Comparative Analysis of Campus Life Experiences Between Mainstream Daytime Students and their Evening-Attendance Counterparts

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ABSTRACT

This research conducts a comparative examination between daytime and evening attendance students of the campus life experiences at a selected university of technology in South Africa. In a context marked by massification and the growing demand for equitable access to higher education, evening programmes have emerged as a strategic solution to extend institutional capacity and cater to non-traditional learners. These programs also create opportunities for out-of-classroom learning (OCL), enabling students, particularly those engaged in employment or caregiving, to pursue academic advancement while balancing work and life responsibilities. Using a mixed-methods approach involving surveys, focus groups, and observational studies, the study investigates disparities in academic performance, social involvement, student well-being, and engagement with informal learning opportunities. The findings reveal that while evening students report higher satisfaction with campus life, they face persistent barriers related to commuting, campus safety, and limited access to co-curricular programmes, internships, and professional networking opportunities. In contrast, daytime students demonstrate a broader but more uneven spectrum of engagement and well-being, often shaped by rigid academic scheduling and competing responsibilities. This investigation highlights the transformative potential of evening programmes in expanding access, supporting student mobility, and promoting inclusive forms of student success. It also reinforces the role of OCL as a critical enabler of flexibility and resilience, especially for students navigating multiple responsibilities. The study calls on institutions to develop flexible timetables, enhanced support services, and targeted interventions that address the unique needs of students learning beyond traditional classroom hours, particularly in preparing for future employability in a post-pandemic educational landscape.

Introduction

Higher education has recently experienced a substantial surge in student enrolment, driven by various economic and societal factors. As universities strive to expand access and financial sustainability, they face increasing pressure to accommodate a growing number of students. In South Africa, the statistics reveal a significant rise in enrolment, with a 102.8% increase between 2011 and 2019 (Filho & de Freitas Barreiro, 2012; IOL Online, 2022). For the 2023 academic year, public universities in South Africa were projected to offer 1.1 million spaces, an increase from the previous year's 1.07 million. However, with over 830,000 students passing the National Senior Certificate (NSC) the previous year, the challenge of accommodating all these students remained significant. For example, the University of the Witwatersrand (WITS) received over 100,000 applications but had only 6,000 spaces for first-year students. Similarly, the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) had 8,500 spaces available despite receiving 250,000 applications, and the University of Johannesburg (UJ) had about 10,500 openings (Makwea, 2023).

In 2022, public universities in South Africa admitted only 200,000 first-year students, less than a quarter of the applications received. Universities nationwide received more than a million applications for that year, highlighting the growing demand for higher education (Nonyukela, 2022). This rapid expansion has placed immense strain on available resources and infrastructure, raising concerns about the quality of education and the student-to-faculty ratios. A study by Mohamedbhai (2014) found that massification was caused by the need for African public higher education institutions to respond to historical conditions and address equity issues. However, massification has negative consequences on educational quality, and graduation rates in higher education in Africa still need to improve. Higher education institutions and governments have taken several corrective measures to address the consequences of massification, including creating new institutions and putting quality assurance systems in place (Mohamedbhai, 2014).

To address the challenges posed by the rapidly expanding student population in higher education, innovative solutions are crucial. One promising approach gaining traction is the implementation of evening programmes within universities. By offering courses during non-traditional hours, universities can maximise their existing infrastructure, ensuring efficient utilisation of facilities that might otherwise remain underutilised during evenings. This enhances an institution's capacity to accommodate students and provides an accessible avenue for individuals with work or family commitments during regular daytime hours (Malumani, 2014).

However, evening classes have challenges that are often overlooked, especially in South Africa. These challenges include physical and mental strain, difficulty commuting during late hours, concerns about personal safety, and the stress of juggling work and academic commitments. Balancing classroom attendance with work demands can be particularly taxing for students. Moreover, issues related to the availability and reliability of public transportation during evening hours, and the potential risks associated with travelling late at night, are important concerns that must be addressed. These factors can significantly impact the well-being and academic performance of evening students. Therefore, universities must consider these logistical and welfare issues to ensure a successful and supportive learning environment for all students enrolled in evening programmes.

This research seeks valuable insights into educational institutions, aiming to enhance the quality of campus life for all students. It explores the following questions: How do the campus life experiences of daytime and evening-attendance students differ? (Encompassing factors like workload, access to educational resources, and academic performance). And what social engagement patterns can be observed among daytime and evening students?

Background

In the realm of higher education, the impact of evening classes on students' academic performance and well-being remains a relatively underexplored area of study, particularly within the South African context. While research on this subject is sparse, I have compiled the limited available literature to construct a comprehensive overview. Additionally, to broaden our understanding and draw parallels, I have incorporated studies from other relevant fields, including international literature on day and night shift work. This amalgamation of insights from academic and occupational sectors across North America, South America, Asia, and Europe allows us to delineate patterns and implications crucial for understanding the unique challenges of evening educational settings globally.

