

Time Management Does Not Matter For Academic Achievement Unless You Can Cope

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Abstract. The success of students at the universities is a great concern for the students themselves, their parents, their sponsors and the universities. Current research suggests that contributing factors such as previous academic grades and time management can predict student success at the universities. Britton and Tesser (1991) theorized that student with well-developed time management practices would have higher college grades. The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between previous academic grades and time management practices on academic achievement among undergraduate students from five of Malaysia public institution for higher education. 551 university students completed a Time Management Questionnaire (TMQ) and provided their self-reported high school grades and current Grade Point Average (GPA). Analysis of data from descriptive and inferential statistics was done. Results from the structural model showed that previous academic grades and the practice of time management have no direct effect on academic achievement. However, the use of coping strategies as mediator showed that there was a significant effect on Grade Point Average (GPA).

Keywords: Time Management, Previous Academic Result, Coping Response, Academic Achievement.

1. Introduction

The predictors of academic success among undergraduates have been a major interest for many educational scholars. Research related to the academic success of university students show that several factors such personality traits [1], time management [2], previous academic grades [3] and study habits [4] have been associated with academic achievement. Generally, we tend to assume that students who excel during high school will also be excellent students at university. However, this assumption is not always true especially for new students who have just begun their life as undergraduates at the university. Sadly, in Malaysian education scenario, not all of them remained as best students as what had been expected of them. Despite, their excellent result when they were in high schools or matriculation colleges, there is a group of students who do not excel in their academic at the university. As a result, not all of the students who further their studies at the university will obtain their degrees or graduate from the university within the given time period. According to Morisano et. al [5], 25% of the students did not graduate because of academic problems, 15% of undergraduate students in Italy failed to complete their bachelor degree [6] and Lassibille and Gómez [7] found that 26% of first year students; 10% of second year students; 6% of third year students and 5% of final year students in Spain were dismissed because of academic problem.

According to Enns et al.[8], high school students who were once thought to be ‘the best among the best’ based on high school academic result, were found to be average or at risk students at the university. Every semester, there are few of them who show a drop in academic performance and obtain a grade point average of less than 2.00, being placed under probation or terminated by the university due to academic difficulties. Aluja and Blanch [4] suggested that students who obtained low academic result does not mean that they are not smart enough or have low academic ability. Students who are having difficulties in academic may face problems due to factors such as time management and the ability to cope at the university.

- Time Management

Claessens et al. [9] defined time management as behaviours that aim at achieving an effective use of time while performing certain goal-directed activities. This definition highlights that the use of time is not an aim

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in itself and cannot be pursued in isolation. The focus is on some goal-directed activity, such as performing a work task or an academic duty, which is carried out in a way that implies an effective use of time.

- Coping Responses

Coping refers to a person's constantly changing cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage the internal and external demands of a transaction that is appraised as taxing or exceeding our resources [10].

- Previous Academic Result

Evans dan Fancy [11] defined previous academic result as one or some combination of various indices, such as secondary school results or ranking (overall or in specific subjects), the score on some form of scholastic aptitude test, school recommendations, and other relevant experience or submitted folio of work.

1.1. The Purpose of the Study, Data Collection and Analysis

The first goal of this study is to examine whether previous academic result and time management practices are predictive of academic achievement of undergraduate students. The second goal of this study is to evaluate whether coping response of undergraduate students has direct significant effect on academic achievement.

2. Method

2.1. Subjects

The subjects of this study were undergraduate students from five of Malaysia public institution for higher education. Generally, majority of them received scholarship or study loan from various government agencies and only very few of them have their parents to support them. In terms of previous academic grades, majority of them obtained excellent results in Malaysian Certificate of Education. The subjects in this study came from various courses such as health sciences, engineering, social science, science and technology and management.

2.2. Instruments

27-item Time Management Questionnaire (TMQ) was used to measure time management practices and 60-item COPE Inventory was used to measure coping responses of undergraduate students. Both of the instruments were administered to 551 subjects who consisted of 118 female and 333 male undergraduate students. The TMQ and COPE Inventory were administered in a designated room and it took 25 minutes to complete both of the instruments. The TMQ has 5-point Likert scale and the responses under each item consist of *always, frequently, sometimes, infrequently* and *never*. A 5 point was assigned to answer "always" at positive items, and 1 point was assigned to answer "always" at negative meaning items. The higher values on the TMQ indicate a better time management practices. The COPE Inventory has 4-point Likert scale and the responses under each item consist of *I usually don't do this at all, I usually do this a little bit, I usually do this a medium amount* and *I usually do this a lot*. For each item, 1 point was assigned to answer "I usually don't do this at all" and 4 point was assigned to answer "I usually do this a lot". The higher values on the COPE Inventory suggest the type of coping responses students engage during a given period of time.

