

Balancing Hours Balancing Honors: Unraveling The Nexus of Time Optimization and Academic Achievement among EFL Sophomores at the Tertiary Level- A Case StudyChahira Nasri ^{1*}, Kenza Saou ^{2*}¹Biskra University, Algeria, chahira.nasri@univ-biskra.dz²Biskra University, Algeria, kenza.saou@univ-biskra.dz

Date of submission: 03/03/2024

Date of acceptance: 27/04/2024

Date of publication: 30/06/2024

Abstract:

Developing students' productivity involves how to divide their time between different activities. In fact, time is indispensable for all people to determine their success or failure. Therefore, there is a necessity to manage it properly. The ability to manage time allows you to work smarter. Essentially, the purpose of time management is to define and achieve goals faster. The aim of the study is to provide how teachers and students view the application of time management at the Algerian university. The ultimate aim of this study is to shed light on the countless benefits as well as the challenges of time management in the Algerian university in order to foster students' academic achievements. In order to achieve the aims of the study, both university teachers and students were involved. They responded to a structured questionnaire and semi structured interview as reflective tools to measure their attitudes towards time management. That is, the current study involved 50 second year students and 6 university teachers from the department of English at Biskra University. As a result of the research it was determined that the students' major challenges range between procrastination, cramming, not taking breaks, multitasking and distractions.

Key words: Time management; challenges of time management; time management skills; productivity; activities

I. Introduction

At university, students are in need to organize and plan their activities in order to be a good time manager. That is, being disciplined involves using time effectively, because success means being able to arrange your work. The ability to divide time well makes studying more effective because success is not just about having high scores but about how to use your available time. Managing time successfully involves a harmonization of activities and time spent to ensure the workability. In fact, the purpose of managing time is to make students focus on their tasks and discard the unnecessary things. In other words, planning out your day through using schedule or to-do- list helps in accomplishing goals on time. Time management can help students to take control of their studies and helps them improve their career. Moreover, it leads to improve efficiency and productivity. Productive time management skills are key abilities that allow students to improve their academic performance. It is important for individuals to develop these valuable qualities such as setting goals, prioritization and organizing. Maintaining an up to date calendar assists in achieving goals. In fact, setting goals is the first thing to do in order to be a good time manager. The main aim of this study is to highlight the importance of time management in order to develop students' academic achievement. In other words, the study at hand investigates the challenges of time management that students suffer from. Furthermore, this study aims to find out the effective ways to improve the time management skills. The current study focuses on determining the main challenges of effective time management for second year students of English at Biskra University. It is an attempt to answer a few questions that pertain second year student of English and university teachers as well. This research seeks to answer the following questions:

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Q1. Do EFL sophomore students face time management-related problems?

Q2. How do EFL sophomores perceive time-management, and what are the teachers' perspectives on this matter?

Q3. How can time management skills be improved?

Based on the abovementioned research questions, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1. EFL sophomore students commonly face time management-related challenges owing to academic workload, extracurricular activities, and personal responsibilities.

H2. EFL sophomores perceive time management as a challenging task due to conflicting priorities and a lack of effective strategies; teachers offer resources such as study skills workshops, individualized assistance, or referrals to academic support services.

H3. Time-management skills can be enhanced through strategies, including prioritizing tasks, setting realistic goals, creating schedules, minimizing distractions, and practicing self-discipline.

In order to commence this investigation, an interview, which serves as a primary data collection method, was conducted with six university teachers in order to get an in-depth exploration of their experience and viewpoints. In addition to interview, a questionnaire was administered to 50 second year students of English at Mohamed Khider University.

II. Literature Review

1. Time Optimization: Simplification and Relevance

The use of the term "time management" dated back to 1950's and 1960's where Fredrick Winslow Taylor conducted studies on how to boost the productivity of workers and how to avoid wasting time (Razari et al., 2018). According to Claessens et al., (2007) managing time refers to behaviours that a person wants to apply in order achieve certain directed desires. More importantly, they uphold that time management and time structure are two concepts that have the same meaning of setting goals, prioritizing, planning, and monitoring. Undoubtedly, individuals tend to set such principles in order to ensure the coordination of activities within a specific amount of time to optimize work. To put differently, it is about setting short and long term goals, planning and allocating time to arrange different activities. Interestingly, time management is a system that includes tools and techniques to organize and plan how to accomplish different activities within a specific period (Srikumar & Arun, 2017). Furthermore, controlling time involves worthwhile skills like defining, monitoring and evaluating goals (Ocak & Boyraz, 2016). In other words, for students, tracking progress involves assigning and controlling clear, specific and realistic goals in order to increase concentration and pursuing academic improvement.