In a United States (US)-based 2009 study, Lazari examined students' academic achievements in college algebra classes, contrasting those attending morning sessions with those in the evening. She observed that students in morning sessions consistently scored better in mid-term and final evaluations. Lazari pinpointed several potential reasons for this discrepancy, including exhaustion due to work or familial duties, and a higher absence rate among evening attendees. She also

suggested that morning students, often full-time enrollees, may exhibit greater academic determination. Lazari recommended targeted institutional support, such as flexible coursework and additional assistance, for evening students (Lazari, 2009).

In her study conducted in 2016 at a prestigious women's liberal arts college in the US, Elizabeth Lee explored the nuances of class differentiation among stakeholders. Her research, based on two years of fieldwork and over 140 interviews with students, faculty, administrators, and alumni, revealed how socio-economic status shaped campus life. Students from wealthier backgrounds often participated in expensive extracurriculars and accessed enhanced academic resources, while those from modest backgrounds focused more on employment and advocacy-oriented groups. Lee's findings underscore how class differences inform both academic trajectories and social integration, offering valuable parallels to the experiences of part-time and evening students in other global contexts (Lee, 2016).

Furthermore, Lee emphasises that these socio-economic disparities influence academic trajectories. Affluent students often benefit from enhanced educational aids, such as private coaching and specialised preparatory courses, potentially positioning them at the academic forefront. In contrast, students from economically challenged backgrounds might need more academic resources. Lee's investigation offers profound insights into the intricate web of class distinctions in tertiary education, showcasing how class infuses college life's social and academic dimensions. Her revelations are invaluable to stakeholders, especially those keen on nurturing a balanced and welcoming academic milieu (Lee, 2016).

In a 2017 research endeavour, Lee delved into the experiences of part-time students within the Canadian higher education landscape, gleaning information from a survey that included over 2,000 part-time learners. The study sheds light on elements impacting student involvement, perceptions, and persistence among this group. Results from Lee's study show that part-time learners tend to have reduced engagement in academic activities relative to their full-time peers. This group also tends to express more critical views on their educational quality and the institutional support they receive. Moreover, there is a higher likelihood for part-time students to discontinue their studies compared to those enrolled full-time. Lee hypothesises that these variances in participation, viewpoints, and persistence stem from several causes, one of which is limited time availability. With reduced time to dedicate to academic pursuits, part-time students find it arduous to stay abreast with their academic commitments and to immerse themselves in ancillary college activities.

Economic challenges also play a pivotal role; part-time students frequently juggle full-time employment, potentially grappling to cover tuition and related costs. Furthermore, a sentiment of inadequate institutional support often prevails among part-time students, perhaps due to their restricted access to essential academic aids and campus amenities (Lee, 2017).

The 2013 study by Luz and Fischer in "Sleep Medicine" examines the effects of daytime work and evening classes on sleepiness and academic performance among young working students in Brazil. The research, conducted with 20 students aged 14-20 participating in a first job training programme in São Paulo, found that 90% experienced disrupted sleep and reduced school performance due to the combination of work and study. Key factors contributing to their sleep deprivation included late-night internet use for homework and early wake-up times for work. Consequently, students reported declining school performance and grades and increased physical fatigue and sleepiness, negatively impacting their attention and focus at school and work. These findings underscore the necessity for public policies that address the implications of long working hours on young students' sleep, health, and educational outcomes (Luz & Fischer, 2013).

In their 2004 study, Portela, Rotenberg, and Waissmann explored the health and sleep-related concerns of 258 female nurses working 12-hour shifts, day and night. They focused on the prevalence of diseases, sleep issues, and lack of time for personal activities. Interestingly, the study revealed no notable differences in sleep complaints between night and day shift workers, a finding potentially influenced by the shift schedules and opportunities for napping during night shifts. However, nurses working night shifts frequently reported a lack of time for family and leisure activities, highlighting the personal and social challenges associated with night shift work (Portela, Rotenberg & Waissmann, 2004).

The 2017 study by Cheng and Cheng used data from a nationwide survey in Taiwan to explore the effects of night and rotating shifts on sleep problems, burnout, and minor mental disorders among employees. It was found that workers with fixed night shifts experienced the shortest sleep duration, the highest level of burnout, and the highest prevalence of insomnia and minor mental disorders. The study also revealed gender differences, showing that in female workers, fixed night shifts were associated with increased risks for burnout and mental disorders. However, these associations diminished after adjusting for insomnia. This research suggests that fixed night shifts are particularly detrimental to sleep and mental health, and that these associations might be mediated by sleep disturbance (Cheng & Cheng, 2017).

