

***Baito* vs. *Benkyō*: Part-Time Employment and EFL Academic Performance at a Japanese University**

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Abstract

Many university students in Japan have part-time jobs and must balance this employment with their studies. The relationship between part-time employment and academic performance at the tertiary level has long been of interest to researchers and educators, yet findings remain mixed. This cross-sectional quantitative study investigated the relationship between part-time employment and EFL academic performance at a mid-sized private university in Tokyo over the 2022-23, 2023-24, and 2024-25 academic years ($n = 337$). Descriptive statistics, Welch's independent-samples *t*-tests, Welch's one-way ANOVAs, and nonparametric tests were conducted. No statistically significant relationships were found between part-time employment and final grades in either the Freshman English or Sophomore English cohorts. However, different patterns were observed: Freshman English students who worked part-time tended to have slightly higher average grades than nonworkers, whereas the opposite pattern was observed with Sophomore English students. Similarly, the more hours Freshman English students worked, the higher their average grades tended to be, whereas Sophomore English students who worked the most hours received, on average, the lowest grades. These findings are consistent with the wider literature, which has reported mixed results, suggesting that the relationship between part-time employment and academic performance may be more complex than is often assumed. The findings also suggest that educators, university administrators, and policymakers should avoid assuming that part-time employment affects all students uniformly and instead find ways to support students whose work commitments may be affecting their studies.

Keywords: academic performance, EFL students, higher education, part-time employment

1. Introduction

The part-time employment (PTE) of students has long been a matter of interest to educators and researchers. At the tertiary level, the proportion of students working part-time has increased internationally, due to reasons such as financial necessity caused by rising tuition and living costs, decreased governmental financial support, and the broadening access to universities of previously underrepresented demographic groups (Callender, 2008; Eurostudent, 2018; Higher Education Policy Institute, 2024).

How PTE affects academic performance has become a much-researched question. Some studies focusing on educational attainment and student retention have found that those who work long hours are more likely to leave university early and thus not complete their degree (Holmegaard et al., 2017; Lessky & Unger, 2023). However, studies of academic performance, typically investigated through an analysis of grades and other assessment data, have reported more mixed results.

While many have written on this topic internationally, relatively little attention has been given to the relationship between PTE and EFL academic performance. To the best of the author's knowledge, no published studies have specifically examined this relationship among Japanese university students. Given this gap within the broader international literature, it is important for EFL educators working at the tertiary level to consider this relationship.

To address this gap, this paper presents the results of a 3-year study conducted with the author's students at a mid-sized private university in Tokyo over the 2022-23, 2023-24, and 2024-25 academic years. It investigates potential differences between the scholastic cohorts of the author's Freshman English and Sophomore English students and examines whether PTE, job type, and hours worked were associated with differences in EFL academic performance.

2. Literature Review

According to the Japan Student Services Organization's *2022 Student Life Survey Report* (JASSO, 2024), 83.8% of four-year college students and 80.7% of junior college students were engaged in paid employment. Of those who worked, the majority – 66.3% of four-year college students and 67.1% of junior college students – worked 1-15 hours a week. Only 14.4% of four-year college students and 14.8% of junior college students worked over 20 hours a week.

In comparison, according to Eurostudent's *Combining Studies and Paid Jobs* (2018), 51% of tertiary students in Europe were engaged in some form of paid employment, which included both regular, continuous work throughout the term and irregular work. However, this varied vastly by country, from 23% in Albania to 77% in the Netherlands. When looking at the hours worked by those continuously employed, although the average was 28 hours a week overall, this also varied substantially by country and region. The number of hours students tended to work correlated to three distinct regional groups: 30+ hours in Central and Eastern European countries, 23-28 hours in Western Europe, and less than 20 hours in Denmark, the Netherlands, Germany, and Switzerland.

Focusing on studies that specifically report on grades and other assessment data, the literature on the impact of PTE on academic performance reveals mixed international results, consistent with the findings of a recent systematic review (Višnjić et al., 2024). These results can be divided into two categories.

2.1 PTE Negatively Impacts Academic Performance

This negative impact may increase as the number of hours worked increases, or the effect may be seen more generally. In one study of 1,000 students at six UK universities, Callender (2008) found that PTE had a negative effect on both final-year grades and degree results. This effect was greater the more hours that were worked, and students working the average number of hours a week were one-third less likely to obtain a first or upper second degree compared to comparable nonworking students. The majority of students who did work relied on PTE to supplement their inadequate student loans, and more than half did not receive financial support from their families. In another study of 823 students at the University of Poitiers in France, Body et al. (2014) found the number of hours worked to be important. Those working less than 8 hours were not affected, but those working 8–16 hours, and especially those working 16+ hours, had impaired academic performance. The authors also noted that the type of employment mattered: students with public sector jobs were less affected than those with private sector jobs, possibly because public sector jobs had more flexible working hours.