3. Data Analysis

Data gathered were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 16 and the Analysis of Moment Structure (AMOS) version 18. Descriptive statistics specifically the M and SD were used to determine the levels of time management, coping responses and previous academic results of the participants. In addition, SEM analysis was used to test a model showing time management predicting academic achievement. The model is tested for goodness of fit using the chi square (χ^2), Root Mean Square of Error Approximation (RMSEA), Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and Chi Square/Degrees of Freedom (CMINDF).

4. Results

We first tested whether students' time management and previous academic results have direct significant effect on academic achievement among undergraduate students. The SEM model was

conducted to test the effect of time management, coping responses and previous academic results on academic achievement. Table 1 shows the mean scores, standard deviation and Cronbach's alpha for time management, coping responses and previous academic responses.

- Time Management

In assessing the students' time management using the TMQ, the M and SD obtained are as follows: Average in short range planning (M=24.20, SD=5.81), average in long range planning (M=34.92, SD=6.78), and average in attitude toward time (M=23.90, SD=4.50). Results show that the participants tend to use short range planning, long range planning and attitude toward time moderately.

- Coping Responses

Concerning coping responses, the following descriptive statistics were obtained: Average in problem focused coping (M=59.28, SD=8.73), average in emotion focused coping (M=60.39, SD=8.79), and average in denial focused coping (M=56.62, SD=8.86). Results show that the participants tend to use each coping responses moderately.

- Previous Academic Results

The descriptive statistics of previous academic result showed that the respondents were low in MCE (M=2.46, SD=0.573).

Table. 1. Mean and Standard Deviations of Dimensions of Time Management, Coping Responses and Previous Academic Result

	M	SD	Cronbach's Alpha
Short Range Planning	24.20	5.81	0.776
Long Range Planning	34.92	6.78	0.761
Attitude Toward Time	23.90	4.50	0.571
Problem Focused Coping	59.28	8.73	0.864
Emotion Focused Coping	60.39	8.79	0.849
Denial Focused Coping	56.62	8.86	0.824
MCE	2.46	0.573	-

To establish the relationship among the variables involved in the model, a correlation was conducted to determine the pair of variables that are significantly related (Table 2). Short range planning and long range planning are positively correlated with problem focused coping, emotion focused coping, denial focused coping and grade point average. Attitude toward time is positively correlated to problem focused coping, emotion focused coping and grade point average. All three dimensions of coping responses are positively correlated to grade point average. The correlations are all significant at .01 (**) and .05 (*) level of significance.

Table. 2. Correlation of the Factors of Time Management, Coping Responses and Grade Point Average

	Problem Focused Coping	Emotion Focused Coping	Denial Focused Coping	GPA
Short Range Planning	0.425**	0.361**	0.130**	0.185**
Long Range Planning	0.402**	0.387**	0.168**	0.262**
Attitude Toward Time	0.088*	0.098*	0.062	0.086*
GPA	0.250**	0.240**	0.157**	-

The estimates of regression weight were computed in order to determine the effect of time management on coping responses and grade point average (Table 3). When coping responses goes up by 1, grade point average goes up by 0.186. However, the results indicated that the regression weights for time management in the prediction of coping responses and grade point average are not significantly different from zero at the 0.05 level (two-tailed). The result also showed that the regression weights for previous academic grade in the prediction of current grade point average is not significantly different from zero at the 0.05 level (two-

Table. 3. Estimates of Regression Weight of the Time Management to Coping Responses and Grade Point Average

	Estimates	S.E	C.R.	p-level
Coping Response < ---Time Management	.540	33.194	.750	.453
GPA < ---Time Management	.169	.762	.729	.466
GPA < --- Previous Grade	-.031	.047	-.766	.444
GPA < --- Coping Response	.186	.004	3.378	0.001

The model showed adequate goodness of fit, as indicated by the low chi-square and discrepancy function values ($\chi^2=55.095$, $df=18$, $\chi^2/df=3.061$). The CFI (.996) and the RMSEA (.061) indicated an acceptable fit. These indicate that the sample represents the model well.

