

Preliminary Study: Time Management Skills and Stress Levels among Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia Students

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Abstract

Time management skills are core skills often used in almost all aspects of human life. Stress is "the reaction or response of the body that is not specific to the request or desire" or non-specific feedback by any part of the body against the existence of a force that can make a person lose focus, bring disruption to thinking, create a feeling of restlessness and uneasiness that often disturbs their daily activities. This study examined the time management skills and the stress levels students at the National University Malaysia faced. The study's design is quantitative and cross-sectional. In this initial study, the total sample was 30 people, including young adults aged 18 to 24. The preliminary investigation found that out of the 30 respondents, 27 scored high in time management skills, two got a moderate score, and one got a low score. As for the stress level, only two respondents got a high score, 25 got a moderate score, and three got a low score. In terms of the Time Management Program (TMP), 16 respondents thought that more effective time management techniques in the Time Management Program could drive the effectiveness of this program. Therefore, it can be concluded that time management skills are essential to reduce individual stress levels.

Keywords: Stress, Time Management Skills, Students, Quantitative, Preliminary Study

Introduction

Time management skills are crucial skills for every student in Malaysia, from primary school students to university students. Time management skills are a core skill often used in almost all aspects of human life. By learning ways to manage time well, individuals can finish their tasks in time (Othman et al., 2020), and excel in their studies, achieve their dreams and aspirations, maintain sound mental well-being, and lead a prosperous and happy life. In addition, research also found out that good time management related to academic excellent (Hamdan et al., 2015). If time management is not practised or applied well in a person's life, especially by university students. In that case, the learning and teaching sessions will fail or be challenging to achieve (Charles & Senter, 2002) and can lead to stress.

Next, stress is defined as “a non-specific reaction or response of the body to a request or desire” or a non-specific response by any part of the body to the existence of pressure (Selye, 1973). Stress can also make a person lose focus, cause disruption to a person's thinking, and make a person feel agitated and restless, which often interferes with a person's daily activities (Mahfar et al., 2007).

According to Muhsin et al (2023), stress affects emotion, physical and mental in human life. So, this will happen among the university students. They are exposed to stress because of new life changes while studying at university and can weigh and impact heavily on their lives (Monteiro et al., 2014). This stress is also said to stem from a student feeling disappointed, worried and hopeless with themselves or others caused by various tasks and responsibilities they cannot complete while at university (Ghazali, 2012). This study aims to explore time management skills and stress levels among UKM students. Meanwhile, the specific objectives of this study are:

- i. To identify the level of time management skills among UKM students.
- ii. To identify the level of stress among UKM students.
- iii. To suggest a more efficient time management program to help UKM students.

Literature Review

Time Management

Practising time management skills and attitudes in everyday life provides many benefits in organizing one's daily life. Time management can ensure a strategic life plan and avoid wasting valuable time with useless activities such as immoral or criminal acts that can lead to other dire consequences. In general, time management is a fundamental skill that involves all the things that happen around a person based on the activities they do. Good management of time will provide to an excellent activity when practiced in everyday life especially students (Swart et al., 2010). Time management should be practised by everyone, including teachers, the police, parents, doctors and especially students, including school and university students.

Time management is a technique that helps students improve their self-discipline to learn new knowledge at university and become punctual in everything they do. To become a top student, they must master the technique of being intelligent in all aspects, including time management. It is proven that students who are wise in managing time have strong self-discipline in their daily lives (Aznan, 2014). Time is not a problem that causes a person to think of a way to manage it, but the important thing is that an individual should be wise in handling that time (Azizan, 2008).

To implement time management more effectively, a person needs three things to help them manage time: determining goals, identifying goals and listing priorities concerning essential things that need to be implemented first (Aznan, 2014). The methods used to manage time must be examined in terms of techniques and the individual's skills. Students can practice time management skills by applying them in their daily life, such as preparing schedules, setting the duration of a job, dividing needs from wants, and so on. Even though there are various subjects and skills that require in-depth learning, time management is a lesson that must be mastered first to improve the overall well-being of a student's life at university.

According to Ali et. al (2008), in addition to focusing on classroom learning, time management skills are also one of the most critical skills for students to master to help them achieve excellence in their goals and targets during their studies at university. Time management skills can be practised through several popular time management methods, such as scheduling and time-allotting skills. However, in the same study, time management skills among students were found to be at a moderate level and were significantly different between students. This study categorized these differences in gender, year of study, and field of study. This study found that female students who are more mature and independent have better time management skills than male students who are younger and still immature. The results highlighted that mastering good time management skills can reduce the stress of studying and anxiety experienced by students (Trueman & Hartley, 1995).