Some studies have reported a threshold beyond which GPA starts to be negatively affected. In one study of 1,890 undergraduate students in Slovenia, Kosi et al. (2013) found that student employment adversely impacted academic performance only when work exceeded 18 hours a week. They also found that students worked relatively evenly throughout the year, with little seasonal impact on their work, and that the proportion of students whose employment was related to their subject of study was small. In another study of 267 nursing students in Australia, Salamonson and Andrew (2006) found that 78% of second-year students engaged in PTE, with half working more than 16 hours a week during the semester. Even though the majority of those working held nursing-related jobs, it was found that those not working had the best academic performance. The amount of time spent in employment was the strongest negative predictor of academic performance, with 16 hours a week being a critical threshold.

More recently, in a study of 100 university students in Bangladesh, Alam et al. (2025) found that students engaged in PTE had significantly lower cumulative GPAs than nonworking students. They also found that longer working hours were associated with lower cumulative GPAs, while greater study time was associated with improved academic performance. Other studies that have found overall negative results include Beffy et al. (2010), Carney et al. (2005), DeSimone (2008), Logan et al. (2016), Rochford et al. (2009), and Salamonson et al. (2012).

2.2 PTE Has a Mixed or Positive Impact on Academic Performance

In these studies, results were heterogeneous, other factors were found to be more important, and/or working a certain number of hours – or up to a certain number – had positive effects. In one study of 5,223 senior students at a mid-sized midwestern public university in the U.S. between 2001–2009, Tessema et al. (2014) grouped these students into nonworkers and those who worked 1–10 hours, 11–15 hours, 16–20 hours, 21–30 hours, and 31+ hours a week. They found that, as a whole, the average GPA and student satisfaction of nonworkers were slightly higher than those of workers. However, when workers were separated into the different cohorts, the 1–10 hours cohort had both the highest mean GPA and level of student satisfaction, even higher than those of nonworkers. As the number of hours worked increased, the mean GPA and level of student satisfaction decreased for each additional cohort.

In another study, Wenz and Yu (2010) analyzed the school-administered survey results of students enrolled at Winona State University in the U.S. between 2004–2008. From 6,992 observations of 4,140 individuals, they found that the average GPA of workers was higher than nonworkers, 3.12 to 3.03, respectively. However, where students worked was important: on-campus

employment was associated with a 0.20 increase in GPA compared to nonworkers, but this increase was only 0.07 for off-campus employment. Notably, within the worker cohort, each additional hour of work decreased the GPA by 0.007 points, meaning there was a positive effect of working but a negative effect of increasing work hours. The authors suggest two possible explanations: 1) students who work are overall better students, but increasing their hours decreases their academic performance, or 2) it is the working itself that causes the increase in GPA, perhaps by necessitating better time management or organization by the student, but increasing these hours makes this difficult to maintain.

In a third study of 256 students at a small liberal arts college in the US, Dundes and Marx (2006) grouped individuals into four cohorts: nonworkers, less than 10 hours, 10–19 hours, and 20+ hours. They found that the 10–19 hours cohort not only had the highest GPA but also reported studying more than the other three groups. Not working or working less than 10 hours did not result in a GPA benefit, and working 20+ hours did not seem to decrease GPA, when compared to the other cohorts. The authors propose that the performance of the 10–19 hours cohort results from an optimal work–college dynamic that imposes the right amount of structure and discipline on students, not seen in those working less than or more than this amount.

In another study, Kalenkoski and Pabilonia (2008) utilized data from those who were a part of the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth and had attended or were attending either a four-year college or a two-year community college. Analyzing 2,031 students, they found a notable difference: four-year college students working 1–20 hours had the highest GPA, those not working had an intermediate GPA, and those working 20+ hours had the lowest GPA. However, for two-year community college students, the GPA was higher the more hours students worked: those working 20+ hours had the highest GPA, followed by those working 1–20 hours and, lastly, those not working. Other studies that have found overall mixed or positive results include Daniels (2016), Darolia (2014), Nonis and Hudson (2006), Pike et al. (2008), Simón et al. (2017), Thies (2023), and Yanbarisova (2015).

