



PECUNIARY LIMINALITY: INDIAN STUDENTS AND THE QUIET ARCHITECTURE OF EARNED WORTH

¹Sruthi Sara Rajan, ²Sruthi Sunil, ³Hanna Susan Jose

¹Assistant Professor, ²Post Graduate Student, ³Post Graduate Student

¹Department Of Commerce,

¹Saintgits College of Applied Sciences, Kottayam, India

Abstract: This study examines the concept of “earning with dignity” by analysing how Indian students’ attitudes toward part-time employment are shaped by cultural, social, and socioeconomic factors. The study also investigates how willingness to engage in part-time work contributes to skill development, employability, and personal growth. A quantitative descriptive research design was adopted, and primary data were collected from 116 students through a structured questionnaire. Multiple regression and simple linear regression analyses were performed using SPSS software. The findings reveal that cultural, social, and socioeconomic factors significantly influence students’ willingness to engage in part-time employment, with social factors emerging as the strongest predictor. Further, willingness to engage significantly enhances employability, skill development, and personal growth. The study highlights the importance of institutional support systems and changing societal perceptions regarding student employment. The findings contribute to the growing discourse on experiential learning, employability, and dignified earning opportunities among Indian students.

Index Terms - Student work engagement, Employability, Experiential learning, Financial independence, Dignity of labour

I. INTRODUCTION

Higher education has increasingly become both an intellectual pursuit and a financial investment. Rising tuition fees and living expenses have encouraged students worldwide to seek part-time employment while pursuing their studies. In many Western countries, student employment is viewed positively as an opportunity to develop independence, responsibility, and professional competence. However, in India, cultural expectations and social attitudes often discourage students from engaging in paid employment during their academic years.

Existing studies indicate that part-time employment improves communication skills, leadership, teamwork, adaptability, problem-solving ability, and time management. International exposure further enhances cultural intelligence and employability among students. Despite these benefits, Indian students frequently perceive part-time work as a financial necessity rather than a dignified developmental opportunity.

Although previous studies have explored employability and experiential learning, limited research has examined how cultural, social, and socioeconomic factors collectively influence students’ willingness to engage in part-time work and how this willingness affects employability and personal growth. This study addresses this gap by developing a structured model connecting contextual influences, willingness, and developmental outcomes among Indian students.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- 1.To identify cultural, social, and socioeconomic factors influencing students' willingness to engage in part-time work.
- 2.To analyse the role of part-time employment in developing skills, employability, and personal growth.
- 3.To examine how willingness to engage in part-time work contributes to developmental outcomes among students.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Part-time employment has increasingly become an important aspect of student life across the world, not only as a source of financial support but also as a means of gaining practical exposure and personal growth. Several studies have shown that students who engage in part-time work tend to develop important soft skills such as communication, teamwork, adaptability, leadership, and problem-solving abilities, which contribute positively to their employability and confidence (Fernandes, 2020; Chandra & Malik, 2025). Researchers have also observed that balancing academics and work responsibilities helps students improve time management, discipline, motivation, and emotional maturity without seriously affecting their academic performance (Raman, 2023).

The perception of part-time employment, however, differs across societies and cultural settings. In many Western countries, student employment is generally viewed as a normal and respectable part of higher education. Institutions often encourage students to take up part-time jobs through flexible schedules, campus employment opportunities, and career support systems, allowing them to gain work experience while studying (Lawrence, 2022). As a result, students abroad often associate part-time work with independence, self-respect, and personal development (Chauhan, 2023).

In the Indian context, attitudes toward part-time employment are comparatively more conservative. Many students continue to face social and family pressures that discourage them from working during their academic years. Part-time employment is often seen mainly as a financial necessity rather than a valuable learning experience or a dignified activity (Mathew & Abraham, 2021). At the same time, changing social attitudes, globalization, and exposure to international education have gradually influenced the mindset of Indian students. Recent studies suggest that many young people in India are beginning to view employment as a symbol of self-reliance, financial independence, and dignity of labour (Agarwal, 2024).

Research has also highlighted the role of international exposure in shaping students' attitudes toward work and employability. Students studying abroad often develop stronger cultural intelligence, adaptability, and intercultural communication skills through work-integrated learning experiences (Verma & Das, 2024). Similarly, Nair and D'Souza (2025) found that Indian students returning from overseas education tend to retain positive perceptions regarding part-time employment and demonstrate greater respect for labour and self-dependence.

