasks, not being afraid to negotiate when given extra tasks, delegating tasks, setting boundaries, taking advantage of time management, being resourceful, brainstorming with the others, and asking for help.

Equally noteworthy is the finding that according to Arguedas, M., Daradoumis, A., & Xhafa, F. (2016), students' learning performance increases with motivation, engagement, and self-regulation when they are aware of their emotions and are directed by particular teaching strategies. Patience is crucial for customer service professionals. Patience is a coping strategy that involves rational thinking, self-acceptance, self-control, and effort. This study found that patience relates positively to work engagement (Endro et al., 2020). This affirms the study by R. Comer, D., & E. Sekerka, L. (2014), which argues that patience plays a vital role in organizations and that individuals can use emotional self-regulation to enhance their patience.

Aside from this, young people employed in the BPO industry are attaining their professional milestones and financial objectives considerably sooner than in the past. However, since they have high wages that are disposable at a young age, they are more likely to engage in risky behaviors such as drinking and smoking. Smoking was considered by many to be a quick-fix solution to their stress problems. It has been observed that 63% of employees had multiple addictions (smoking, chewing tobacco, alcohol, and other forms). As much as 56% of the "more than one pack-a-day" smokers and 61% of the "more than one peg-a-day" drinkers worked in call centers. Poor eating habits like skipping meals, overeating, and excessive drinking of coffee and other beverages were also reported. Drug use and risky sexual behavior were also apparent among them. It has also been reported that 42% of employees resorted to adopting 'new lifestyle patterns' like late-night partying, smoking, boozing, drug addiction, and staying away from family or live-in relationships. Many employees felt socially alienated, wholly cut off from their family and friends circuit owing to nocturnal labor. Some also complained of having little time to spend with their family members even though they were physically present at home during the daytime. BPO employees had higher rates of stress, depression, and anxiety than their non-BPO counterparts. Stress was also found to be relatively high (66%). Researchers from call centers in other major cities have observed even higher stress levels, at over 65%. The prevalence of anxiety was also greater among this group (45%) (Raja, J. D., & Bhasin, S. K., 2014).

Along with the previous studies, student employment has become widespread across many European countries, eliciting the question of how working while studying affects student retention. Previous research by Lessky F. & Unger M. (2022) agrees by arguing that firstly, students who work long hours are more likely to leave university early. Apart from this, most international students work while studying, but quantitative data regarding potential work–study conflicts are scarce. Data from an online survey were analyzed with multivariate statistical methods to clarify the risk factors associated with perceived work–study conflicts in an Australian university. More than 66% of students felt that working demands interfered with their studies. Negative impacts included tiredness and timetable clashes. As many universities seek to increase their international student enrollments, these are important factors for student retention (Yahya T. et al., 2019).

In the same way, one of the problems with working while going to school is that students have to give up time for their studies. Students with jobs only have a little time to study their lessons. This affects classes that require a lot of reading and writing. They could always get to class late. This could cause the student to do badly in school and get low grades (Curambao et al., 2015). Mismanagement affects how well students do in school. Time management is a big part of changing how well learners do and what they achieve. This study aimed to use structural equation modeling to find a link between how well students in online learning schools handle their time and how well they do in school. Both factors are related, and how well students use their time dramatically affects their learning (Saghir, A., 2019).

In addition, Di Paolo A. & Matano A. (2016) found that working while pursuing a degree lengthens the time it takes to graduate and has a modest negative influence on academic performance, except full-time employment linked to the subject of study, which had a favorable impact on high academic accomplishment. Students who have gained work experience in positions relevant to their study area are more likely to be employed four years after graduation. The result for people who have worked in an area unrelated to their studies is conditional on the effort put out. Furthermore, working while studying raises the chance of obtaining permanent employment, particularly in the case of full-time occupations relevant to the degree. Early career job qualification

matches benefit primarily when the job is related to education. Also, Sanchez-Gelabert et al. (2017) say that working and going to school simultaneously affects grades but helps people get jobs, especially if the work done while in school is connected to their studies.

Kocsis, Z., & Pusztai, G. (2020) also showed that financial reasons dominate during student employment, which makes them fall into a vicious circle. The data show that working while going to school or instead of going to school is a significant reason why people drop out. Also, Bocsi V. et al. (2019) found that delayed graduation and dropping out are caused by a poorly chosen institution and course, working while studying intensively at a higher education institution, playing a competitive sport, and having friends who are not fond of learning. Furthermore, according to student perceptions, term-time work contributes to their employability. However, this study has also identified factors that might increase dropout rates.

Furthermore, studies have shown that traditional colleges and universities cannot adapt to changing societal needs (Pusztai et al., Z., 2019). Students who work full-time while still enrolled in school are less likely to graduate than those who work shorter amounts of time or who do not work at all. Long part-time jobs (more than 20 hours per week) seem too much for students since they raise the chance of dropping out as much as full-time jobs (Hovdhaugen, E. 2015). Students who worked 20 or more hours per week in addition to a full-time study reported feeling overwhelmed by their responsibilities, and their grades suffered as a result (Salamonson Y. et al., 2018).

Subsequently, recent large-scale research in the UK suggests a negative relationship between hours worked and academic achievement. More research is needed on how the number of working hours affects student learning in groups and whether students in groups with varying work patterns report different learning outcomes compared to groups with similar work patterns. This study reports that, overall, greater working hours decrease students' perceptions of the value and their experience of group work and that this occurs more with 2nd and 3rd year than 1st-year students. It also reveals that students studying in groups with a large proportion of members working more than two days a week displayed significantly more negative appraisals of their experience at the end of a project than their peers in groups where few students were working (Ward et al.; S., 2008).

In addition, STW (School-to-work) students were less likely to have a grade point average >2.0, more likely to have three or more unexcused absences, and more likely to spend <1 hour in school-sponsored activities. Holding multiple jobs also negatively affects a student's academic performance. School-to-work students reported poorer academic performance and more unhealthy school-related behaviors than nonworking and other students. Whereas many factors have a role in why students perform poorly in school, more research on students enrolled in STW programs is needed to understand whether participating harms students' academic achievement (Welsh et al., 2014).

In addition, the combination of working and attending school impacted the student's academic achievement. Most often, the consequence was a need for more engagement in class activities. On the other hand, people might connect the abilities they use in their jobs and certain educational activities. Similarly, the students become adept at balancing their working and studying time. In conclusion, the family is the most frequent aspect that affects them, and how it acts as an incentive to work and study hard is also the most common way it influences them. Additionally, academic performance has the potential to be an efficient means of obtaining good marks in return for the laborious effort. The findings have provided a list of potential measures that may be used to remedy the predicament and protect against the detrimental impacts of working while simultaneously pursuing academic pursuits. According to Acaso M. et al. (2019), the best way to encourage children to concentrate on their jobs and studies is for both parents and professors to collaborate.