3. Research Methods

3.1 Research Questions

Within the context of this international literature reporting mixed results, a cross-sectional quantitative study was conducted to investigate the relationship between PTE and academic performance in a 3-year study of Japanese university students. The following research questions are addressed:

RQ1. What are the characteristics of the students' part-time employment?

RQ2. What is the relationship between part-time employment and final grades?

3.2 Methodology

The 2022–23 academic year was selected as the starting point of this 3-year study. This decision was made because it was the first year post-COVID-19 that was not affected by remote/hybrid teaching. In the last two weeks of each semester, the author asked his students at a mid-sized private university in Tokyo to complete a Google Form questionnaire, written in English and created by the author, which contained, among others, the following three questions:

- 1) Did you have a part-time job this semester?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

- 2) What was your part-time job?
 - a. Store (convenience store, supermarket, clothes shop, etc.)
 - b. Cram school
 - c. Restaurant / Pub
 - d. Other
- 3) On average, how many hours a week did you work?
 - a. 0–5 hours
 - b. 6–10 hours
 - c. 11–20 hours
 - d. 20+ hours

The questionnaire was designed to collect descriptive information about students' PTE rather than subjective attitudes and beliefs. As it was focused on reporting employment status, job type, and hours worked, validation procedures were not considered necessary. To reduce potential reporting errors and response bias, class time was allotted for completing the questionnaire, students completed it individually, and responses remained confidential.

3.3 Participants

Freshman English (FE) is a required two-semester course that all incoming students in all faculties must take. Sophomore English (SE) is a TOEIC preparation course, one of many one-semester English courses required for all Faculty of International Relations students not studying abroad. Students are placed into groups of similar English ability as determined by their TOEIC IP test results. FE students take the test prior to the start of their first year, and SE students retake it during their first year.

FE and SE were analyzed separately due to differences in course structure and assessment: FE has lessons five days a week for 50 minutes, and attendance and class participation are more heavily weighted in their final grades, whereas SE has lessons once a week for 105 minutes, and homework assignments are more heavily weighted.

During the three years of this study, the author taught 19 FE semesters and 6 SE semesters. Although FE is a two-semester course, the grades are separate for each semester. Most of the FE students were taught by the author for both semesters, meaning these students likely took the questionnaire twice, so their responses have been recorded as separate semester-level observations rather than unique students. As SE is a one-semester course, the same does not apply to this cohort.

Of the 19 FE semesters, 263 out of 308 observations completed the questionnaire, a response rate of 85.4%. Of the six SE semesters, 74 out of 103 students completed the questionnaire, a response rate of 71.8%. These survey responses were then linked to each student's final grade for the semester. Students who automatically failed their course due to not meeting the program's attendance requirements were not included, but students who failed their course due to receiving a final grade of less than 60%, and who did complete a questionnaire, were included.

All participants provided informed consent prior to participating in the study. The study followed the ethical guidelines established by the author's department for classroom-based research involving students. Participation was voluntary, responses remained confidential, and participation did not affect grades.

3.4 Data Analysis Technique

For RQ1, descriptive statistics were calculated. For RQ2, Welch's independent-samples *t*-tests were conducted to determine differences in grades between those who worked and those who

did not. Welch's one-way ANOVAs were also conducted to determine grade differences by job and by number of hours worked per week. Prior to conducting the analyses, the assumptions for each statistical test were examined. As sample sizes differed across groups, Welch's procedures were used as they are more appropriate for these conditions. When the assumption of normality was not met, nonparametric tests were also conducted to determine whether the results were consistent. All statistical analyses were conducted using JASP (version 0.95.2).

4. Results

RQ1. What are the characteristics of the students' part-time employment?

4.1 Freshman English

A total of 263 observations were included in the analyses, with a mean final grade of 75.61 ($SD = 9.19$). A total of 81.7% ($n = 215$) reported having a part-time job during the semester. Of those with jobs, when it came to job type, 33.5% ($n = 72$) worked in a store, 1.9% ($n = 4$) worked in a cram school, 55.8% ($n = 120$) worked in a restaurant/pub, and 8.8% ($n = 19$) worked in "other." For average hours worked per week, 22.3% ($n = 48$) worked 0 to 5 hours, 30.7% ($n = 66$) worked 6 to 10 hours, 38.6% ($n = 83$) worked 11 to 20 hours, and 8.4% ($n = 18$) worked over 20 hours (Table 1).