Although previous studies have examined employability, experiential learning, and student employment separately, limited research has explored how cultural, social, and socioeconomic factors together influence Indian students' willingness to engage in part-time work and how this willingness contributes to skill development, employability, and personal growth. Therefore, the present study attempts to address this gap by examining the relationship between contextual influences, willingness to engage in part-time work, and developmental outcomes among Indian students.

IV. HYPOTHESES

- H1: Cultural factors significantly influence students' willingness to engage in part-time work.
- H2: Social factors significantly influence students' willingness to engage in part-time work.
- H3: Socioeconomic factors significantly influence students' willingness to engage in part-time work.
- H4: Students' willingness to engage in part-time work significantly influences skill development.
- H5: Students' willingness to engage in part-time work significantly influences employability.
- H6: Students' willingness to engage in part-time work significantly influences personal growth.

V. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a quantitative, descriptive, and explanatory research design. Primary data were collected from 116 students using a structured online questionnaire. Convenience sampling was employed to collect responses from students belonging to different educational backgrounds.

The questionnaire measured cultural factors, social factors, socioeconomic factors, willingness to engage in part-time work, employability, skill development, and personal growth using a five-point Likert scale. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS software. Multiple regression analysis and simple linear regression analysis were applied to test the proposed hypotheses. ANOVA, R^2 values, F-values, and beta coefficients were used to determine model significance and explanatory power.

Conceptual Model

The conceptual model of the study explains the relationship between cultural, social, and socioeconomic factors and students' willingness to engage in part-time employment, along with the outcomes resulting from such willingness. The model proposes that cultural beliefs, societal attitudes, peer influence, family perceptions, and economic conditions play an important role in shaping students' attitudes toward part-time work. It further suggests that students who show greater willingness to engage in part-time employment are more likely to develop essential skills, improve employability, and experience personal growth. Thus, the model establishes willingness to engage in part-time work as a connecting factor between external influences and developmental outcomes among students. The model also reflects the changing mindset of modern students toward work and financial independence. In recent years, part-time employment has gradually evolved from being viewed merely as a financial necessity to being recognized as an opportunity for learning, self-development, and gaining practical exposure. The framework highlights that positive social support and changing cultural perceptions can encourage students to engage more confidently in work-related experiences. Overall, the conceptual model emphasizes that part-time employment can contribute not only to economic support but also to the holistic development and career readiness of students.

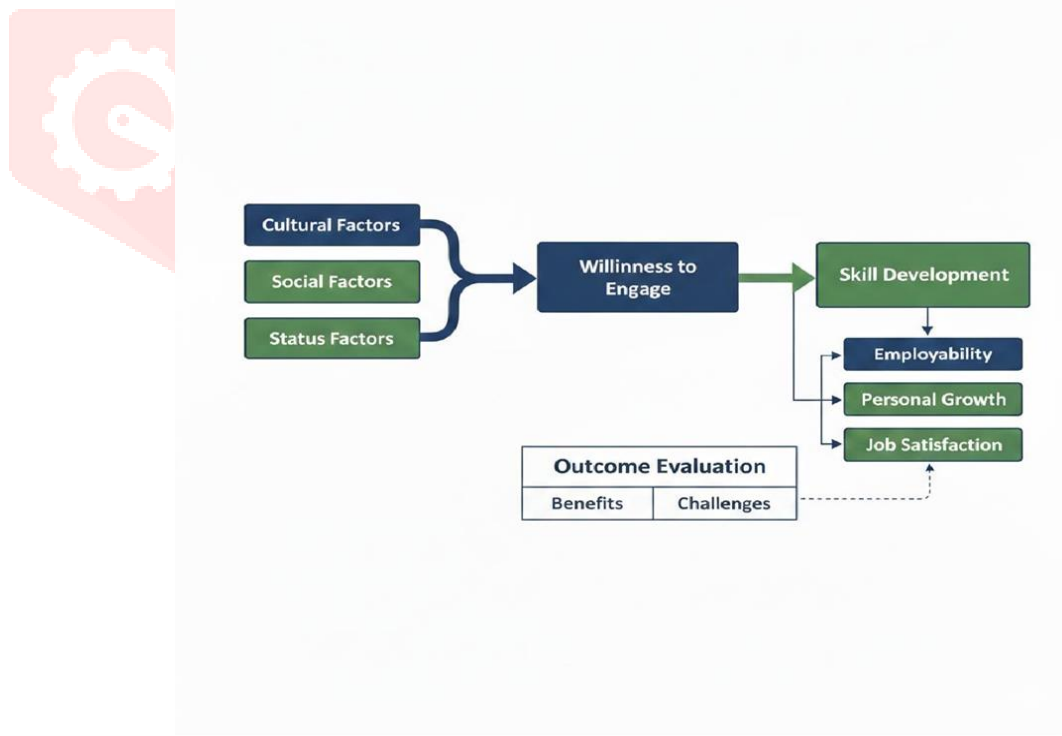


Fig. 1. Proposed Conceptual Model

VI. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Table 1
Regression Analysis Results