In their 2019 study, Hulsegge, Loef, Van Kerkhof, Roenneberg, Van der Beek and Proper explored sleep disturbances and social jetlag in healthcare workers, focusing on the differences between rotating shift workers and non-shift workers. The study included participants from six Dutch hospitals and utilised Actigraph accelerometers to monitor sleep patterns. It revealed that shift workers, particularly older individuals, and morning chronotypes, were more prone to sleep disturbances than their non-shift working counterparts. This finding underscores the potential health implications of shift work, particularly concerning sleep disruption (Hulsegge et al., 2019).

While limited research exists specifically on evening-attendance students in the South African higher education context, parallels can be drawn from studies on non-standard work schedules, such as night-shift employment. These analogies help highlight the health and engagement challenges associated with unconventional schedules. Nonetheless, further integration of higher education literature, particularly from the Global South, remains essential to contextualise these findings and ground the study within broader pedagogical and policy discussions.

How information from generic literary resources transferred to higher education?

In the research conducted by Williams and Shapiro (Williams & Shapiro, 2018), it was found that scheduling group meetings in the morning led to dropouts due to fatigue and drowsiness. However, after moving the meetings to the afternoon, not only was drowsiness no longer a problem, but the session time could be extended, resulting in more productive discussions and better didactic training. Additionally, research in psychology suggests that performance varies across time of day, and that spacing out learning over time can enhance long-term memory. Furthermore, a study conducted at the US Air Force Academy (Williams and Shapiro, 2018) found evidence of cognitive fatigue caused by scheduling multiple courses in a row. This fatigue had a significant impact on student performance, with expected differences of up to 0.15 standard deviations between students with different schedules. Moreover, the study also revealed that students tend to perform better in the afternoon compared to the early morning. This information from the various sources suggests that there is a relationship between course scheduling and student achievement. It indicates that scheduling classes in the afternoon may lead to better performance and reduce issues related to fatigue and drowsiness. In addition, the research highlights the importance of spacing classes out to prevent cognitive fatigue and improve instructional quality. Overall, the research emphasises the need for a reorganisation of daily school schedules to optimise student performance and enhance

educational interventions. The literature suggests that scheduling classes in the afternoon may lead to better student performance and reduce issues related to fatigue and drowsiness.

Methodology

This study was conducted at a selected university of technology in South Africa and employed a mixed-methods research design to explore and compare the campus life experiences of electrical engineering students attending classes either during the day or in the evening. The study aimed to understand variations in student satisfaction, engagement, well-being, and social involvement based on attendance times.

Quantitative phase

Data was collected using two structured Google Forms surveys tailored for daytime and evening-attendance students, respectively.

Each form consisted of a combination of closed-ended questions, quantified using Likert-scale ratings, multiple-choice items, and optional open-ended responses. Likert-scale items (e.g., satisfaction rated from 1 to 5) were reported using their respective scales so that they could be transformed into quantitative data and analysed using descriptive statistics. Multiple-choice selections were converted into categorical variables to allow for a quantitative comparison between groups. These surveys were disseminated via departmental WhatsApp groups and email lists, targeting students registered in the Electrical Engineering Department.

A total of 208 students, of whom 154 were daytime students, and 54 were evening students, participated in the survey phase. Basic demographic information, such as age, gender, and study schedule, was also captured to facilitate appropriate comparative analysis.

Qualitative phase

To complement the survey data and deepen the understanding of lived experiences, we conducted:
- two focus group discussions (one for daytime students and one for evening students), each consisting of eight participants, and
- one individual in-depth interview with a student representing each attendance group.

Participants for these qualitative sessions were selected using purposive sampling, ensuring representation from diverse age groups, gender identities, and academic standings.

The focus groups and interviews explored students' perceptions of campus safety, workload management, academic support, and access to social activities. All discussions were audio-recorded (with consent), transcribed, and analysed thematically using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework.

Observational study

Additionally, non-participant observational studies were conducted to assess how campus facilities (e.g., library, labs, lounges) were used during daytime and evening hours. These observations were conducted over a period of four weeks and documented patterns in crowding, resource availability, and usage behaviours.

Document review

Institutional documents were reviewed to contextualise findings, including class timetables, resource allocation memos, safety policies, and student support service guidelines.

Data analysis

Quantitative data were analysed using Microsoft Excel to compute frequencies, means, and cross-tabulations. Qualitative data from focus groups and interviews were transcribed and analysed thematically using an inductive coding process guided by Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis: familiarisation, coding, theme development, theme review, theme definition, and final write-up. Emergent themes were triangulated with findings from the survey and observational studies to enhance validity.

Ethical considerations

Ethical clearance for this study was granted by the Mangosuthu University of Technology Research Ethics Committee, under the reference number RD1/11/2023. Informed consent was obtained from

all participants prior to their involvement, and confidentiality was assured throughout the data collection and reporting process.

