



Should part-time work opportunities be open to high school students?

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After completing their O levels, I have seen some of my classmates work as teachers' assistants in coaching centres where they previously attended classes in. Many of my seniors, who were then A level students, were offered to grade test papers of junior classes and received payment based on the number of copies they checked. I, too, have considered looking for tuition gigs in order to gain some work experience as well as earn some money.

Although it is not common for school students in Bangladesh to engage in formal work alongside pursuing their education, many of us still seek out opportunities that would allow us to earn a certain sum of money in exchange for work, without interfering with our academic schedules. For some students, this could be a lookout for a side hustle, while others may need to support their families financially.

In many countries, part-time job opportunities, such as working at food service and retail stores, are usually open to high school students. It is common for students to work summer jobs during school vacations or take up weekend shifts where they are required to work a set number of hours. According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, a total of 53.1 percent of young people in the US are employed, including 16 to 24-year-olds, as of July 2025.

Early exposure to the workplace environment can actually return several benefits and open doors to a myriad of opportunities. For instance, working part-time is a great way for students to gain hands-on experience and real-life skills that may prove to be useful afterwards in life. It helps to instil essential soft skills, including communication, teamwork, time management, and conflict resolution, among teenagers, as well as grow a distinct social network outside their ordinary circle.

Moreover, learning to navigate workplace expectations, meeting deadlines, and interacting with co-workers or customers are key attributes necessary to survive the workplace dynamic. Fostering a sense of professionalism from an early age not only builds confidence but also makes

it easier for adolescents to transition into the labour force as young adults. Besides, for students who aim to develop a strong resume, these experiences equip them with practical examples to showcase their skills and work ethic, which can set them apart from other applicants when applying for future jobs or higher education opportunities.

Engaging in paid work at some point during your high-school years allows you to take on multiple responsibilities at once and learn to work out a balance between them. It can also teach important lessons about managing money, encouraging financial independence, and helping students develop responsible spending and saving habits.

That being said, in a country like ours, where child labour is already a pressing concern existing in various forms, the idea of expanding employment opportunities for minors could potentially open up the risk of exploitation. In the absence of proper safeguards, young workers could be subjected to working under low wages, with excessive work hours or unsafe conditions. Many may lack the confidence or awareness to recognise when they are being handled unfairly, making them more vulnerable to mistreatment.

Besides, such circumstances can likely take a toll on a student's academic performance, as long or irregular work hours often leave little time or energy for studying. For those already struggling to keep up, balancing work and school can become overwhelming, and the immediate need to earn money may start to outweigh the long-term benefits of completing their education. In certain cases, students who choose to work out of financial necessity may even consider dropping out of school entirely if completing their education no longer remains a priority or viable option.

Therefore, it is very important to keep these challenges in mind as cautionary steps if we want to present teenage employment in a positive light. For instance, the type of work being offered to school-going kids should be age-appropriate and not too physically demanding. This could include various jobs such as working in telesales, serving

food at restaurants, or moderating social media business platforms.

At the same time, it is crucial to recognise that not all students will benefit equally from employment. Factors such as social background, prior academic involvement, and mental health influence whether working is actually perceived as an enjoyable experience or an additional source of strain and burnout. For example, students who come with certain existing privileges may find it easier to balance work and school, and as a result, their experiences will turn out to be completely different from those of others who may be carrying a financial burden.

In fact, in Bangladesh, the idea of having part-time jobs itself is not a widely accepted concept even among university students. The job market remains highly saturated, with a limited number of openings that often prioritise hiring full-time employees or those with prior experience. The question of whether or not high school students should be integrated into the labour force, therefore, contradicts the present scenario of the employment landscape in several ways.

Still, part-time work opportunities can surely serve as a great way for school students to gain real-world experience and practical skills, given that they are presented under the right circumstances. As evident from the post-July uprising of last year, when students took control over traffic management in the absence of authority figures, many of whom were schoolgoers, they have proven their ability to take on responsibility and perform effectively even under challenging situations. Ultimately, by prioritising safe and well-structured work environments and ensuring that teenagers are not placed in situations that could harm their well-being or future prospects, it is possible to create opportunities that benefit young people as well as the state at large.

Reference:

Bureau of Labor Statistics (August 21, 2025). *Employment and Unemployment Among Youth Summary*.