Hypothesis	Relationship Tested	R ²	F-value	β	Result
H1–H3	Cultural, Social & Socioeconomic → Willingness	.718	94.93	.199, .532, .220	Supported
H4	Willingness → Skill Development	.447	92.02	.668	Supported
H5	Willingness → Employability	.542	134.90	.736	Supported
H6	Willingness → Personal Growth	.394	74.10	.628	Supported

The regression results revealed that cultural, social, and socioeconomic factors significantly influenced students' willingness to engage in part-time work. Among these variables, social factors emerged as the strongest predictor. The findings further indicated that willingness to engage in part-time work significantly enhanced employability, skill development, and personal growth among students.

VII. FINDINGS

- Social factors emerged as the strongest predictor of willingness to engage in part-time work.

The study found that social factors such as family attitudes, peer influence, and societal perceptions had the strongest impact on students' willingness to engage in part-time employment. Students were more likely to participate in part-time work when they received positive encouragement and social acceptance from their surroundings.

- Students' willingness significantly enhanced employability outcomes.

The findings revealed that students who showed greater willingness to engage in part-time employment also demonstrated better employability-related skills.

- Willingness to engage in part-time work positively influenced confidence, independence, and personal growth.

The study observed that students involved in part-time employment developed greater self-confidence and independence in managing responsibilities. Part-time work provided students with opportunities to interact with different people, handle real-life situations, and make independent decisions.

- All proposed hypotheses were statistically supported.

The statistical analysis confirmed that all the proposed hypotheses in the study were significant and supported by the collected data. The regression results established meaningful relationships between cultural, social, and socioeconomic factors, students' willingness to engage in part-time work, and the resulting developmental outcomes. This indicates that the conceptual framework developed for the study was valid and consistent with the research findings.

VIII. LIMITATIONS

The study has certain limitations that should be considered while interpreting the findings. First, the research was conducted only among Indian students, which may limit the generalizability of the results to students from other cultural or national backgrounds. Second, the study relied on self-reported responses, and therefore personal bias or differences in perception may have influenced the data collected. Third, the study focused mainly on students' current attitudes and willingness toward part-time employment rather than examining long-term career outcomes. Finally, factors such as differences in institutional policies, work regulations, and

support systems across countries were not examined in detail, even though they may influence students' perceptions and experiences regarding part-time work.

IX. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that cultural, social, and socioeconomic factors significantly shape Indian students' willingness to engage in part-time employment. Further, willingness to engage in employment activities contributes positively to employability, skill enhancement, and personal development. The findings emphasize the importance of institutional support systems and societal acceptance in promoting dignified student employment. Encouraging work-integrated learning opportunities can significantly enhance career readiness and holistic student development among Indian students.

REFERENCES

1. Agarwal, R. (2024). Student employment and changing perceptions of dignity of labour among Indian youth. *International Journal of Social Science and Educational Research*, 11(2), 45–53.
2. Chandra, R., & Malik, S. (2025). Leadership and skill development through student employment. *Journal of Youth Employability Studies*, 9(1), 22–34.
3. Chauhan, R. (2023). Cultural perspectives on dignity in student work. *Indian Journal of Social and Behavioral Studies*, 15(3), 61–72.
4. Fernandes, A. (2020). Impact of part-time work on student employability and self-esteem. *Journal of Student Development and Employability*, 8(2), 40–51.
5. Joshi, P., & Prasad, K. (2024). Institutional support and experiential learning among university students. *Asian Journal of Educational Management*, 13(1), 75–88.
6. Lawrence, P. (2022). Institutional support systems and student work culture. *International Journal of Higher Education Studies*, 10(4), 90–102.
7. Mathew, J., & Abraham, T. (2021). Social perceptions of part-time work among Indian students. *Indian Journal of Youth and Society*, 7(2), 33–47.
8. Nair, S., & D'Souza, M. (2025). Overseas education and changing attitudes toward labour among Indian students. *Global Education and Employability Review*, 6(1), 14–29.
9. Raman, V. (2023). Balancing academics and employment: A study on student work-life management. *Journal of Educational Psychology and Development*, 12(2), 58–69.
10. Verma, S., & Das, R. (2024). Cultural intelligence and employability among international students. *International Review of Education and Workforce Development*, 18(3), 101–115.