Working students' mental and physical demands often lead to exhaustion, sleep deprivation, role conflicts, homesickness, and dissatisfaction. A student's physical, mental, and social health might all suffer if they balance work and school. Consequences in other areas of a working student's life are likewise concerning. Sleep deprivation is a serious issue for students who work graveyard or other late-night jobs, such as those in call centers. Contrary to popular belief, these students were able to successfully counteract the negative impacts of studying and working simultaneously by using a wide variety of coping strategies, such as seeking out social support and engaging in a variety of leisure and non-leisure activities. Furthermore, a Penn State study on the relationship between work and academic performance reveals that one of the drawbacks of being a student while holding a job is that they commonly find themselves short on time and struggle to find the time to study, sleep, and maintain healthy eating habits. Those who work full-time are also less likely to devote time to their education.

The present study has highlighted some redeeming features associated with sleep patterns, depression, anxiety, and lifestyle noted in BPO workers (Suri C. et al., 2007). Most call center workers work at times when they would typically be sleeping. Particular working conditions and organization of working time may cause significant sleep disturbances that have been proposed to predict cognitive decline (Leso V. et al., 2021). Most people who work night shifts do not get enough sleep during the day. Thus, they

could end up severely sleep-deprived. In addition, Chua C. et al. (2017) found that sleep deprivation negatively affects task switching and switching across activities. Potentially applicable to jobs where multitasking, long hours, and sleep deprivation are all present, these results might also impact other fields. The Australian Sleep Foundation discovered that in three months, one in six individuals admitted to making mistakes at work due to drowsiness or sleep issues. Recent studies have shown a link between better sleep and mental and physical health, so it makes sense to take action if you are having trouble sleeping. Javier (2020) adds that it is essential to avoid guilt while choosing to relax. Taking time away from work might be beneficial for your health and academics.

A call center's employees must maintain a pleasant demeanor and avoid displaying negative emotions such as impatience, resentment, and rage while interacting with consumers. This emotional repression can profoundly affect a person psychologically if not given a healthy expressive outlet. Hiding the call handlers' true feelings would have negative consequences, such as depression and anxiety. Call-time pressure, dealing with hostile customers, reading prescription conversations on the phone endlessly, system monitoring of call activities, and difficulty in providing good customer service while simultaneously meeting time targets were found to be significant sources of job stress, more vividly, characterizing the work as "repetitive brain strain."

According to The InCAP Desk (2022), "Me time" is when you can do what you want. As a result, our overworked minds can relax a little. Managing our stress in this way improves our quality of life in many ways, including sleep, mood regulation, emotional stability, tolerance for frustration, and presence of mind. High-quality me-time not only improves your psychological well-being, but it can also make you a more engaged employee, scientists have found. Overall, the study shows that if people recharge their batteries and enjoy their leisure time, it positively affects their mental health, family ties, and jobs, considering they are likelier to do great work.

Research from Michigan State University also highlights the significance of breaks. If you do not allow yourself to relax and recharge, you are more likely to burn out and experience stress. Taking a break from work allows workers to return with renewed vigor and enthusiasm, increasing their output once they return to it. Taking breaks may enhance workers' mental health and well-being since they provide a brief respite from work demands. These elements help make one happier in their work.

Furthermore, Tippett, J. (2021) shared that the most common things people in call centers do with breaks between calls include browsing the internet, catching up on social media, completing crosswords, messaging other agents, playing video games, and many more. Recent research has shown that taking regular breaks is an effective way to manage stress, keep productivity high, and shorten the time needed to recharge at the end of the workday. In addition, Franklin, L. (2022), who emphasized the value of stepping away from the office throughout the day, said that doing so boosts productivity and reduces fatigue.

Also, call center workers have the right to breaks, which they should take to be more productive. A break or time off helps agents stay awake and interested so they can return to work with a clear head. It can also help workers remember information, make quick choices, work more efficiently, and, in the long run, be more engaged with their jobs. Jordan (2022) also said that taking small breaks during the day is vital for productivity, focus, and health, especially after working several hours. This 30-minute to 1-hour break allows workers to refuel and reset to face the second part of the day with more energy. Also, working in a BPO has changed how many friends young BPO workers have and how much they talk to their friends. When workers take lunch breaks, they get a lot of perks that are good for them and the business as a whole. Breaks also help people relax, keep them from getting burned out, and make their workplaces happy and healthy. Regular lunch breaks can make you happier, healthier, and more creative. They can also help you do a better job at work.

Bridges, F. (2018) states that habits make us who we are as people and professionals. We are the sum of the things we do every day and every day. We decide whether to get better, stay fabulous, or add to our dissatisfaction. Taking things personally and stressing all the time are bad habits that are easy to defend at the moment but hurtful in the long run. If you do not take things personally, you and your workplace will be less stressed. Worrying also does not solve problems and is a waste of time. Also, Mark Manson's 2016 book, "The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F\*ck," says that "not giving a f\*ck" does not mean being apathetic; it means being okay with being different. Most people think of "not giving a f\*ck" as a kind of perfect, cool indifference to everything, a calm that can withstand any storm. Students who got jobs in the BPO business said that one of the most important things it taught them was having the right attitude. This means you are willing to stand up to the pressure you feel in these scenarios. If we look at things this way, we can be open and let ourselves fail so we can learn something new.

Furthermore, Schwartz, T., & McCarthy, C. (2023) claim that most of us react to increased expectations on the job by putting in longer hours, which eventually takes a toll on us physically, intellectually, and emotionally. The result is a decrease in productivity, an increase in absenteeism, a rise in healthcare expenditures, and a decrease in employee engagement. The best way for businesses to reinvigorate their staff is to stop focusing on "getting more out of people" and start investing in them so that workers feel

appreciated and inspired to give their all at work every day. To refuel, people must first become aware of the expenses associated with energy-draining activities and assume responsibility for changing these routines, independent of external factors.

In addition to that, our mindsets are the implicit beliefs we have about ourselves and others, and these beliefs ultimately determine our actions. We differentiate between extrinsic and intrinsic motivation, highlighting the latter's importance in fostering student engagement and resiliency (Brooks R. et al., 2012). Kang, D. (2022) also finds that workers' positive perceptions of workability and life satisfaction contributed affirmatively to their re-employment. These results suggest the importance of workers' mental recovery and the need to innovate rehabilitation services for their employment. Positive thinking and self-rehabilitation could be critical for workers, parallel with social welfare policies.