Results and discussion

Demographic data

A total number of 208 participants is presented in Figure 1, delineating the percentages of attendance, which have been segmented based on age and gender, during various segments of the day. Within the demographic of individuals under the age of 20, it is evident that male presence surpasses that of females, as males are observed to attend more frequently, with a rate of 4% during the daytime and 6% during the evening sessions. In contrast, female attendance is notably absent during the evening period. Moving on to the age bracket, spanning from 20 to 30 years, it becomes apparent that this group exhibits the highest level of active engagement, with 31% of males and 37% of females participating in daytime sessions, in contrast to a lower proportion of 12% males and 2% females attending evening sessions. Interestingly, the data reveals a shift in behaviour among the age ranges of 30 to 40 and 40 to 50 years, with a complete absence of male attendees. At the same time, females were represented only in the evening sessions in the 30–40 and 40–50 age groups, accounting for 4% and 2% respectively.. This statistical evidence implies a discernible pattern wherein younger age groups tend to gravitate towards daytime activities, whereas older females prefer evening commitments, potentially influenced by daytime responsibilities.

	Daytime		Evening	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
under 20	4%	2%	6%	0
20 - 30 years	31%	37%	12%	2%
30 - 40 years	0	0	0	4%
40 - 50 years	0	0	0	2%

Figure 1: Demography of participants

Satisfaction of students based on attendance

The interplay between class attendance timings and student satisfaction and engagement offers a rich tapestry of insights. Using a rating scale of 1 to 5 of level of satisfaction, with 1 being the least satisfied and 5 the very satisfied, students who attend daytime classes generally exhibit a neutral

response towards their campus experience, often rating their satisfaction as moderate, typified by a score of 3. This suggests a balanced, albeit unremarkable, perception of campus life, where neither significant displeasure nor exceptional pleasure is reported. Contrastingly, students in evening classes often report higher satisfaction levels, frequently selecting "Very Satisfied" in surveys, which may be attributed to a range of factors including differing expectations, the unique campus atmosphere at night, or various personal experiences during these hours.

Building on this, an individual highlighted the positive aspects of their experience while attending classes during maternity leave. Despite facing initial challenges, they emphasised the supportive role of their lecturer and study group in overcoming these hurdles and achieving academic success. Additionally, the person found that attending Saturday classes was particularly advantageous as it allowed them to focus better on quizzes and assignments. The lecturer's commitment to keeping them informed about missed lessons further enhanced their positive educational experience. Research supports the significance of attendance in shaping educational satisfaction. Gottfried (2010) posits that regular class attendance is pivotal for student contentment, which correlates strongly with academic performance (Gottfried, 2010). This view is bolstered by Ahmad, Ul-Saufie, Mohamed, Ahmat and Zahari (2018), who confirm the direct relationship between attendance and academic success. Conversely, irregular attendance, which may be influenced by external commitments such as part-time work, adversely affects student satisfaction. This underscores the necessity for educational institutions to encourage consistent attendance to foster higher academic achievement and enhance student life (Ahmad et al., 2018).

Despite the disparity in satisfaction, both daytime and evening students show limited engagement in social activities on campus. Daytime students are particularly disengaged, often reporting that they "Never" participate in on-campus social events or clubs. Evening students, while slightly more involved, still describe their participation as "Rarely." However, the higher satisfaction levels among evening students suggest that their contentment may derive from other aspects of their university experience such as positive academic interactions, supportive administrative services, and/or a sense of community during quieter campus periods.

Dunker and Belcastro (1993) highlight an interesting anomaly where daytime students expressed greater satisfaction with academic advising compared to their evening counterparts, despite similar access and scheduling opportunities. This further complicates the landscape of student satisfaction,

indicating that factors such as advising play a crucial role yet operate differently across student cohorts (Dunker & Belcastro, 1993).

Kärnä, Julin and Nenonen (2013) also emphasise the crucial role of attendance in determining student satisfaction, aligning with the broader research narrative that effective management of educational facilities and student services is essential for maximising student satisfaction and overall academic success (KärnäJulin & Nenonen, 2013).