Table 1. *Freshman English Descriptive Statistics*

Variable	Percentage	Count (n)
Mean Final Grade	75.61 ($SD = 9.19$)	-
Total Observations	-	263
Observations with PTE	81.7	215
Job Type		
Store	33.5	72
Cram school	1.9	4
Restaurant / Pub	55.8	120
Other	8.8	19
Hours Worked per Week		
0-5	22.3	48
6-10	30.7	66
11-20	38.6	83
>20	8.4	18

4.2 Sophomore English

A total of 74 students were included in the analyses, with a mean final grade of 77.79 ($SD = 9.16$). A total of 90.5% ($n = 67$) reported having a part-time job during the semester. Of those with jobs, when it came to job type, 46.3% ($n = 31$) worked in a store, 3.0% ($n = 2$) worked in a cram school, 40.3% ($n = 27$) worked in a restaurant/pub, and 10.4% ($n = 7$) worked in "other." For average hours worked per week, 13.4% ($n = 9$) worked 0 to 5 hours, 32.8% ($n = 22$) worked 6 to 10 hours, 34.3% ($n = 23$) worked 11 to 20 hours, and 19.4% ($n = 13$) worked over 20 hours (Table 2).

Table 2. *Sophomore English Descriptive Statistics*

Variable	Percentage	Count (n)
Mean Final Grade	77.79 (<i>SD</i> = 9.16)	-
Total Students	-	74
Students with PTE	90.5	67
Job Type		
Store	46.3	31
Cram school	3.0	2
Restaurant / Pub	40.3	27
Other	10.4	7
Hours Worked per Week		
0-5	13.4	9
6-10	32.8	22
11-20	34.3	23
>20	19.4	13

RQ2. What is the relationship between part-time employment and final grades?**4.3 Freshman English**

A Welch's independent-samples *t*-test was conducted to determine whether there were differences in final grades between those who had jobs and those who did not. Final grades were slightly higher for those who did work ($M = 75.72$, $SD = 8.76$) than for those who did not work ($M = 75.16$, $SD = 11.02$), but the difference was not statistically significant, $t(60.91) = 0.33$, $p = .744$, with a negligible effect size, Hedges' $g = 0.06$, 95% *CI* [-0.26, 0.37]. The Brown-Forsythe test indicated that the assumption of homogeneity of variances was met, $F(1, 261) = 1.87$, $p = .173$. However, the Shapiro-Wilk test indicated that the assumption of normality was not met, $W = 0.97$, $p < .001$. Therefore, a Mann-Whitney *U* test was also conducted, which indicated no statistically significant difference between groups, $U = 5,059.50$, $p = .834$, with a very small rank-biserial correlation ($r = .02$), consistent with the Welch's *t*-test (Table 3).

A Welch's one-way ANOVA was then conducted to determine whether final grades differed for the various job types. No statistically significant difference was found, $F(3, 14.26) = 0.34$, $p = .798$, with a negligible effect size, $\omega^2 = .000$. Levene's test indicated that the assumption of homogeneity of variances was met, $F(3, 211) = 1.27$, $p = .285$. However, the Shapiro-Wilk test indicated that the assumption of normality was not met for the restaurant/pub group, $W = 0.98$, $p = .033$. Therefore, a Kruskal-Wallis test was also conducted, which indicated no statistically significant difference between groups, $H(3) = 0.58$, $p = .902$, with a very small effect size ($\epsilon^2 = .003$), consistent with the Welch's one-way ANOVA (Table 3).

Another Welch's one-way ANOVA was conducted to determine whether final grades varied by the number of hours worked. No statistically significant difference was found, $F(3, 67.68) = 0.44$, $p = .728$, with a negligible effect size, $\omega^2 = .000$. Levene's test indicated that the assumption of homogeneity of variances was met, $F(3, 211) = 0.41$, $p = .745$. However, the Shapiro-Wilk test indicated that the assumption of normality was not met for the 0-5 hours group, $W = 0.93$, $p = .009$. Therefore, a Kruskal-Wallis test was also conducted, which indicated no statistically

significant difference between groups, $H(3) = 0.83$, $p = .841$, with a very small effect size ($\epsilon^2 = .004$), consistent with the Welch's one-way ANOVA (Table 3).