Not only Kang but also Orkibi, H.& Brandta, Y. (2015) said that high self-esteem, which refers to how people regard and accept themselves, has been associated with more effective coping approaches and persistence when facing problems and difficulties and having a greater sense of control over life events. Life satisfaction, which refers to an overall evaluation of one's life as satisfying, has been associated with positive coping strategies, internal locus of control, and better mental and physical health. Likewise, optimism, which refers to individuals' general expectations to experience more good than bad things in their future, has been associated with desirable outcomes and health through active and effective coping in the face of hardships. This indicates that a positive outlook acts as an adaptable personal resource that may aid workers in juggling their professional and personal lives and ultimately increase their sense of contentment in their jobs. Finally, employees' mental health and well-being are crucial factors in an organization's performance and success. The results of our quantitative study indicated that workplace well-being and happiness correlated with inner psychological resources, hope, and optimism in particular. The study concludes that the future focus on employee well-being must consider positive contributing factors and adopt a positive approach to promoting well-being (Kun et al., 2022).

The cited articles are connected to the present study as they show how working while studying affects students' performance in school. There are more negative impacts than positive ones when a student juggles work and study.

### **3. Objective of the Study**

This study sought to understand the lived experiences of BPO on-site employed students at the University of Cebu-Main Campus during the Academic Year 2022-2023. It focused on exploring the reasons behind their employment in the BPO sector, their day-to-day experiences as BPO on-site employed students, their challenges, and the strategies they used to cope with these challenges.

### **4. Methodology**

This chapter presented the description of the research methods, the study's respondents, the instruments used, and the procedures and sources of data utilized in analyzing the data gathered.

#### **4.1 Research Design**

This study used a qualitative phenomenological research design. This type of research design aims to understand a phenomenon's universal nature by exploring the views of those who have experienced it. This design will discover the lived experiences of the BPO on-site employed students.

#### **4.2 Research Environment**

The study was carried out at the University of Cebu—Main Campus. With forty (42) years of quality education, the University of Cebu (UC) has been awarded a Deregulated status by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) while recognized by the Philippine Association of Colleges and Universities Commission on Accreditation (PACUCOA) as a learning institution with the most accredited programs. This university commits itself to serve as an active catalyst in providing efficient delivery of educational services; pursue excellence in instruction, research, and community services towards social and economic development as well as environmental sustainability; acquire, disseminate, and utilize appropriate technology to enhance the university's educational services; and foster an organizational culture that nurtures employee productivity and engagement. The rationale behind this choice is the sense that a school campus is a place that is designed to provide learning spaces and learning environments for the teaching of students under the direction of teachers, but also a home for students who juggle both work and school, especially in these trying times. Hence, there is a possibility of obtaining all necessary and relevant data from this choice of research environment.

#### **4.3 Research Participants**

The participants of this study were BPO-employed students until data saturation was obtained from any college courses at the University of Cebu—Main Campus. In selecting the participants, this study utilized purposive sampling. This type of sampling helps

the researchers select the best participants who can provide in-depth and detailed information about the phenomenon under investigation.

#### **4.4 Research Instruments**

A semi-structured interview questionnaire with open-ended questions was the main instrument used in gathering data. This is a type of interview in which the interviewer asks only a few predefined questions, while the rest of the questions are not planned and arise spontaneously in a free-flowing conversation. In formulating the questionnaire, the researchers used straightforward language to enable the respondents to adequately understand and answer the question. The validity of the instruments was tested and presented to the research professor or the subject adviser for content validation. The panel of experts was consulted to revise the research to improve the studies.

#### **4.5 Research Procedures**

This section provided an overview of the study's data collection and analysis processes. It discussed the methods employed for gathering data and highlighted the key aspects of the analysis.

##### **4.5.1 Data Collection**

The researchers sent a letter and sought authorization from the faculty of the College of Liberal Arts to carry out the study. The letter was addressed to the Dean, Dr. Gloria Cuevas. Upon approval, the researchers conducted the research study. The researchers started by selecting their participants and introducing them to the goals of the research study. Moreover, the researcher acquired consent from the participants; the researchers interviewed the 16 participants using a semi-structured questionnaire with open-ended questions. The researchers may also add follow-up questions to understand the participants well. After the interview, the researchers thanked and guaranteed the participants that the information collected would only be applied to the research study.

##### **4.5.2 Data Analysis**

After collating the data, the researchers used the Thematic Analysis. Thematic Analysis is finding themes or patterns within qualitative data (Clarke & Braun, 2006). The researchers transcribed the audio recordings obtained during participant interviews. The researchers acquainted themselves with the data and used it to identify the patterns. The researchers then created codes with supporting data and grouped them into themes. The researchers also evaluated and revised the data as they saw fit for their research study to guarantee that the results were fully understood.

### **5. Results and Discussion**

This chapter summarizes the findings gathered from participants' interviews and questionnaires, as well as data analysis using thematic analysis by Clarke Braun (2006) to gain an in-depth understanding of the study.

#### **5.1 Presentation and Analysis of Data**

This qualitative study relied on a comprehensive understanding of the transcribed responses. For every main participant's transcribed response, comprehensively reading the transcripts to identify the overall sense of its content coverage. The significant statement was obtained, recorded, and encoded using Google Docs and Microsoft Word from the transcripts of the interviews and questionnaires. The significant statements were properly encoded with the designed number of responses and participant numbers for efficient tracing. There were 192 significant statements that represented college students' simultaneous, lived experiences as both a student and an employee working on-site in the BPO industry.

The researcher formulated meanings for the 192 significant statements extracted from the transcripts. There were 192 coded formulated meanings that clearly explained the participant's experiences.

The formulated core meanings that shared the same patterns of ideas and structure were grouped. These common groups of formulated meanings were categorized as cluster themes.

There were 20 cluster themes developed. The cluster themes were then improved and re-grouped into sub-themes, merging two or more cluster themes. The merging of cluster themes resulted in 15 sub-themes. Finally, the 15 sub-themes were clustered to form the major themes known as emergent themes. Fourteen (14) emergent themes represented the major themes that provide meaning to the study's four (4) sub-problems.