The analysis presented herein illustrates the complex nature of student satisfaction and engagement, revealing that simple measures of social involvement might not fully capture the multifaceted elements that contribute to a fulfilling university experience.
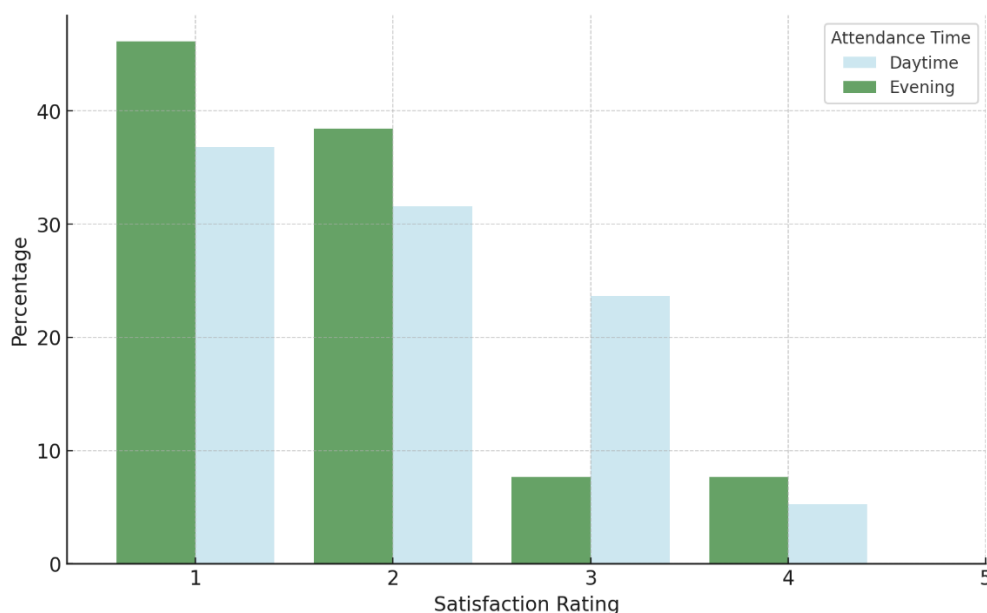

Figure 2: Distribution of satisfaction ratings by attendance time (percentage)

Participation in social events

An exploration into the engagement patterns of students in campus social activities reveals distinct differences between daytime and evening attendees. Students who attend during the day frequently report not participating in these activities. This trend suggests that daytime students, due to denser schedules and/or external commitments, have less time or inclination for extracurricular involvement compared to their evening counterparts. In contrast, evening students show a tendency

to participate, albeit 'Rarely', indicating potentially more flexible schedules or different priorities that allow for occasional engagement.

Interestingly, 'Daily' participation in social activities is exclusively reported by a small segment of daytime students. This implies that while the majority of daytime students are less involved, a specific subgroup engages highly in activities that align with their schedules or personal preferences. Additionally, 'Monthly' participation is also more common among daytime students, highlighting a pattern of sporadic but existent engagement, possibly driven by events tailored to specific interests or occurring less frequently.

Despite less frequent participation, evening students demonstrate a consistent, though low, level of involvement in social activities, suggesting a balance between academic responsibilities and limited social interactions. This contrasts with the daytime student population, which exhibits a polarised engagement spectrum, ranging from minimal to very active participation, reflecting diverse levels of involvement within the community.

The role of social activities in fostering individual growth and development is well-documented. Engaging in such activities enhances students' social relationships, identity development, civic engagement, and mental health (Aartsen & Hansen, 2020). However, the extent of participation in these activities can be influenced by several factors, including part-time employment, the scheduling of classes and assignments, and overall academic performance (Gottfried, 2010).

This analysis highlights the complex dynamics of student engagement in campus social activities and underscores the need for educational institutions to consider these varying patterns when designing programmes that cater to the diverse needs of their student body.
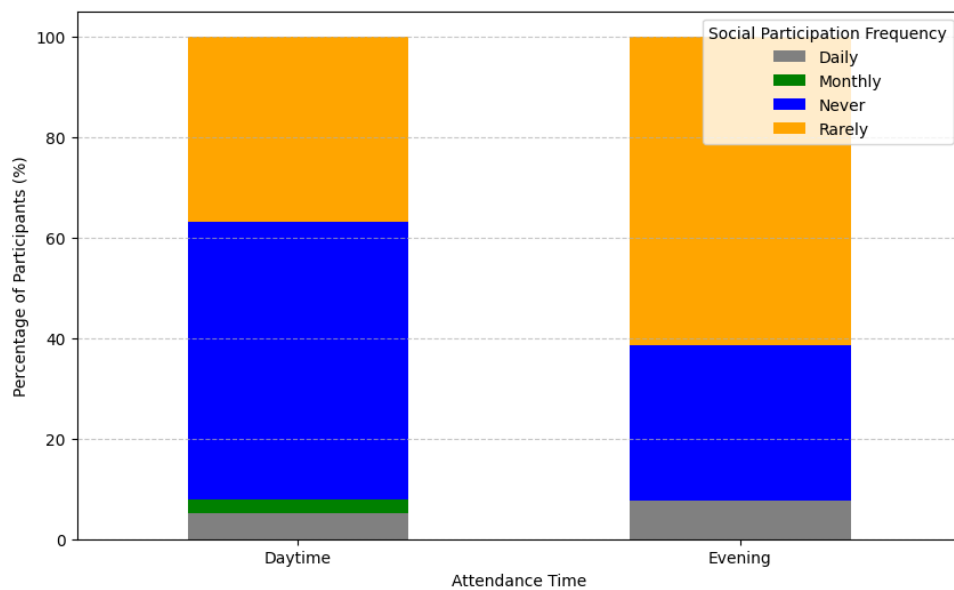
Figure 3: Participation in on-campus social events and clubs