Table 3. *Freshman English Final Grades*

Variable	Mean (<i>SD</i>)	<i>p</i> value
Worked Part-Time		0.744
Yes	75.72 (8.76)	
No	75.16 (11.02)	
Job Type		0.798
Store	74.99 (9.56)	
Cram school	77.04 (5.18)	
Restaurant / Pub	75.95 (8.67)	
Other	76.70 (6.71)	
Hours Worked per Week		0.728
0-5	74.71 (9.42)	
6-10	75.39 (9.18)	
11-20	76.37 (8.21)	
>20	76.56 (8.13)	

4.4 Sophomore English

A Welch's independent-samples *t*-test was conducted to determine whether there were differences in final grades between those who had jobs and those who did not. Final grades were higher for those who did not work ($M = 81.23$, $SD = 5.52$) than for those who did work ($M = 77.43$, $SD = 9.42$), but the difference was not statistically significant, $t(10.12) = -1.60$, $p = .141$, with a medium effect size, Hedges' $g = -0.49$, 95% *CI* [-1.28, 0.33]. The Brown-Forsythe test indicated that the assumption of homogeneity of variances was met, $F(1, 72) = 2.73$, $p = .103$. However, the Shapiro-Wilk test indicated that the assumption of normality was not met, $W = 0.94$, $p = .003$. Therefore, a Mann-Whitney *U* test was also conducted, which indicated no statistically significant difference between groups, $U = 185$, $p = .365$, with a small rank biserial correlation ($r = .21$), consistent with the Welch's *t*-test (Table 4).

A Welch's one-way ANOVA was then conducted to determine whether final grades differed for the various job types. No statistically significant difference was found, $F(3, 4.62) = 0.17$, $p = .914$, with a negligible effect size, $\omega^2 = .000$. Levene's test indicated that the assumption of homogeneity of variances was met, $F(3, 63) = 1.53$, $p = .217$. However, the Shapiro-Wilk test indicated that the assumption of normality was not met for the store job type, $W = 0.89$, $p = .004$. Therefore, a Kruskal-Wallis test was also conducted, which indicated no statistically significant difference between groups, $H(3) = 0.85$, $p = .838$, with a very small effect size ($\epsilon^2 = .013$), consistent with the Welch's one-way ANOVA (Table 4).

Another Welch's one-way ANOVA was conducted to determine whether final grades varied by the number of hours worked. No statistically significant difference was found, $F(3, 27.57) = 1.50$, $p = .236$, with a small effect size, $\omega^2 = .024$. Levene's test indicated that the assumption of homogeneity of variances was met, $F(3, 63) = 1.14$, $p = .341$. However, the Shapiro-Wilk test indicated that the assumption of normality was not met for the 6-10 hours group, $W = 0.87$, $p = .009$. Therefore, a Kruskal-Wallis test was also conducted, which indicated no statistically

significant difference between groups, $H(3) = 4.69$, $p = .196$, with a small effect size ($\epsilon^2 = .071$), consistent with the Welch's one-way ANOVA (Table 4).

Table 4. *Sophomore English Final Grades*

Variable	Mean (SD)	p value
Worked Part-Time		0.141
Yes	77.43 (9.42)	
No	81.23 (5.52)	
Job Type		0.914
Store	78.03 (10.02)	
Cram school	75.49 (11.12)	
Restaurant / Pub	76.57 (9.75)	
Other	78.60 (5.74)	
Hours Worked per Week		0.236
0-5	77.47 (6.97)	
6-10	76.46 (10.54)	
11-20	80.41 (8.20)	
>20	73.76 (10.22)	

5. Discussion

For the scholastic cohort of the author's FE and SE students, 83.7% were engaged in PTE, which is very similar to the previously mentioned JASSO (2024) report, where 83.8% of four-year college students were engaged in PTE. The similarity is also maintained when it comes to hours worked: in this study, 51.4% worked 10 hours or less, 37.6% worked 11-20 hours, and 11.0% worked 20+ hours. In the JASSO report, 41.2% worked 10 hours or less, 44.4% worked 11-20 hours, and 14.4% worked 20+ hours.

No statistically significant relationship was found between PTE and final grades. However, different patterns were observed in the FE and SE cohorts. For FE, mean grades were slightly higher for workers compared to nonworkers, but the opposite was the case for SE. For FE, the mean grade was higher the more hours students worked, but these differences were small and within a range of only 1.85 points. This contrasts with SE, where nonworkers had the highest mean grade, and there was a larger difference of 6.65 points between those working 11-20 hours and 20+ hours. The two programs, therefore, revealed opposite trends at the higher end: for FE, those working 20+ hours had the best grades, while for SE, those working 20+ hours had the worst grades.