After a generation with the thorough and time-consuming formation of core meaning using the narrative analysis by Bamberg (2012), twenty (20) cluster themes were generated and reorganized into fifteen (15) sub-themes, which were further separated into

fourteen (14) major themes known as emergent themes. The emergent themes were categorized into four (4) main points that provide meaning to the study's sub-problems. The following are the overall themes with emergent themes:

**I. Participants' Reasons for Working While Studying in the BPO Industry**

1. Good Work Compensation
2. Competence
3. Interpersonal Skills
4. Provider

**II. Lived Experiences as a BPO On-site Employed Student**

1. On Physiological Needs
2. Overwhelming Workload
3. Patience
4. Night Life

**III. Challenges Met by the Participants**

1. Time Management
2. Sleep Deprivation
3. Irrate Customers

**IV. Coping Mechanisms of the Participants on the Challenges Met**

1. Me Time
2. Not Giving Care
3. Positivity

The themes were created to describe the study's answers to the questions. Each of the four (4) main themes with different emergent themes is discussed here:

**5.1.1 Participants' Reasons for Working While Studying in the BPO Industry**

The themes constructed with main themes provided descriptions of the various reasons of participants and their experiences with having the role of student-employee in the BPO industry. The descriptions also determined the participants' difficulties in dealing with being an employed student and the significance of the strategies to overcome the stresses and pressures in work and school.

The following are the four (4) themes developed to describe the responses of the study's key participants to the sub-problem number 1:

**5.1.1.1 Good Work Compensation**

This theme details the participants' reasons for working in the BPO industry while studying. Participants 1 & 15 were asked about their reason for studying and at the same time working in the BPO industry, and they answered:

Participant 1 said:

I am thinking of ways to have somehow a higher paying job, that's why I decided to follow one of my friends to be a call center agent, and now I am a call center agent in one of the biggest BPO Companies here in the Philippines.

Participant 15 added:

I thought it was easy, but dili day and then offer man sad silage high salary. (*I thought it was easy, but it is not, and they offer a high salary.*)

This theme agrees with Clayton Alderfer's ERG theory (1969), which says that all humans are motivated by the needs of existence, which really relates to physical and psychological survival. Results of the study about the motivational factors that influence the desire of graduating students to work in a BPO company show that salaries and benefits provided to employees are vital for the respondents (Pobre, R., 2019). In addition, Castro, A. M. et al. (2013) said that never before has any industry pulled so many youngsters into a world of make-believe, glamour, and relative affluence as BPO has. The job's primary draw is the substantial salary it offers. It is a question worth a million dollars as to how far the young workers have progressed in their studies and what their future holds. The majority of the time, recent college graduates were lured with earnings that were, in comparison to those offered in any other field for a degree that was not professional. Everybody needs money, but some of us are more in need of

additional funds than others. Finding a job that allows you to save some money and pay your bills at the end of the month is crucial because of rising rent prices or student loan debt. As per participants, employed students need to know that the job offers high work compensation, inspiring them to show up for work. Their levels of job satisfaction rise, and their morale stays strong. Employees with high morale are more likely to be driven to show up for work each day and do their best work.

#### **5.1.1.2 Competence**

This theme describes the participants' reasons for being a BPO on-site employed student, their motivations to continue studying and working, and their significant experiences while working in the BPO industry.

The participants were asked about their reasons and motivations for being an employed student, and they answered: Participant 6 said:

So, hmm, my reasons why I preferred BPO on-site is because when you are on-site, you can have more knowledge, you can gain more skills like watching your co-workmates, like you can ask what's the problem, and you can have fun. On-site, I don't feel like working at home while studying. *(My reasons why I preferred BPO on-site is because when you are on-site, you can have more knowledge, you can gain more skills like watching your co-workmates, like you can ask what the problem is, and you can have fun.)*

Participant 13 added

For me, it's important for me because it enhanced my communication skills, especially in English speaking and handling customers bc. Umm, in my experience, I am a customer service representative and I learned how to communicate with people. I learn how to umm help to assist well um, just like which is relate ra sad sakong course nga gi kuha Karon which is psychology umm make nako ma assist nako ang usa ka person on how ka nang Kuan if in term of counseling like that. *(It enhanced my communication skills, especially in speaking in English, and it enhanced my social skills in handling customers, which is a big help to my course as a psychology.)*

This is supported by the ERG Theory of Clayton Alderfer (1969), which says that all humans are motivated by the need for Growth, which relates to self-development, fulfillment, and the sense of achieving your potential, and is also supported by the Goal-Setting Theory of Edwin Locke (1960) which states that the willingness to work towards the attainment of a goal is the main source of job motivation. The Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) industry of the Philippines has been evolving as the "sunshine industry" for significant reasons such as cheaper labor costs, high English proficiency, and good computer literacy, which are some of the main reasons why BPO providers choose to outsource in the country. Furthermore, research has revealed a few critical factors that lead to Employee Engagement (Solomon, V. & Renuka D., 2017). Some of them recognized are BPO sectors with great levels of engagement that offer employees opportunities to improve their abilities, acquire innovative skills, obtain new knowledge, and recognize their potential. In addition, most Eurostudent nations see the accumulation of work experience as the second most compelling reason to get employed. Work experience may be advantageous for students' future careers and their competitiveness in the labor market since it can allow them to develop study-related and transversal skills, particularly if the jobs they hold are connected to the area of study in which they are enrolled. This is especially true if the jobs they hold are relevant to the field in which they are enrolled. Employed students share various reasons that they see this job in the BPO industry as a place for growth in enhancing skills, gaining knowledge, and creating valuable experiences. They also acquired valuable skills that they can use in the future or as a stepping stone towards their dreams, such as communication & listening skills, to resolve complicated problems best.

#### **5.1.1.3 Interpersonal Skills**

This theme further narrates the participants' reasons for being a BPO on-site employed student and their colleagues' practices that influenced them. Participants were asked what practices of their colleagues influenced them, and they answered:

Participant 5 said:

It's kind of happy and exciting when you work on-site because you get the chance to bond with your co-workers, and it somehow relieves stress. *(It is delightful and exciting working on-site because you will have the chance to create bonds with your co-workers, which also helps relieve stress.)*

Participant 15 replied:

It helped me get out of my comfort zone and talk more with other people since BPO will bring out the best in you.

This is reinforced by the ERG Theory developed by Clayton Alderfer (1969), which states that all people are driven by the wants of Relatedness, which is the human urge to feel loved, linked to others, and meaningfully engaged with the greater social environment. Indeed, through their occupations, students can learn transferable skills. Students believe that part-time jobs broaden their social and personal skills, the important soft skills we should obtain (Chantrea B. et al., 2017). Usually, employed students go out with their friends to eat, find enjoyable things together to release their stress, and form bonds with each other. Students who work part-time in addition to their studies benefit in several ways: they get a break from their studies; they have the opportunity to meet new people who are distinct from the individuals they interact with in their university social circles; they have the chance to get fresh experiences; and they have a way to stave off boredom.