Impact of classes attendance time on participation in social activities

Investigating the correlation between students' class attendance times and their participation in social activities reveals notable behavioural distinctions between daytime and evening students. A significant number of daytime students report that their attendance schedule does not negatively impact their social engagement, with many asserting no discernible influence. However, a considerable portion of these students also express that their schedules might occasionally interfere with their social activities, with their responses ranging from 'Maybe' to 'Yes', suggesting varying degrees of conflict or uncertainty. In contrast, evening students more frequently perceive their class times as a barrier to participating in social activities. A higher percentage of these students indicate a direct clash between their academic commitments and social opportunities, as evident from the predominance of 'Yes' responses. Additionally, the response 'Maybe' is common among evening students, highlighting ongoing uncertainty regarding the compatibility of their academic schedules with social engagement. The interplay between attendance time and social participation is a focal point of interest for researchers, educators, policymakers, and parents alike (Gottfried, 2010). Studies consistently demonstrate that regular attendance is crucial not only for academic success but also for fostering social competencies and behaviours. Students who regularly attend classes tend to have better opportunities to engage in extracurricular activities, clubs, and social events, both within and outside the school environment. Moreover, the literature establishes a positive correlation between consistent class attendance and enhanced academic performance, further

emphasising that students committed to their educational obligations are likely to exhibit higher levels of social involvement.

This analysis underscores the complexities of how class attendance times can influence student engagement in social activities, necessitating thoughtful scheduling and policy considerations to optimise both academic and social experiences for students.
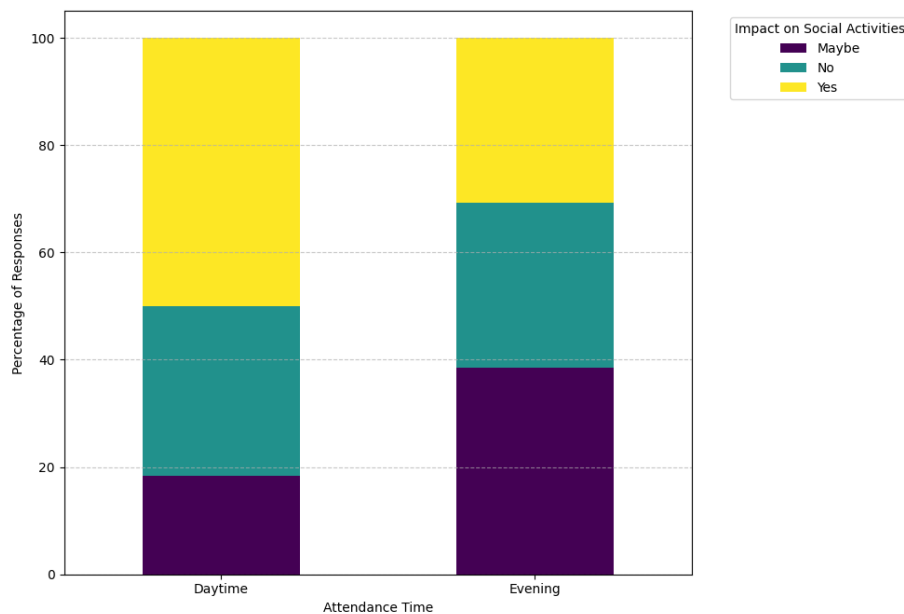

Figure 4: Impact of attendance time on participation in social activities

Students' well-being on campus

The examination of well-being assessments among students, considering their attendance times— daytime versus evening—yields significant insights into their perceived satisfaction levels on campus. Daytime students display a broad spectrum of well-being ratings, spanning from low to high, which suggests a varied range of experiences and possibly differing challenges or advantages associated with regular educational hours. The notable presence of both extremely high and low ratings underscores that while some daytime students thrive, others may face significant hardships. Evening students often exhibit a narrower range of well-being scores, generally centered around the middle to upper levels, indicating a more consistently positive or at least satisfactory well-being. This consistency may be attributed to factors such as less crowded campus facilities, reduced stress from daytime obligations, and a curriculum that aligns better with their personal and professional lives.

One student highlighted that balancing personal life and well-being with academic commitments during the day is a significant challenge that demands excellent multitasking skills. Many students find that their personal time is frequently spent catching up with schoolmates for study sessions and revisions. For some, true leisure time becomes nearly impossible to attain, as it is often consumed by studying or work-related activities.