Taking control of time helps people to increase focus since it enables them complete tasks smoothly in specific period of time (Tracy, 2013). Time arrangement helps in maximizing the academic leadership where individuals pace themselves to accomplish their objectives in order to have a balanced life. In other words, it is a useful resource that enables people to clearly define their goals and accomplish them. On the same train of thoughts, Forsyth (2007) and Mukwevho (2018) consider time management as crucial skill that everyone needs to adapt in order to get desirable results and to improve the personal or professional level. More specifically, Germin (2001) upholds that effective time management can be very useful for women and leads to success because generally speaking women tend to devote their time between different activities like serving their homes and children, working inside and outside to meet their needs. Interestingly, Morris (2005) puts it, time management involves getting more done in a less time.

Besides, arranging time successfully allows boosting productivity and enhances the quality of work. That is, high-quality work is a consequence of good command of time. Ekundayo & Kolawole (2013); Grissom, Loeb, and Mitani (2015) reveal that time management skills can be valuable to reduce anxiety and stress either in school or at work. More importantly, Laguador, and

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Agena (2013) highlight the notable benefit of time management in enhancing the teaching performance. According to them, brilliant teachers are good time managers who can cope with the different situations in their classes. Needless to say, good controlling of time ultimately translates into good work. It is also notable that the ability to structure time significantly leads to have extra time. In other words, people can enjoy their time in doing things they like which initially affect their mood and reduce stress and anxiety (Ghiasvand et al., 2017).

III. Methodology

The current study adopts the mixed-methods approach. Additionally, the study aims to explore the challenges that hinder students' development when it comes to managing time. Therefore, the mixed-methods approach is more suitable. To answer the research questions and accomplish the aims of the study, two data collection methods are involved in this study. That is, it involves the analysis of a semi-structured interview with 6 university teachers and a structured questionnaire to 50 students in order to investigate and explore their attitudes towards the challenges of time management. The adoption of thematic analysis to analyze the semi-structured interview data in this study is grounded in its suitability for capturing rich, nuanced insights from participants' experiences and perspectives. Thematic analysis offers a flexible yet rigorous approach to examining qualitative data, allowing for the identification of recurring patterns, themes, and meanings within the interviews. By systematically coding and analyzing the interview transcripts, researchers can uncover the underlying themes that emerge across participants' narratives, providing a deeper understanding of the phenomena under investigation. This qualitative data analysis procedure offers several advantages, including its ability to capture the complexity and diversity of participants' viewpoints, its flexibility in accommodating both deductive and inductive approaches, and its potential for generating new theoretical insights. Ultimately, thematic analysis serves as a robust methodological tool for exploring the intricacies of the semi-structured interview data, enriching the study's findings and contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of the research topic.

1. Population and Sampling Technique

To investigate the teachers' and students' perspectives and attitudes about the constraints of time management, a sample of 50 second year LMD students at Biskra University was collected to answer the structured questionnaire through the convenience sampling. The population has been chosen for the reason that second year students get used to University and can express and share their opinions about planning out their time. A sample of 6 university teachers from the English department was included as well. The main aim of the interview is to benefit from the teachers' experience regarding the challenges of time management and to investigate their attitudes about the study.