#### **5.1.1.4 Provider**

This theme further reveals the participants' motivations to continue studying and, at the same time, working. Participants were asked about their motivations to continue studying and working at once, and they replied:

Participant 15 responded:

The goals that I want to conquer. These goals are to help my family and myself. I want to be financially independent.

Participant 12 added:

Akung goals and dreams sa life, kay ganahan ko maka graduate and ganahan ko maka lampos sad akung manghud nga akoy maka gasto niya. *(My goals and dreams in life, because I want to graduate and I want to succeed for my younger sister so that I can support her financially in school).*

It is confirmed that financial support is one of the driving forces of working while studying at university. Moreover, the ultimate reason that leads students to work is to earn money to support their families and keep themselves in school. (Accion, 2019). Furthermore, the needs pointed out by Maslow, known as physiological and security-based needs, are covered under the Existence, Relatedness, and Growth (ERG) Theory of Clayton Alderfer (1969), which includes the needs of Existence, which seem to be basic survival needs. Although most students feel that having these jobs can distract them from their studies, working in this dire situation is now a necessity and not just a choice. According to Eurostudent, the majority of working students indicate that they work to cover their living costs. However, many argue that they would not be able to put the time and effort into their education if they did not have a job that brought them money. Few students have also reported working because of the necessity to support others financially. The truth is, it indeed can get overwhelming. Working while attending school is quite prevalent, with at least half of all students holding paid employment during their education. Students who choose to work are driven primarily by financial need. Moreover, employed students shared that working in a call center company is one of the easiest jobs to earn, especially in financing education, supporting their families, and becoming financially independent. Most importantly, they believe that being in this industry can help them kill boredom and create worthwhile bonds.

#### **5.1.2 Lived Experiences as a BPO On-site Employed Student**

This overall theme has four (4) emergent themes that describe the key participant's experiences of being a student employee in the BPO industry. The following themes are developed to describe the responses of the study's key participants to the sub-problem number 2:

##### **5.1.2.1 On Physiological Needs**

This theme shows the experiences of the participants while working and studying at once. Participants were asked what they could say about students working and studying simultaneously.

Participant 7 answered:

I think ang kanang makasayo or makaattend ka sa klase on time kay usahay dugay ang out then 7 am ang klase then traffic pa so imposible jd kaayo na dili ka malate and also imposible kaayo nga makafocus ka hundred percent sa klase kay during ana na time kay giduka najud ka. *(I think the difficulty to come or*

*join classes on time because of the work schedule and also it's impossible to focus fully in class because of sleepiness.)*

Participant 8 added:

Uhhh, the challenges that I encountered while I was, I mean, in my work at the call center is the schedule is very hectic, and my health is compromised because, hmm, I do the shift at night, and then the next morning, I will be a student, and it's very unhealthy for me because I cannot focus what needs to be focused. *(The challenges that I encountered while I was in my work at the call center were the schedule was very hectic and my health was compromised because I did the shift at night and then the next morning, I will be a student, and it was very unhealthy for me because I cannot focus what needs to be focused).*

This theme aligns with the study of Challa, M. (2014), wherein, although the high packages and sophisticated work environment in BPOs succeeded in attracting a large number of youngsters, they failed to sustain the pool for reasons that range from physiological fatigue, psychological dissatisfaction to fear of an illusive future. Workers under electronic monitoring and a highly bureaucratized work environment are more likely to experience burnout and stress as a result of the mental and emotional toll it takes on their lives. Some BPO employees living and working in the New Delhi area's contact centers were surveyed about their sleep habits, the frequency with which they experienced anxiety and despair, and the overall effect of their jobs on their personal lives. The sleep pattern of BPO workers was found to be markedly different from normal. They were sleepier. The present study has highlighted some of the redeeming features associated with sleep patterns, depression, anxiety, and lifestyle noted in BPO workers (Suri C. et al., 2007). Additionally, long hours of work, permanent night shifts, incredibly high work targets, and loss of identity are the dark clouds threatening to mar the 'sunshine' call center industry. The odd timings and nature of work root people to a chair 9 hr a day, reading pre-scripted conversations on the phone endlessly. Every single second of an employee's time is recorded, measured, and automatically logged onto a computer for praise or censure weekly. Walking down to the water cooler for a drink and a chat with a friend messes up performance metrics, salaries, and hikes. The three acts of listening, watching, and talking - all simultaneously - never get a break. This performance monitoring also puts enormous stress on the employees. Working at night requires adjusting the biological clock and social practices to a different time, which turns out to be a major cause of health-related and social problems (Sudhashree, V. P., Rohith, K., & Shrinivas, K., 2005).

### **5.1.2.2 Overwhelming Workload**

This theme narrates the practices of their colleagues that influenced the participants while working in the BPO industry. Participants were asked about their colleague's practices that influenced them while working in the BPO industry.

Participant 1 said:

Mmm, I think it is to value time. You ought to finish all your -- work so it won't pile up. *(Value your time. You must finish your workload on time so it will not pile up.)*

Participant 14 added:

Uhm, that they influenced me or their practices that influenced me is the organization of the plans that you will gonna do on this day or on the whole week.

As a result, it is indeed true, according to N. A. & Kirkendall, C. (2012), that excessive workload is a problem that is highly salient to many workers. The employees mentioned that an excessive workload was one reason for their stress, resulting in negative effects. On the contrary, DiStaso, M. J., & Shoss M. K. (2020) discussed the conservation of resources theory, that anticipating workload can be a future opportunity to recover from the current workload, and it would moderate the situation. Employed students have too much on their plate. The excessive workload stresses them, and managing everything is the only way for them to push through. According to Garfinkle, J. (2023), there are several ways to manage workload and reduce stress. Prioritizing the most important task, writing down a to-do list to schedule your day and your priorities, saying "no" to unnecessaries, not being afraid to negotiate when given extra tasks, delegating tasks, setting boundaries, taking advantage of time management, being resourceful, brainstorming with the others, and asking for help.

### **5.1.2.3 Patience**

This theme describes the participants' experiences while working in the BPO industry. Participants were asked about their experiences while working in the BPO industry.

Participant 11 replied:

The significant experiences that I have encountered while working in BPO are you need to be patience ahm, has good customer service, and also have active listening skills. *(The significant experiences that I have encountered while working in BPO are that you need to be patient and, have good customer service, and also have active listening skills).*

Participant 6 added:

So, while working in the BPO industry, one of the most important things I've learned is you need to more like collaborate or cooperate with your teammate, you need to listen carefully, you need to improve your patience, especially while dealing with customers.