This scenario underscores the intense nature of managing academic responsibilities while trying to maintain personal well-being. The higher concentration of positive well-being scores among evening students suggests that those who opt for or require evening classes find the arrangement sufficiently supportive. Conversely, the diverse well-being outcomes among daytime students may reflect a larger and more heterogeneous student body with varied needs and expectations from campus life, which may not be uniformly met.
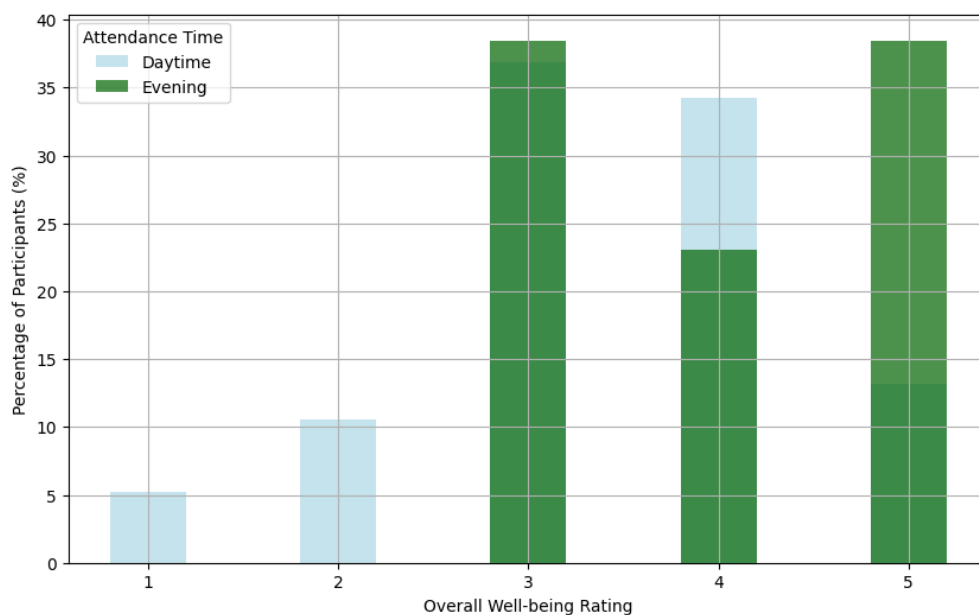

Figure 5: Overall well-being on campus by attendance time

During times of campus adjustments, such as those necessitated by the pandemic, the need for accessible off-campus resources and emergency services becomes crucial (Harris, Maher & Wentworth, 2022). Higher education institutions must prioritise mental health by providing and promoting supportive resources for students, faculty, and staff. This includes adopting a comprehensive public health approach to foster a supportive community that addresses emotional well-being, reduces risks of suicide, and combats substance abuse on campus.

Furthermore, the impact of attendance timing on well-being is marked by distinct challenges faced by daytime and evening students. A significant number of daytime students report occasionally or frequently experiencing difficulties that adversely affect their well-being, likely due to conflicts arising from typical working hour schedules. This may lead to increased stress or decreased well-being for some.

However, evening students, despite also facing challenges, generally report fewer issues, likely due to their academic schedules not clashing with standard working hours. When challenges do arise for evening students, they tend to have a profound impact on their well-being, as indicated by the relatively high frequency of "Yes" responses.

These observations underscore the need for tailored support services. Daytime students could benefit from more accessible stress management resources and flexible scheduling options, whereas evening students might require targeted support to address their unique challenges. Implementing such differentiated support mechanisms is essential for ensuring that all students receive the necessary assistance to maintain their well-being during their academic pursuits.
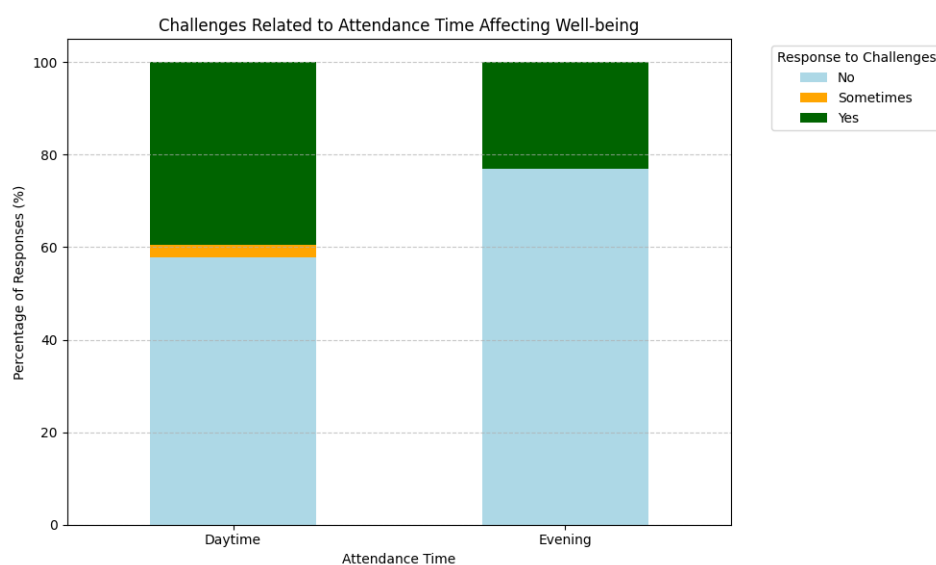

Figure 6: Challenges related to attendance time affecting well-being

Implications for employability and career readiness

The study's findings also carry important implications for students' career readiness and post-graduation opportunities. Evening-attendance students, often balancing full-time employment or

family obligations alongside their studies, are less likely to engage in structured OCL experiences such as internships, mentorship programmes, or on-campus employer networking events. While this cohort may gain real-world experience through their concurrent work roles, they frequently miss out on institutionally facilitated professional development opportunities that daytime students are more likely to access. This limits their exposure to formal career guidance services and may affect their competitiveness in graduate job markets that value academic performance and demonstrated professional engagement (Tomlinson, 2017).