The exact patterns observed in this study have not been reported in any of the previously surveyed literature. The sequential relationship found with FE, where working more hours was associated with a higher mean grade, is perhaps most comparable to Kalenkoski and Pabilonia (2008), who found a similar sequential relationship with their community college students. However, nonworkers in their study had the lowest grades, while in this study those working 0-5 hours had the lowest grades. The SE results are perhaps most comparable to Dundes and Marx (2006), who also found that those working 10-19 hours had the highest GPAs. However, they did not find a substantial decrease in the 20+ cohort when compared to the other cohorts, as seen in this study.

As some authors of the previously surveyed literature with similarly mixed or positive results have considered, the act of working may itself cause an increase in GPA, providing a structure around which students must organize and manage their time. However, once a certain ideal amount of working time is reached, increasing work hours decreases academic performance. For Tessema et al. (2014) it was 1–10 hours, for Dundes and Marx (2006) it was 10–19 hours, and for Kalenkoski and Pabilonia's (2008) four-year college students it was 1–20 hours. This contrasts with the literature that found that PTE only negatively impacts academic performance, which frequently operates from a zero-sum perspective: as time and energy are finite, any involvement in extracurricular activities, such as PTE and club activities, will reduce time spent on academics (Coleman, 1961).

Regarding the contrasting patterns of the FE students who worked 20+ hours but received the highest grades, while the SE students who worked 20+ hours received the lowest grades, one possible explanation may be the difference in assessment components used in the two courses. For FE, attendance and class participation were more heavily weighted, whereas for SE, homework assignments were more heavily weighted. The different assessment components may be related to the differing academic performance observed between the two cohorts. However, the present study did not examine this directly, and this explanation remains speculative.

6. Conclusion

Overall, these findings are congruent with the literature on PTE and academic performance, surveyed above, where many studies have reported mixed effects. No general consensus has been reached on this topic of inquiry. This large disparity of findings may primarily stem from the varied methodologies, student samples, and assessment data utilized in each separate study. For example, studies of a single university or student population vary considerably from those of larger multi-university or national studies. There are, however, enough mixed results in the literature and in the present study to suggest that the relationship between PTE and academic performance may be more complex than is often assumed.

International comparisons may also not always be appropriate, as the tertiary educational system of different countries, and how students financially support themselves, can vary substantially. In educational systems that are more supportive of part-time, older, or non-traditional students, and/or where funding is not traditionally provided by family, grants, or loans, there are substantial differences in students' motivations for engaging in PTE and the number of hours worked. The dissimilarity of Japan to various European nations regarding PTE engagement and average hours worked, as previously discussed in the literature review, speaks to this disparity. The specifics of each country's tertiary educational system and the distinct composition of its student body complicate international comparisons.

A key distinction is likely whether individual students *must* work to financially support themselves through their education or *choose to* work to earn additional spending money and to gain some experience. Students who work due to necessity tend to work longer hours and are more likely to experience a negative impact on academic performance, as Callender (2008) and Salamonson and Andrew (2006) found. For these students, a zero-sum perspective of time may be the most appropriate framework of analysis. In contrast, students who are financially supported and do not work due to necessity tend to work fewer hours and, importantly, can choose how many hours they want to work. These students are more likely to experience a mixed or even positive impact on academic performance, as Wenz and Yu (2010) and Dundes and Marx (2006) found, and the optimal work-college dynamic perspective may be the most appropriate analytical framework. This optimal number of work hours presumably varies from student to student,

influenced by numerous factors such as personality, academic workload, PTE demands, extracurricular activities, and other commitments.

From a practical perspective, these findings suggest that educators, university administrators, and policymakers should be cautious about assuming that PTE uniformly benefits or harms students' academic performance. Instead, they should recognize that this relationship may differ across student populations. Rather than discouraging PTE in general, universities should provide support for students whose work commitments may be affecting their studies, while recognizing that the relationship between PTE and academic performance is not always straightforward.

A primary limitation of this study is that it includes only the EFL grades of the students and not their overall GPA, in contrast to much of the literature. A study utilizing GPA may report different results. It is also limited to first- and second-year students from a single mid-sized private university in Tokyo, and while similar in some findings to the national JASSO (2024) report, it may not be representative of all Japanese university students. In addition, the cross-sectional nature of the data means that causal relationships between PTE and EFL academic performance cannot be established.

Another limitation is that this study does not include more specific details about the students' PTE, for example, when and what time of day students work, or qualitative details, such as whether students must work for financial necessity or choose to work to receive additional spending money, how they feel about their employment, and whether they believe it interferes with their academic studies. Future research that includes these factors may provide a clearer understanding of the relationship between PTE and the EFL academic performance of Japanese university students.

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