Consequently, this theme affirms R. Comer, D. did the study, & E. Sekerka, L. (2014), which argues that patience plays an important role in organizations and that individuals can use emotional self-regulation to enhance their patience. Moreover, work engagement is a fulfilling and positive state of mind characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption. Patience is a coping strategy that involves rational thinking, self-acceptance, self-control, and effort. This study found that patience relates positively to work engagement (Endro Puspo Wiroko, 2020). Research has found that when it comes to call center experience, emotion plays a big role. Research has shown that being in a good mood may boost productivity, while being in a foul mood might raise the risk of mistakes and mishaps. Managing emotions at work is crucial for making good judgments since human beings are more prone to making choices based on their feelings than their rational faculties. According to Arguedas, M., Daradoumis, A., & Xhafa, F. (2016), students' learning performance increases in connection to their motivation, engagement, and self-regulation when they are aware of their emotions and are directed by particular teaching strategies. Patience is crucial for customer service professionals.

#### **5.1.2.4 Night Life**

This theme describes the practices of the participants' colleagues/workmates that influenced them and further describes the activities that participants engaged in during their break while working in the BPO industry. Participants were asked further about the practices of their colleagues that influenced them while working in the BPO industry.

Participant 7 responded:

Feel nako ang nightlife kay wa man sad jud kay choice jud kay mao ra mana imong life na naa sa call center, night raman di man ka makabuhay ug daylife hahaha kay natug man ka ana so yeah kana nightlife. *(I think the nightlife since it's the only thing that you can do in working as a call center agent because, during daytime, you're asleep.)*

Participant 6 added:

So my colleague's practice is like drinking in the middle of the break, eating and having some jokes, playing while on break, and yeah, that's it. *(My colleague's practices are like drinking in the middle of a break, eating and then have some jokes, playing while on break.)* Participants were also asked about the activities they do during their break time.

Participant 2 answered:

Kuan, social media, so mao na ang time nako mag social media, or mag use ug social media or matulog, mag nap. *(I use social media, sometimes I sleep.)*

Participant 6 also replied:

So yeah, while I am in my free time, I do playing scrolling on FB, but mostly, I will sleep so that I can have energy when I'm back to duty; sometimes, I eat, so that's it.

On the whole, this theme coincides with the findings done by the Philippine Daily Inquirer that two out of three workers in business process outsourcing (BPO) companies continue to live unhealthy lifestyles, with chain smoking and heavy drinking listed as the major vices among the more than 600,000 workers in the industry. While employment in the business process outsourcing (BPO) sector has meant that young adults are reaching their career milestones and financial goals much earlier than before, having high disposable incomes at a young age, they easily resort to smoking and drinking. As much as 56% of the "more than one pack-a-

day" smokers and 61% of the "more than one peg-a-day" drinkers worked in call centers. It's also been reported that 42% of employees resorted to adopting 'new lifestyle patterns' like late-night partying and many more (Raja, J. D., & Bhasin, S. K). Additionally, Tippet, J. (2021) shared that most common things people in call center do with breaks between calls include browsing the internet, catching up on social media, completing crosswords, messaging other agents, playing video games, and many more. Furthermore, working in a BPO appears to have influenced the extent of young BPO employees' peer networks and interaction with peers. A recent study by the University of the Philippines Population Institute (UPPI) also reported that call center agents earn more than most of their peers in other industries. Still, some may pay for it with abnormal sleeping habits, chronic drinking, illegal drug use, and risky sexual activities.

### **5.1.3 Challenges Met by the Participants**

This overall theme describes the study's sub-problem number 3, which is what challenges participants face as BPO on-site employed students and how it affects their lives as students. From the responses of the key participants, three (3) compelling themes were generated.

#### **5.1.3.1 Time Management**

This theme narrates the specific aspect of the participants' student life they struggled with the most due to being an employed student. During the one-on-one interview, the participants were asked what challenges they endure the most as a BPO on-site employed student, responded:

Participant 4:

Time management. It's really hard to find time to rest.

Participant 6:

So there are some aspects of my life na maglisod dog like how I manage my time when I go to school when I go to work like how I manage it properly. *(So there are some aspects of my life na maglisod kog like how I manage my time when I go to school when I go to work like how I manage it properly)*

Participant 11 added:

The aspect of the student life that I struggle the most ahh due to being a BPO on-site employed student is when I balance my priorities and time. *(The aspect of the student life that I struggle the most due to being a BPO on-site employed student is when I balance my priorities and time.)*

This study is supported by the Goal-Setting Theory by Edwin Locke (1960), which claims that goals signal and offer guidance to an employee about what needs to be done and how much work must be put in. This theory lends credence to this research. Working while going to school requires students to devote less time to their studies, which is one of the activities they should focus on. Employed students have far less time to devote to learning the material. Classes that demand significant reading and writing will be negatively impacted. They are prone to consistently getting to their lessons late. According to Curambao et al. (2015), this may lead to poor academic performance and bad grades. More than 66% of students felt that working demands interfered with their studies. Negative impacts included tiredness and timetable clashes (Lessky, F. & Unger, M., 2022). Every established objective must be timely, meaning it has a fixed date. Employed students working in the BPO industry are motivated by this to complete the task in a set amount of time. However, because of focusing on tasks at the same time, which we also refer to as multitasking, became the biggest obstacle to effective time management for students juggling both work and study. As per participants' responses, they describe the BPO industry as a tough job because of its unnatural routine where you work at night and sleep during the day.

#### **5.1.3.2 Sleep Deprivation**

This theme conveys the challenge/s that the participants endured the most as BPO on-site employed students. Participants were asked about the challenge/s that they endured the most, and they answered:

Participant 1 answered:

Lack of sleep, of course. Uhm, imagine, I spend 9 hours at work, ah that is already including 1-hour of lunch and around 2-3 hours for, uhm transportation time. And I also need to juggle my uhm work with studies and in studies, I cannot really uhm say how much time I spent because it's not the same all the time. But most likely, if there are hectic schedules, I spenduhm most of my time at school. So, there are

times that around 2 days or 3 days and 2 nights, I don't have sleep at all. Sometimes, I can get hallucinations, but it's okay. *(Lack of sleep. I spend 9 hours at work, including the 1-hour lunch, and around 2-3 hours for transportation time. I also need to juggle my work with studies, and in studies, I cannot say the exact time I spent because it's not the same all the time. But most likely, if there are hectic schedules, I spend most of my time at school. So, there are times that I cannot sleep for 2-3 days and 2 nights. Sometimes I get hallucinations, but it's okay.)*

Participant 9 responded:

Being sleepy because, ahh, most of the time ahh, we don't have any sleep, so ahh, most of my free time, I always sleep even at work or in school, so since I don't have enough time to sleep. *(Being sleepy because, most of the time, we don't have any sleep, so most of my free time I always sleep even at work or in school, since I don't have enough time to sleep.)*

This theme is supported by Challa, M. (2014) that most call center workers work when they normally sleep. Most workers with night duties are unable to sleep adequately during the daytime and, hence, may develop cumulative sleep debt, leading to significant sleep deprivation. Additionally, they experienced mental and physical strain, leading to symptoms such as fatigue, disturbed sleep patterns, role conflicts, and feelings of homesickness and dissatisfaction (Curambao, Lloyd, 2015). Particularly for individuals who work the graveyard shift or other late-night jobs (such as those in call centers), lack of sleep may be a serious issue for a full-time student. Furthermore, a Penn State study on the relationship between work and academic performance shows that one of the drawbacks of being a student while holding a job is that they often find themselves short on time and commonly find that they have limited time to study, sleep, and maintain healthy eating habits.

