The purpose of the present research is to increase our knowledge about adolescent part-time work during the school year, and to examine the association between work and deviant behaviour among Finnish lower-level secondary school students.

Three data (Finnish Self-Report Delinquency Studies 1998 and 2001, and School Health Promotion Survey 2000) were analysed in four separate articles. In addition, the study includes the summary article. In two of the original papers the relationship between adolescent part-time work and delinquency was studied, one article explored the association between work and heavy drinking while the remaining one examined the relationship between work and drug use. There is a sound basis for a generalisation of the results for 14 to 16 year-olds.

The study shows that there is a significant association between intensive (more than 10 hrs per week) adolescent part-time work and an increased likelihood of delinquency, heavy drinking and drug use. Intensive work and 'adult-like' jobs do not keep adolescents 'off the streets' or 'out of trouble'. Part-time work cannot therefore be used as a strategy for preventing deviant behaviour.

However, intensive work was not among the factors most strongly associated with an increased likelihood of deviant behaviour. Common criminological variables, such as parental control and peer-related variables, as well as other relevant variables, such as gender and disposable allowances, were more strongly associated with various types of delinquency. Similarly, low parental control was more strongly associated with an increased likelihood of heavy drinking and the use of drugs. Even so, after controlling several relevant variables, there still remained a significant association between intensive work and an increased likelihood of all deviant behaviours examined. In contrast, moderate work was mostly not associated with deviant behaviour.

This research does not claim that adolescent work causes delinquency or substance use, or that work is always bad for adolescents. The study indicates that under certain conditions, working during the school year may be potentially harmful. Work as such is neither good nor bad. It is the characteristics of the job that is essential, among which the number of hours worked, is the most important.