

Abstract

Despite the extensive body of empirical research, the discussion on whether student employment impedes or improves educational outcomes has not been resolved. Using meta-analytic methods, we conduct a quantitative review of 861 effect estimates collected from 69 studies describing the relationship between student work experience and academic performance. After outlining the theoretical mechanisms and methodological challenges of estimating the effect, we test whether publication bias permeates the literature concerning educational implications of student employment. We find that researchers report negative estimates more often than they should. However, this negative publication bias is not present in a subset of studies controlling for the endogeneity of student decision to take up employment. Furthermore, after correcting for the negative publication bias, we find that the student employment-education relationship is close to zero. Additionally, we examine heterogeneity of the estimates using Bayesian Model Averaging. Our analysis suggests that employment intensity and controlling for student permanent characteristics are the most important factors in explaining the heterogeneity. In particular, working long hours results in systematically more negative effect estimates than not working at all or working only a few hours per week. In contrast, studies accounting for student pre-existing characteristics such as ability yield consistently positive estimates.

JEL Classification I21, I20, I23, C11

Keywords student employment and educational outcomes, meta-analysis, publication bias, Bayesian Model Averaging

Title The Impact of Student Employment on Educational Outcomes: A Meta-Analysis