In addition, a study on the correlation between work and academic performance at Penn State reveals that one of the drawbacks of being a student who additionally has a job is that they often find themselves short on time. As a result, they typically have less time to study, sleep, and eat in a way that is good for them. Full-time workers also have less time for academic studies and school activities. Particular working conditions and/or organization of working time may cause important sleep disturbances that have been proposed to predict cognitive decline (Leso V. et al., 2021). According to Chua E. C. et al. (2017), the capacity to split attention across various things is hampered when an individual is deprived of sleep for an extended period of time. These results might have important repercussions for professions that involve multitasking over long work hours and exposure to sleep deprivation.

### **5.1.3.3 Irate Customers**

This theme further imparts the participants' biggest challenge/s in studying and working in the BPO industry simultaneously. Participants were asked about the biggest challenge/s they have while working and studying at the same time, and they responded:

Participant 4 answered:

It's very tiring and very draining because you have to use most of your energy, especially if you have or you have a voice account. There are times that the customers are very upset and they tend to blame us. They usually shout at us and say bad words that could hurt our feelings. *(It's very tiring and very draining because you have to use most of your energy, especially if you are on a voice account. There are times that the customers are very upset and they tend to blame us. They usually shout at us and say bad words that could hurt our feelings.)*

Participant 6 replied:

So, while I'm in the BPO industry, one of the most challenging parts is like dealing with an irate customer, so most of us nakaexperience like dealing some inappropriate or disrespectful customers na when it comes to family situations, your friends like there are customers na like hurtful kay manulti ba like you need to handle it more, you need to handle it carefully, you need to stronger, longer your patience. *(While I'm in the BPO industry, one of the most challenging parts is dealing with disrespectful people, which you need to handle more; you need to handle it carefully, you need to be stronger a longer patience.)*

This theme still corresponds to the study of Challa, M. (2014), which says call center employees are expected to express positive emotions and suppress negative emotions, like frustration, resentment, and anger, in their interactions with customers so as to create a desired state of mind in the customer. Call-time pressure, dealing with hostile customers, reading prescription conversations on the phone endlessly, system monitoring of call activities, and difficulty in providing good customer service while

simultaneously meeting time targets were found to be significant sources of job stress, more vividly, characterizing the work as "repetitive brain strain." Call-time pressure, dealing with hostile customers, reading prescription conversations on the phone endlessly, system monitoring of call activities, and difficulty in providing good customer service while simultaneously meeting time targets were found to be significant sources of job stress, more vividly, characterizing the work as "repetitive brain strain."

#### **5.1.4 Coping Mechanisms of the Participants on the Challenges Met**

This theme describes the study's sub-problem 4 on the coping mechanisms of the BPO on-site employed students to the challenges they have encountered for juggling work and study at the same time. Three (3) themes were developed.

##### **5.1.4.1 Me Time**

This theme describes how the participants deal with the stresses and pressures of juggling both work and study and the coping mechanisms they would recommend to those planning to work and study at once. Participants were asked how they were able to deal with the stresses and pressures, and they responded:

Participant 2 answered:

Kuan, ev- uhm every day off nako kay I always have time- or kanang mag allot gyud kog time for myself. I always have kanang "me-time" para mo recharge ko, para ready nasad sa- to face another week. *(Every day off, I always have my "me-time" to recharge myself for another week.)*

Participant 8 added:

Don't deal with or focus more on work; you should also enjoy yourself; you need to go out with yourself and be happy.

This theme is supported by The InCAP Desk (2022), which states that "Me time" is when you can do what you want to do. Unplugging and relaxing our active minds in this way is beneficial. Doing so alleviates tension, improves our sleep quality, gives us more control over our emotions, boosts our patience, and makes it easier for us to be present in the here and now. High-quality me-time not only improves your psychological well-being, but it can also make you a more engaged employee, scientists have found. The most important is having care for oneself. There is an underlying assumption that we must always be productive, which can ultimately take away from opportunities for self-care in a society where individuals are expected to work long hours and pass on vacation days, especially in the BPO industry. But if you take some time to care for yourself, you may release some of the pressures of daily life and reset your state of health so that your productivity is once more optimized. When we are under a lot of pressure, we tend to overlook the things that can help us feel better; thus, it is essential to create time in your schedule to take care of yourself.

##### **5.1.4.2 Not Giving Care**

This theme explores how participants manage the strains and tensions of balancing employment and study and the coping strategies they would suggest to people who intend to combine the two activities. Participants were asked about their coping mechanisms in juggling both work and study, and they responded:

Participant 1 replied:

Uhm, just thinking about myself and thinking about the positive things that will gonna happen uhm for my family. There are some instances that you will gonna have this libakera uhm your neighbors, who are uhm quite busy to uhm speaking ill intentions towards you, you have this colleague at work, at school, I don't really give that shit you know towards them. Since they didn't even contribute a penny to my own life, and there are things that you will gonna say to me like Keber, the fuck I care. Like, it's the reality that we are experiencing, and if I will gonna took it uhm deeply in my heart or I'll gonna think about it, I'll just feel depressed, anxious all the time, stress and uh for me, they don't- they don't have the worth for me to be depressed. I deal with stress by thinking about positive things, and at the same time, one of my past times- reading manga toon. *(I think about myself and be positive about the things that will going to happen to my family. There are neighbors, colleagues, and classmates who are quite busy speaking ill intentions towards you. I don't give that shit. Since they didn't even contribute a penny to my own life. This is the reality, and if I am going to take it deep in my heart or think about it, I'll just feel depressed, anxious, and stressed, and for me, they don't have worth for me to be depressed. I deal with stress by thinking about positive things, and at the same time, one of my past times- is reading manga-toon.)*

Participant 11 added:

I deal with the stresses and pressures of juggling both work and study by ahh unwinding, ahm keep calm, not minding stressful situations, and am looking for the brighter side.