Time management is generally a skill related to the technique and ways a person manages, divides and organizes their daily time to be optimally used. Among the methods that have successfully helped individuals to manage time well are: recording the time used, managing time well and allocating time according to the daily schedule (Swart et al., 2010). These techniques can make a person use time more efficiently and avoid procrastination and time wastage. Effective time management can be also correlate to academic achievement (Misran et al., 2016).

Time management skill is also necessary for a student with a pile of tasks to be carried out in a limited period because it can help make their life more systematic through various time management methods to determine which tasks are more critical. The tasks can be managed according to priority and the time needed to complete the job. Controlling and using their time well will ensure success and satisfaction in the student's life (Yusof and Azman, 2013).

Stress

Stress is "a particular relationship between the person and the environment that the person considers to be taxing or exceeding his or her resources and putting his or her well-being at risk." (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Everyone in society will experience some pressure that stems from various problems unique to each individual, especially those with numerous responsibilities when managing their daily lives. Minor problems that are initially not given attention and treated with urgency often cause this stress. According to Maizub (1998), stress is an experience or event frequently occurring in a person's life that can disrupt the individual's thoughts, feelings and daily activities. Changing a person's daily routine can strain the thinking process, and implementing actions not in line with an individual's wishes can make them stressed with the frustration experienced.

Stress is also a response to situations where a person's life can lead to situations that threaten their well-being or challenge themselves (Feldman & Leana, 1994). Every individual with the title of human on this earth will be met with various situations leading to the disharmony of life. Among them are problems with family or friends. For students, problems like trying to answer exam questions, problems with too many assignments, problems with teachers or other students, and problems completing general tasks at school or home happen all the time. However, stress is also closely related to the psychological and physiological response that occurs in an individual. Stress occurs when environmental stress reaches the

maximum level of an individual's ability to overcome and improve it (Yusof & Azman, 2013). In other words, stress is the discrepancy between environmental demands and the ability of a person to respond aptly; it occurs when failing to meet these demands will have serious repercussions (Lazarus & Folkman, 1987).

Stress is an imbalance (disequilibrium) in an individual that can be caused by various internal and external factors, such as frustration with oneself or others or a conflict with the environment. Pressure from social and psychological environments can mentally and physically weaken the individual, leading to adverse effects on daily life, such as daily tasks and difficulties in fulfilling responsibilities. It can also disrupt the smooth learning process of students if the pressure that plagues them reaches the highest level and is not well-controlled (Maizub, 1998).

For students in higher education institutions, various factors can cause stress to interfere with their daily lives and make them lose focus on their studies. Students at this institution of higher learning have many commitments within and outside the scope of learning at the university. Responsibilities include completing assignments within the given period, sitting for exams, getting involved in extra-curricular activities, holding jobs to generate income to support themselves at the university, etc. All these activities can potentially lead to stress if they are not managed well (Rahman et al., 2021; Misran et al., 2016).

Methodology dan Research Area

Data collection procedure

This study was conducted using a quantitative cross-sectional method. According to Piaw (2006), quantitative research is suitable for using the cross-sectional survey method because questionnaires can express the concepts in more detail. This approach conducted through a survey method research using the questionnaire form given to the study subject as done by (Razuan et al., 2023).

Data was collected using a questionnaire created based on previous studies on time management and stress levels, namely the Time Management Questionnaire (TMQ) by Britton and Tesser in 1991, which has been improved by Trueman and Hartley (1996) and the Perceived Stress Scale-10 (PSS-10) by (Cohen et al., 1983). This questionnaire was distributed via e-mail and the WhatsApp application.

In the initial section before Section A, there is a section on the established questionnaire about the respondent's rights that the respondent needs to read. Next, a verbal informed consent form needs to be marked by the respondent before the respondent answers the questionnaire. The researcher keeps the informed consent form as evidence if something undesirable happens. The researcher is responsible for providing an explanation related to the purpose, content of the study and why this study was conducted. Data collection only occurs after the respondent fills out the informed consent form as a sign that the respondent agrees to participate in this study. Respondents have the right to withdraw from the study without penalty. If respondents do not agree to fill out the informed consent section, their data will not be used as research data or analyzed with other research data.

The study location is at the National University of Malaysia (UKM), and the study sample is undergraduate students in the final year of UKM from the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities from each program. The number of samples for this preliminary survey is 30 people. Therefore, permission to conduct research activities with FSSK students was requested from the FSSK Dean's Office, and once approved, the data collection date and data collection period were set by the researcher.

After data collection, all questionnaires and informed consent forms are stored in a locked cabinet and a computer that can only be accessed by the researcher and supervisor. Based on the Data Protection Act, the study data in both the questionnaire and the computer will be destroyed within five years after the completion of the study.