5. Discussion

The results of the present study do not support previous investigations [2], [3], [12], and [13] that showed there were significant effects of time management and previous academic result on academic achievement. Based on the result of this study, time management is not a predictor and has no significant effect on academic achievement (C.R.= 0.729, $p > 0.05$). In other words, irrespective of time management practice that was used by the students, it is not a significant factor that can predict or influence academic achievement of students. This inconsistent result may have to do with other possible factor which has lowered the power of time management on academic achievement.

Another insignificant finding was that previous academic result did not have a significant effect on academic achievement. The result shows that previous academic result is not a predictor and has no significant effect on academic achievement (C.R.= -0.766, $p > 0.05$). This result suggests that regardless whether students have excellent, average or poor academic result during high schools, it cannot predict or has no influence on their grade point average when they are at the university. The result of this study also shows that there is no significant effect of time management on coping responses among the undergraduate students. This result indicates that time management is not a predictor and has no significant effect on coping response (C.R.= 0.750, $p > 0.05$). Despite different time management practices that were exercised by the student, it has no impact on the types of coping responses that were used by the students. However, the result of this study shows that there is a significant effect of coping response on academic achievement. The result indicates that coping response can predict and has significant effect on academic achievement (C.R.=3.378, $p < 0.05$). Students who use different types of coping responses in their daily life can improve their academic achievement at the university.

This study has established the model of time management, previous academic result and coping response in predicting variance on academic achievement. It highlighted the importance of coping responses on academic achievement and the need to use different coping responses in daily life. Life as undergraduate students is not always on the bright side. Even though they used to be excellent students during high schools, some of them are not totally prepared to confront with academic demands and pressure at the university [14]. Without a doubt, good time management practices can help students to plan their academic work and run their daily life routine smoothly. However, there are times when students planned their time too perfectly; it makes their life difficult and stressful due to inability to adapt to the changes that happened around them either too sudden or fast. As a result, they tend to feel tensed, worried and overwhelmed with their daily routine which may have negative impact especially on their academic achievement. Given that coping response can predict academic achievement, the finding might help university counsellors to teach coping skills and encourage students to use different types of coping response in their daily life.

Since findings were based on self-report measures, future study may want to replicate by using other methods of data collection such as peers' rating, in depth interview and specific dimensions. The generalizability of this study should be examined in other student populations such graduate students.

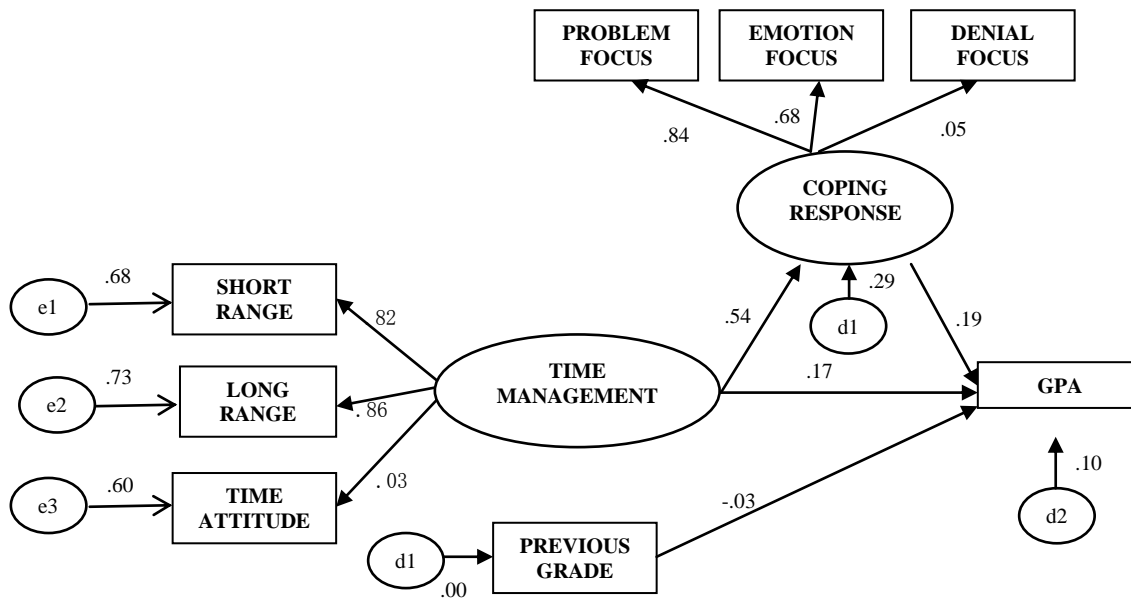


Fig. 1: Model of the effects of time management, coping responses and previous academic result on grade point average

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