This theme indeed goes with the book by Mark Manson entitled 'The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F\*ck (2016) says that not giving a f\*ck does not mean being indifferent; it means being comfortable with being different. When most people envision giving no f\*cks, they envision a perfect and serene indifference to everything, a calm that weathers all storms. Employed students said that one of the most important things the BPO industry has taught them is the right mindset. This means you are willing to challenge the pressure you feel in such situations. If we approach things from this mindset, we can be vulnerable and allow ourselves to learn new things when we fail. According to Schwartz, T., & McCarthy, C. (2023), most of us respond to rising demands in the workplace by putting in longer hours, which inevitably take a toll on us physically, mentally, and emotionally. That leads to declining engagement levels, increasing distraction levels, high turnover rates, and soaring medical costs among employees. To effectively reenergize their workforces, organizations need to shift their emphasis from getting more out of people to investing more in them so they are motivated and able to bring more of themselves to work every day. To recharge themselves, individuals need to recognize the costs of energy-depleting behaviors and then take responsibility for changing them, regardless of their circumstances.

#### **5.1.4.3 Positivity**

This theme outlines how the participants manage the strains and tensions of balancing job and study, as well as the coping techniques they would suggest to people who plan to work and study simultaneously. Participants were asked further about their coping strategies to be able to manage the pressures they experienced while working and studying simultaneously; they said:

Participant 4 responded:

I just take everything positively, and I surround myself with positive people.

Participant 10 added:

Yeah, I always looked up to the positive side with a silver lining that I am doing this for me and my future.

This theme is supported by the self-efficacy theory by Albert Bandura (1977, 1986, 1997), which states that an individual's belief in his or her capacity to execute behaviors is necessary to produce specific performance attainments. A person's amount of self-efficacy shows how strongly they believe they are in charge of their own drive, behavior, and the social setting they are in. This helps predict relationships between antecedents to employees' remote work self-efficacy assessments and their behavioral and attitudinal consequences (Staples et al., 2006). Research has found that when it comes to call center experience, emotion plays a big role. Researchers have shown a correlation between a pleasant mood and enhanced productivity, whereas a bad mood has been shown to increase the risk of making mistakes and having accidents. As we are more inclined to make judgments based on our emotions than on our rationale, we must manage our emotions while at work if we can make decisions that are in our best interests. Orkibi, H. & Brandta, Y. (2015) also shared that positivity, which refers to individuals' general expectations to experience more good than bad things in their future, has been associated with desirable outcomes and health through active and effective coping in the face of hardships. The future emphasis on employees' well-being must consider positive contributing elements and adopt a positive-oriented strategy for fostering well-being. (Kun, A. & Gadanecz, P., 2022). Moreover, positive thinking and self-rehabilitation could be critical for workers, parallel with social welfare policies (Kang, Dongsuk, 2022).

The themes that emerged from the participants' responses presented the solutions to the study's sub-problems. The responses were represented by four (4) main themes, each with four (4), two (2), three (3) and three (3) emergent or major themes.

## **6. Conclusion**

The study aimed to understand the experiences of BPO on-site employed students at the University of Cebu-Main Campus during the Academic Year 2022-2023. It specifically examined the reasons for working while studying, their day-to-day experiences, the challenges they faced, and their coping mechanisms.

The participants' responses yielded fourteen (14) emergent themes, organized into four (4) overarching themes related to the sub-problems. These themes were discerned through an analysis of key statements by the primary participants. In the context of working while studying, the overarching theme was "Reasons of Participants on Working While Studying," encompassing four (4)

emergent themes: (1) Good Work Compensation, (2) Competency, (3) Interpersonal Skill, and (4) Provider. When it came to the experiences of BPO on-site employed students, the overarching theme was "Lived Experiences as BPO On-site Employed Students," including four (4) emergent themes: (1) On Physiological Needs, (2) Overwhelming Workload, (3) Patience, and (4) Night Life. The challenges encountered by the participants fell under the overarching theme "Challenges Met by the Participants," with three (3) emergent themes: (1) Time Management, (2) Sleep Deprivation, and (3) Irrate Customers. Lastly, regarding the coping strategies employed by the participants to address these challenges, the overarching theme was "Coping Mechanisms of the Participants on the Challenges Met," featuring three (3) emergent themes: (1) Me Time, (2) Not Giving Care and (3) Positivity.

The results were specific to BPO on-site working students and did not extend to students in other work settings and environments. Different groups of working students may yield different findings. Additionally, the findings do not represent BPO students working in blended setups or those exclusively working from home.

Based on the findings of this study, BPO onsite working students demonstrate resiliency. However, excessive resilience can lead to an excessive tolerance of adversity and may inadvertently invalidate their struggles. As a response, the school, through one of its guidance services, conducts a workshop aimed at promoting self-awareness among employed students. This workshop encourages them to acknowledge their strengths and weaknesses while recognizing emotions they might have previously deemed unimportant. Ultimately, this self-awareness workshop can foster self-growth and personal maturation.

Lack of sleep is a common issue among employed students, many of whom work to support their families and continue their education. To address this concern, a potential intervention is proposed: creating a dedicated napping room within the school. Nap rooms have the potential to enhance productivity and efficiency by improving working memory, crucial for tasks such as studying and writing. Access to the room could be contingent on providing proof of the employed student's work commitments and academic workload, allowing for monitoring. This not only benefits the students but also helps the university maintain a positive image without students napping in various places on campus. Furthermore, seminars could be organized to help employed students address common challenges, providing them with an opportunity to share ideas and gain fresh perspectives. These seminars might encompass themes like applying self-discipline and effective time management, both crucial for balancing academic and professional responsibilities. The findings emphasize that practicing self-discipline and time management can significantly aid employed students in reducing stress by avoiding procrastination and completing tasks on time. The overwhelming feelings experienced by employed students can be addressed through resilience, which helps them overcome negative thoughts and maintain an optimistic attitude towards their work and academic goals. Moreover, employed students can better take care of themselves by prioritizing their health and ensuring adequate rest, sleep, personal time, and social interactions with friends to support their positive mental health.

Several potential avenues for future study are suggested. The first topic pertains to "Recreational Activities: Managing Stress for BPO On-Site Employed Students." The second area of exploration is centered around "Relationship Satisfaction and Self-Confidence among BPO On-Site Employed Students." Lastly, there is a recommendation for a quantitative study that investigates the correlation between the experiences of BPO onsite working students and their stress levels when faced with health threat situations while working onsite amidst a health crisis. These research areas hold promise for gaining deeper insights into the experiences and well-being of BPO on-site employed students.

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