IV. Results and Discussion

The analysis of the teachers' responses regarding to the importance of time management revealed that all participants commonly mentioned that it is crucial for students at university to manage time appropriately, so that they would be able to accomplish many tasks within specific time frame. Meanwhile, participants also described a range of students' challenges of time management. Among them they have mentioned procrastination, cramming, multitasking, low motivation etc. Procrastination or putting things off intentionally, for 5 teachers, (83.33%) was the main challenge students struggle with. According to these participants, the habitual postponing of tasks leads to create serious issues with the working memory. In other words, it would be hard for them to recall information or to keep it long time in their mind. Additionally, the quality of work can be characterized by being poor because of the last-minute pressure and having to rush to complete assignments. That is, students' academic performance, that is measured by grades, would

be decreased. This result is in line with Lay, & Schouwenburg, (1993) ; Gafni, & Geri, (2010). Hafner, Obsert, and Stock (2014) who have indicated that procrastination is one major problem of poor time management. According to them, it is a failure to be self-disciplined and self-regulated where the student tends to delay the activities and which leads to serious problems. Undoubtedly, this academic delay is characterized by the misuse of time (Wolters, Won & Hussain, 2017).

Four teachers (66.66%) answered that cramming is one of the non-productive habits that directs students to be bad time managers. In fact, collecting things and not meeting deadlines puts students in difficult situations where they end up with undesirable results. This result is in line with Bickerdike et al., (2016) who report that using schedule will minimize cramming which is mainly associated with poor time management (Culler, & Holahan, 1980). In fact, cramming may excessively harm students and can cause many bad habits. Overall, McIntyre, and Munson (2008) state that students at university are usually characterized by postponing their activities and tasks until exams. In other words, cramming is a consequence of procrastination which is a phase of delaying everything followed by an intensive focus on study. Obviously, procrastinators are likely to cram several tasks which may lead to destroy their instructional leadership. Besides, 2 participants (33.33%) brought up the fact that low motivation is one obstacle in managing time effectively. According to them, students can have enough time to do a particular task but they feel that it exceeds their energy because they feel unmotivated. This finding is similar to previous research by Kamaruddin et al. (2017) who found that motivation can significantly impact the students' performance. Based on their research, there is a relationship between high/ low motivation and the arrangement of time. More importantly, unmotivated students can be overwhelming with doubts of accomplishing certain goals. That is, motivation plays a key role in achieving better outcome. With proper time management, students can keep up their academic success, attain better grades and be more responsible of their actions.

One respondent (16.66 %) mentioned that multitasking is one major challenge that students struggle with. Multitasking can affect the students' academic achievement because they will not fully focus on their task which would take longer to complete it. According to Otto et al., (2012), multitasking refers to moving from one task to another in trying to accomplish the needed work. By doing so, students may lose control in switching back and forth. Trying to deal with several tasks at once may lead to poor quality of work (Anteneh, & Gebremeskel, 2023). . In other words, students may not monitor properly and may decrease their focus in their attempt to complete the given activities. Hence, allocate time helps in conquering such a problem. Furthermore, unclear goal was expressed by 3 teachers (50%). In fact, setting a goal is the first thing students need to do to arrange time appropriately. Knowing what students want to realize and prioritize activities, helps in supervising and maintaining their schedule. This was confirmed by Sulstonmurodovna (2023) who believes that setting goals can affect managing time since this latter is considered as crucial resource. Additionally, effective time management involves defining a clear goal which is a part of the system of time structure. More specifically, the utilization of a SMART goal can enhance the academic performance. This acronym refers to Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time- bound (Rubin, 2002). By specific it means individuals should not assign general goals. By measurable, people use numbers and statistics to track their progress. Attainable refers to the ability to achieve this goal. Relevant means to set a doable goal that has a connection with the current situation. By time bound, individuals should devote a specific time to complete their tasks (Conzemius & O'Neill, 2009; Williams, 2012).

Five respondents (83.33 %) reported that the lack of organization impedes the students' time management. Undoubtedly, planning and organizing tasks help students to stay engaged and achieve their objectives instead of switching between tasks. Interestingly, time-planning and time-organizing are two key components in the allocation of time (Repellin & Armesto, 2018). Being

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organized involves the utility of time successfully. Planning ahead may contain different tasks including back-up plans. That is, it ensures that students will know how to deal with unpredictable events. Additionally, students can apply planning and organizing strategies that help in remembering details, avoid misleading and complete the workload in an effective way. Delegating various tasks allows students to handle responsibility through organizational structure.