Conversely, while daytime students often have better access to career services and internships due to schedule alignment, their engagement is not uniform. The demands of part-time work, commuting, and academic overload can still inhibit full participation in employability-enhancing activities. These disparities underline the need for universities to adopt more inclusive and flexible employability interventions, such as asynchronous career workshops, evening employer panels, and online mentorship matching, to support diverse student needs. Institutions must also consider recognising work-based learning for credit and incorporating career development more explicitly into both daytime and evening curricula, ensuring all students, regardless of schedule, graduate with the professional competencies expected in the modern workplace (Jackson & Wilton, 2017).

Conclusion and recommendations

This study reveals clear distinctions in the campus life experiences of daytime and evening-attendance students. Daytime students report a broader range of well-being and social engagement outcomes, some highly positive, others significantly negative, highlighting the diverse and often inconsistent experiences they encounter. In contrast, evening students display more stable, albeit moderately positive, levels of satisfaction and involvement. This consistency may be attributed to factors such as reduced campus congestion and fewer overlaps with daytime obligations, which allow for a more structured and manageable academic experience.

Furthermore, the findings indicate that attendance timing influences not only academic performance but also student well-being and levels of social engagement. Evening students, while participating less frequently in campus activities, maintain a more consistent experience, suggesting that their routines may be more aligned with their personal responsibilities. Conversely, daytime students face fluctuating levels of participation and satisfaction, often shaped by competing

demands from employment, academic load, and family life. These results suggest that external responsibilities play a crucial role in shaping students' ability to integrate fully into university life.

Recommendations

Based on these findings, several institutional responses are proposed to enhance the campus experiences of both student groups and promote equity, accessibility, and mobility in line with the broader goals of out-of-classroom learning.

Firstly, universities should adopt more flexible scheduling models, including evening, weekend, and hybrid class formats. These changes will support students balancing educational pursuits with employment, caregiving, or other responsibilities. Academic calendars should also offer rolling deadlines, modular coursework, and asynchronous learning components to accommodate non-traditional learners.

Secondly, institutions must develop tailored support services responsive to the differing needs of student groups. For daytime students, this could include expanded mental health support, time management workshops, and academic counselling during peak stress periods. For evening students, strategies should include:

- Extended library and lab access until late evening hours
- Dedicated evening academic advisors
- Online tutoring platforms

These services would ensure equitable academic support across attendance times.

Thirdly, safety and mobility concerns, especially for evening students, must be addressed proactively. Universities should implement night shuttle services, secure well-lit walking paths, and subsidised transportation vouchers for late-night commuters. Collaborations with local authorities to enhance off-campus security around evening hours would further support safe access.

Fourthly, community-building initiatives should reflect the diversity of student schedules and identities. Social, academic, and professional development events should be offered at staggered times, including evenings and weekends, and made available through hybrid delivery. Student organisations should be encouraged and resourced to engage full-time and part-time cohorts.

Finally, institutional policy should integrate routine assessments of student engagement, well-being, and academic satisfaction, disaggregated by attendance mode and demographic profile. This data will allow for evidence-based decision-making and ensure interventions reach the most vulnerable student populations.

Further research

To build on this study, future research should consider conducting longitudinal analyses to observe how academic scheduling impacts student outcomes over time. Additionally, comparative studies across institutions or disciplines could provide a broader understanding of how contextual factors influence the effectiveness of evening programmes and flexible learning models in diverse educational settings.

Implications for out-of-classroom learning

The findings of this study contribute meaningfully to the growing discourse on OCL within the context of the Global South. Evening programmes represent an increasingly vital mode of delivery for higher education institutions seeking to expand access, manage massification's effects, and address non-traditional learners' needs. By enabling students to engage with academic content outside of standard daytime schedules, evening attendance supports educational participation for working adults, caregivers, and those balancing multiple roles. This model, while challenging, enhances flexibility and reduces pressure on overstretched campus infrastructure. Moreover, the positive well-being and satisfaction outcomes among evening students observed in this study highlight the potential of non-traditional schedules to promote inclusion and transformation in higher education. These findings are particularly relevant in post-pandemic educational planning, where hybrid and asynchronous modalities are increasingly being adopted to foster broader access and equity.

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