



CHALLENGES AND COPING STRATEGIES OF INTERFACE COMPUTER COLLEGE, INC. WORKING STUDENTS ON OFFICE OF THE STUDENT AFFAIRS AND SERVICES (OSAS) PROGRAMS: BASES FOR PROGRAM RECOMMENDATION

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study explored the challenges encountered and the coping strategies employed by working students at Interface Computer College, Inc. during the Academic Year 2025–2026. The findings revealed that working students experience interconnected challenges that limit their participation in OSAS programs, including time constraints, competing responsibilities, financial obligations, schedule conflicts, and physical fatigue. These difficulties often lead students to prioritize work over institutional activities because of practical and financial needs rather than a lack of interest. Despite these challenges, working students demonstrated resilience by practicing effective time management and prioritization, focusing on income-generating activities, and using adaptive scheduling and communication strategies with teachers and OSAS personnel. The results emphasize the need for more flexible, inclusive, and supportive OSAS programs that recognize the unique circumstances of working students and promote their well-being and engagement.

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Keywords: *Challenges, Coping Strategies, Working Students, Office of the Student Affairs and Services*

INTRODUCTION

Combining paid work with post-secondary studies has become a common survival and opportunity strategy for many college students. Working students—those who engage in part-time or full-time employment while enrolled in college—face a complex set of demands as they try to meet academic expectations, fulfill job responsibilities, and manage family or personal obligations. (Balacuit et al. 2022). Despite experiencing and facing various challenges, working students tend to find alternative ways to overcome difficulties.

Research in higher education consistently shows that employment can affect class attendance, study time, academic performance, mental health, and participation in campus life. At the same time, work can provide important financial resources, practical skills, and personal growth that help students persist and succeed.

Interface Computer College, Inc., like many private higher-education institutions, offers a range of services and programs through its Office of Student Affairs and Services (OSAS). It plays a pivotal role in fostering holistic student development and entrusted with the responsibility of delivering services and programs that enrich students' academic experiences, thereby nurturing their skills, attitudes, interest, and work ethics to mold them into academically and socially adept individuals. (Balisi et al. 2025). While these programs are

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designed to support the general student population, working students often experience unique barriers that limit their ability to benefit fully from OSAS offerings—scheduling conflicts, limited time to participate, financial instability, and increased stress are commonly reported constraints.

Despite the importance of institutional support, there is a notable gap in localized, institution-specific research that examines how working students at Interface Computer College navigate the intersection between employment and engagement with OSAS programs. Understanding the particular challenges these students face—academic, psychosocial, financial, and logistical—and the coping strategies they adopt (time management, prioritization, social and peer support, use of institutional services, adaptive work arrangements, etc.) is crucial for tailoring OSAS interventions that effectively promote retention and student success. Moreover, documenting which OSAS programs are accessed, underused, or mismatched with working students’ needs will help administrators design more inclusive, flexible, and responsive support systems.

This study examined the challenges faced by working students at Interface Computer College in relation to OSAS programs and the coping strategies they use to balance academic and work demands. Guided by stress and coping frameworks, it explored how individual, social, and institutional factors influence students’ persistence and well-being.

The findings aimed to provide practical evidence for OSAS staff and administrators to improve scheduling, communication, counseling, and policies that better support working students.

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Ultimately, the study sought to contribute to local program development and to recommend ways to reduce barriers, strengthen support systems, and enhance students' academic success.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Methodology

This chapter presents the research methodology, including the research design, participants, research instrument, data-gathering procedures, and data analysis employed in the study. It aims to examine the challenges encountered and coping strategies used by working students in relation to the Office of Student Affairs and Services (OSAS) programs at Interface Computer College, Inc. during the School Year 2025–2026.

Research Method

The study employed a descriptive research method within a qualitative framework, utilizing in-depth interviews as the primary data collection technique. Descriptive research seeks to systematically present and interpret a phenomenon as it naturally occurs, without manipulating any variables.

As explained by Elliott (2025), this approach aims to provide an accurate representation of existing conditions, practices, or relationships in educational contexts, allowing researchers to identify patterns, trends, and practical implications. It is particularly appropriate for educational research that intends to examine and document real-life experiences, behaviors, and perceptions in their natural environment (Elliott, 2025).

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During the data gathering process, the interviewer and interviewee were seated at a comfortable distance to facilitate open communication and thoughtful reflection on the series of questions related to the topic. The primary objective of the interview was to obtain essential insights and perspectives from the participants regarding a specific issue within a social context, based on their responses to the prepared questions.

Research Design

The study adopted a phenomenological research design, which is grounded in a philosophical approach to qualitative inquiry. Phenomenology seeks to understand how individuals perceive and interpret their experiences, particularly how their personal views of the world may differ from widely accepted perspectives.

This approach emphasizes a person’s subjective understanding of lived experiences. Data are typically gathered through in-depth interviews to capture participants’ insights and reflections, and the method is commonly applied in disciplines such as psychology, sociology, and social work.

Phenomenology centers on examining the structures of consciousness from a first-person point of view. Its primary objective is to explore and describe phenomena as they are directly experienced, without relying on preconceived theories about their causes or allowing unexamined assumptions to influence interpretation (Biemel and Spiegelberg, 2024).

Respondents of the Study

This study utilized ten (10) respondents purposely chosen from selected college working students of Interface Computer College, Inc. school year 2025-2026.

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These respondents must be working students of Interface Computer College, Inc. from the Information Technology Department and Business Education Department.