In response to the same question of the challenges of time management, students expressed that nothing can disturb them like technology. The whole sample (100%) agreed that distractive devices, mainly phones and social media, prevent them from increasing their academic performance. In other words, interruptions and distractions are recognized as serious issues for successful time management. For instance, revising complex subjects needs more attention and commitment. However, using phones during this process leads students to reduce focus and may drop some necessary details. This result is in line with Soatova (2023) who upholds that minimizing distractions like phone calls, using facebook and TV helps in improving time management skills. That is, students should avoid interruptions and discard the unnecessary activities that lead them to lose focus. In the same respect, Gilavand and Jamshidnezhad (2016) confirm that the instructional environment can be negatively affected by many factors like noise, lack of light, inappropriate conditions, and shortage of equipment. In other words, the uncomfortable environment can profoundly disrupt the students' learning outcomes.

33 of participants (66%) reported that skipping breaks is one consequence of poor time management. Continuous work without taking regular pauses leads to decrease students' academic performance. People in general and students in particular are in need to take breaks so that they will be able to refresh their mind. In fact, underestimating the key role of taking regular breaks may reduce productivity and create problems in arranging time. Strongman & Burt (2000) believe that taking purposeful breaks can enhance the quality of work and increase concentration and energy. Generally, working harder because of poor time management can lead to running out of energy. Hence, students should manage time effectively.

Furthermore, 40 of respondents (80%) answered that perfectionism is another confrontation of productive time management. In fact, some students go hard on themselves looking for perfectionism. On one hand, being perfectionist in achieving objectives lead to thriving success. On the other hand, chasing details can lead students to spend more valuable time in pointless tasks. Sudirman et al., (2023) find that there is a nexus between perfectionism, procrastination and time management. According to them, perfectionists look for perfection even in things that have no significant impact on their life. Eventually, they end up as an academic procrastinator when they feel that they did not achieve a degree of excellence.

78% of participants declared that among the major barriers students suffer from when it comes to arranging time is energy. Lack of energy can be a consequence of various factors. Trying to accomplish many tasks in specific time frame leads students to feel exhausted. In other words, procrastination and cramming are two serious problems that lead students to lose energy. Moreover, their focus will be decreased. Another severe reason of running out of energy is when students do not have enough time of sleep. Skipping breaks can make the situation worst. Having occasional pauses allows students to refresh their brain and continue doing their duties. Alternatively, regular routine of sleep and eating healthy helps in getting energy to keep up the different responsibilities and to maximize the efficiency of work.

29 participants (58%) stated that poor delegation is another challenge they struggle with. Delegation in the process of time management is crucial skill to be developed. Proper delegation includes monitoring work to ensure fruitful results. However, over controlling work and trying to do everything by your self will result in poor time management. In fact, delegation is required in some assignments where the collaborative work is highly needed. According to Trakaniqi (2017)

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organizational stress and anxiety is a consequence of poor time management and ineffective delegation.

In trying to overcome the challenges of time optimization, teachers revealed that there is an inherent need for effective time management skills that students need to have in order to achieve their objectives. The majority of participants (83.33%) expressed that defining a clear goal helps in improving a productive time structure. According to them, knowing what students want to realize helps in building a clear vision about the things that students wish to accomplish. Chiefly, assigning specific goals is like a shortcut that assists better in achieving better results (Turner, 2020). That is, the ability to establish a specific goal leads to fully concentrate on the given responsibilities within a time frame. More importantly, creating a daily to-do list facilitates the accomplishment of the goals students set.

Another way to conquer the problems of time mismanagement according to 4 respondents (66.66%) is prioritization which is a handy skill through which students can prevent time wastage. Giving priority involves classifying tasks according to importance, urgency and realistic deadlines. According to Peng and Kamil (2018), there is a relationship between prioritization as a skill of time management and academic performance. Crucially, students may track their progress through prioritizing tasks that aligns the goals that they have assigned. Besides, 3 teachers (50%) believed that to master time management, students need to control and eliminate distractions like using phone, social media, needless talks, and watching TV. Instead, they can designate a specific time to manage these temptations to have enough time to complete their work and boost productivity. The result is in line with Chase et al., (2013) who reveal that distractions minimize concentration and derail students from the right path. Discovering or acknowledging distractions at an early stage helps in sustaining effective time management.

Advanced time management skills include planning and organizing time. Ghadeer, Issa, and Othman, (2020) uphold that time-planning and time-organizing lead to boost personal performance. According to 4 participants (66.66 %) using a calendar or a daily schedule can easily maximize the efficiency of arranging time. Furthermore, thanks to technology, people can use digital planners to help them focus on the important and upcoming tasks. The use of agenda helps in determining the short term goals. That is, students will focus on achieving these goals through estimating and controlling the needed time.

Furthermore, two respondents (33.33%) recommended students to use consistently some apps in order to facilitate the process of managing time. These apps can significantly reduce stress since they help identifying time and users can refer to these tools to remember the most time-sensitive tasks, review these tasks, and record information. Kim et al., (2014) support the use of application Automated Time Manager (ATM) to be self-regulated and self-monitoring in managing time. 1 respondent (16.66%) added that in order to manage time effectively, students should learn how to say no. According to him, students may have different responsibilities to do. However, it is crucial to say no to unnecessary tasks and showcase dedication to work. Avoiding temptations and focus on devoting time to complete tasks can be beneficial in enhancing time management.

Five participants (83.33%) insisted on avoiding procrastination since it is a poor habit that affects negatively students' academic achievement. The intentional delay creates troubles for learners and makes them struggle to do many things in specific period of time. Consequently, students will suffer from cramming, multitasking, less productivity, time-consuming and poor quality of work. On a theoretical basis, procrastination has a significant impact on human (Yuangga & Sunarsi, 2018). Additionally, adhere to deadlines and delegate activities and allow students to handle time management. More specifically, listing out all the activities helps students to decide the things they will focus and divide their attention.

V. Conclusion

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Being successful students involves using time wisely. Effective time management refers to the process of planning and organizing activities that should be learned and mastered to enhance lifestyle. The utility of time includes using significant skills that ensure more done in less time. Controlling time efficiently will facilitate handling different tasks and improve self-esteem. In other words, it is about finding balance between doing work and having extra time for other things. The findings of this research reveal that time management skills are fundamental in the students' academic achievement. That is, productivity and efficiency go hand in hand with effective time management. The benefits of arranging time appropriately can be seen in being organized, boosting productivity, lowering stress, showing effective delegation, and having high self-esteem overcoming multitasking, avoiding cramming and procrastination which are the most common challenges student struggles with.

Besides, it was found that acknowledging a clear realistic goal helps in eliminating the needless activities. That is, students will focus on completing tasks to end up with desirable results. Additionally, setting a short term goal helps in achieving further goals by discarding unnecessary tasks. Implementing time management skills helps in being punctual and self-disciplined. Furthermore, achieving goals helps in tracking progress. That is, students can monitor and evaluate their success or failure. Showcase dedication to work and commitment involve using time well. That is, it is not about going hard on yourself. Students should know that taking care of their mental and physical health will facilitate time arrangement. Additionally, prioritization allows students to decide and to focus on important activities. In other words, classifying tasks according to importance and urgency helps in determining what to cope with. When using to-do-list or daily planner, students will map out and control how to divide their time. By referring and reviewing agenda, students can remember assignments and the upcoming work.

Lastly, results demonstrated that distractions, which is represented in using cell phones, social media and other distractive devices, can be seen as a massive time stealer. In fact, technology offers a smooth and easy access to information in order to build up knowledge. However, students can lose focus and derail attention when they over use it or when exploit it awkwardly. In short the failure of time management skills can influence every aspects of life, weather personally of academically, and leads to decrease the quality of work and lowers the performance of students. As a consequence, having bad grades can be frustrated. Dissatisfaction may affect the different sides of life and can cause stress and anxiety. Based on the findings, the following hypothesis was verified:

- H1.** EFL sophomore students commonly face time management-related challenges owing to academic workload, extracurricular activities, and personal responsibilities.
- H2.** EFL sophomores perceive time management as a challenging task due to conflicting priorities and a lack of effective strategies; teachers offer resources such as study skills workshops, individualized assistance, or referrals to academic support services.
- H3.** Time-management skills can be enhanced through strategies, including prioritizing tasks, setting realistic goals, creating schedules, minimizing distractions, and practicing self-discipline.

In conclusion, successful time management can allow students to foster productivity, beat procrastination and cramming, optimize workflow, increase self-improvement and realize objectives. Crucially, time management requires defining clear goals, prioritizing tasks, organizing assignments using schedule.

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