They were chosen based on the following criteria: (a) working students who enrolled for Academic Year 2025-2026, (b) been a working student for more than one year, and (c) came from a low-income family willing to participate in an interview and share their experiences.

Sampling Design

The study utilized purposive sampling as its participant selection method.

Nikolopoulou (2023) explained that purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling technique in which participants are intentionally selected based on characteristics that are directly relevant to the study.

In this method, individuals are chosen because they possess the specific experiences, knowledge, or qualities needed to address the research objectives.

Also referred to as judgmental sampling, purposive sampling relies on the researcher's careful judgment in identifying participants, cases, or events that can provide rich and meaningful information consistent with the purpose of the study.

Research Instrument

The study utilized a researcher-made interview schedule as its primary research instrument. The interview schedule consisted of three major questions centered on the challenges encountered by working students, the coping strategies they employed, and the effectiveness of these strategies in relation to their participation in the Office of Student Affairs

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and Services programs. In addition, voice and video recorders were used for data gathering and documentation, subject to the consent of the participants.

Validity of the Research Instrument

Before establishing the validity of the interview schedule developed by the researcher, it was first submitted to the research adviser, the Dean of the Graduate School, and a panel of evaluators recognized for their expertise in research, testing and assessment, and English. These experts were asked to examine each question carefully and provide recommendations for revision, refinement, or improvement.

Validity pertains to the degree to which the results, interpretations, and conclusions of a study accurately and appropriately represent the concept being investigated. It ensures that the research instrument measures what it is designed to measure and that the findings genuinely reflect reality. In determining content validity, the items and overall structure of the instrument must be consistent with the study's variables and objectives, ensuring that each question properly captures the construct being examined.

This procedure commonly involves expert evaluation to assess the relevance, clarity, and representativeness of the items. By aligning the instrument's content and format with the research framework, the credibility and applicability of the gathered data are strengthened (Creswell & Creswell, 2023).

The feedback, revisions, and recommendations provided by the panel of validators concerning the interview schedule were incorporated using the appropriate evaluation format developed by Good and Scates (1972), as cited by Soqueña (2021).

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Data Gathering Procedures

The researcher secured the necessary permissions from the adviser, the Dean of the Graduate School, the Office of the College President of Interface Computer College, the Office of Student Affairs and Services, the Program Heads, and the individual participants before conducting the study. To carry out the interviews, the researcher personally visited the school, the community, or any other location convenient for the participants.

The participants were approached during their free time and were asked for their cooperation in answering the interview questions. They were assured that all information and responses provided would be treated with strict confidentiality.

Before the interview proper, the participants were informed about the nature and purpose of the study and were requested to sign a consent form indicating their voluntary participation. Follow-up questions were also asked when necessary to obtain more detailed and meaningful responses.

Data were gathered through in-depth interviews, with the use of voice and video recorders to ensure that the participants' responses were fully documented.

After completing the series of interviews, the researcher organized and consolidated all the data collected.

Data Analyses

The data gathered for the study were transcribed, interpreted, and analyzed using thematic analysis. Braun and Clarke (2006; in Blanza, 2022) Thematic analysis will be used to recognize common patterns, themes, and categories in the participants' responses. Through

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this iterative process, a comprehensive understanding of the adversities faced by students in research-making was attained, laying the groundwork for the development of targeted learning enhancement strategies tailored to students' needs and experiences.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study determined the challenges and coping strategies of working students in Interface Computer College, Inc. during the school year 2025-2026.

The research method utilized in the study was descriptive method under qualitative method using in-depth interview. The research design was the phenomenological research design.

The participants of the study were the ten (10) selected college working students from different courses, of Interface Computer College, Inc. AY 2025-2026.

The researcher-made interview schedule was used and validated by the experts. The interview was scheduled during the students' vacant time. Formal letter was delivered personally and via email to the program head, OSA and College president of whom, would approve and allow the participants for the said interview.

The researcher personally went to the school and conducted the in-depth interview. Voice recorder and video recorder were used for data gathering upon the permission of the participants.

The researcher consolidated were collected data after a series of interviews. The narratives were gathered, transcribed, analyzed, and interpreted using thematic approach.

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During the in-depth interview with the participants, it was found out that the challenges encountered by working students on their participation in the Office of the Students Affairs and Services were time constraints and competing responsibilities, financial responsibility, schedule of conflicts, and physical fatigue.

The coping strategies of working students in their participation and engagement in Office of the Students Affairs and Services based on the results of the in-depth interview were time management and prioritization strategies, prioritize income-generating activities, adaptive scheduling and communication strategies.

CONCLUSION

The findings show that working students of Interface Computer College, Inc. face multiple interconnected challenges that significantly affect their participation in OSAS programs. Time constraints, competing responsibilities, schedule conflicts, financial obligations, and physical fatigue make it difficult for them to balance work, studies, and extracurricular involvement.

As a result, many students prioritize employment to meet educational and personal expenses. Their limited participation is therefore not due to a lack of interest, but to practical demands and survival needs.

Despite these challenges, working students demonstrate resilience through effective coping strategies. They manage their time, prioritize essential responsibilities, and use

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adaptive scheduling and open communication with instructors and OSAS personnel to handle conflicts and meet requirements.

While these strategies reflect their resourcefulness and determination, the findings also highlight the need for more flexible, inclusive, and responsive OSAS programs that better support the unique circumstances of working students.



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