Data Analysis

This paper presents only descriptive data to identify UKM students' time management skills and stress levels. This descriptive analysis obtains the number and frequency of information collected through respondents. Descriptive analysis uses percentages to analyze the data studied. This descriptive analysis is a core skill or basic knowledge needed in this quantitative study.

In addition, with this descriptive analysis, the frequency and percentage of respondents' responses were analysed according to each item, and a scale on the questionnaire given to respondents was performed. In this research, the descriptive analysis specifically aims to numerically analyze and identify the levels in the first, second and third research objectives, which are to identify time management among UKM students, determine the level of stress among UKM students and propose a management program more efficient time to help UKM students. This descriptive analysis data will then be presented in tables, diagrams and graphs to facilitate the understanding of this research data. Based on the variables analyzed, the tests performed to deliver the data use frequency, mean, mode, median, variance, standard deviation and percentage tests.

Research Area

The study area is where the study is conducted with the selected respondents. Based on this paper's title, the chosen respondents are students of UKM. Therefore, the study was conducted at UKM and, specifically, at the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities. This research site is seen as the most appropriate place to get answers based on the questions for this study. The study site selection is intended to provide information related to the study data that can interpret the informant's perception of a phenomenon around them (Creswell & Clark, 2010).

Results and Discussion

Demography information

A descriptive analysis was carried out to explain the background of the respondents for this study, which includes demographic information, time management skills, stress levels and time management programs. This descriptive analysis demonstrates the demographic data of the respondents of 30 young adults aged between 18 to 24 years old, who are all single and Muslim. The respondent's background includes age, gender, race and study program. The results of the analysis are shown in the following table and diagram:

Age

This study involved one respondent, equivalent to 3.3 percent, aged 18 years old, and two respondents, equivalent to 6.7 percent, who are 20 years old. Three respondents, equivalent to 10.0 percent, are 21 years old; 13 respondents, 43.3 percent, are 22; 7 or 23.3 percent, are 23 years old. Four respondents, equal to 13.3 percent, are aged 24 years. Table 1 shows that the number of 22-year-old respondents is the highest and 18-year-old respondents are the fewest.

Table 1

Number and percentage based on age

Age (Year)	Number (N)	Percentage (%)
18	1	3.30
20	2	6.70
21	3	10.00
22	13	43.30
23	7	23.30
24	4	13.30
Total	30	100.00

Gender

This study involved five respondents, or 16.7 percent, men and 25 respondents, or 83.3 percent, are women. Table 2 shows that there are more female respondents than male respondents.

Table 2

Number and percentage based on gender

Gender	Number (N)	Percentage (%)
Male	5	16.70
Female	25	83.30
Total	30	100.00

Ethnicity

This study involved 29 respondents, 96.7 percent, of the Malay race and one respondent, equivalent to 3.3 percent, of other races. Table 3 shows that the number of Malay respondents is more than other race respondents.

Table 3

Number and percentage based on Ethnicity

Ethnic	Number (N)	Percentage (%)
Malay	29	96.70
Others	1	3.30
Total	30	100.00

Study Program

This study involved 16 respondents, or 53.3 percent, from the Social Work program and 14 respondents, or 46.7 percent, from other study programs. Table 4 shows that the number of respondents from the Social Work program is more than those from other study programs.

Table 4

Number and percentage based on study program

Study Program	Number (N)	Percentage (%)
Social Work	16	53.30
Others	14	46.70
Total	30	100.00

Time Management Skills

Table 5 shows the time management skill level scores, the number of respondents and the percentage of respondents for each level. The majority of the respondents in this study got a high score in time management skills which is 27 respondents (90.0%). Next, two respondents (6.7%) of this study got a moderate score in time management skills. Finally, only one (3.3%) respondent of this study got a low score in time management skills.

Table 5

Time management skill level score, number, and percentage of respondents

Time Management Skill Score	Number (N)	Percentage (%)
High Score (38 and above)	27	90.00
Moderate Score (26 – 38)	2	6.70
Low Score (26 and below)	1	3.30
Total	30	100.00

Stress Level

Table 6 shows the stress level scores, the number of respondents, and the percentage of respondents for each level. The majority of the respondents of this study got a moderate score in the level of stress, which is 25 respondents (83.3%). Next, only two respondents (6.7%) obtained a high score in the level of stress. Finally, three respondents (10.0%) got a low score on the level of stress.

Table 6

Stress level score, number, and percentage of respondents

Stress Level Score	Number (N)	Percentage (%)
High Score (27 - 40)	2	6.70
Moderate Score (14 - 26)	25	83.30
Low Score (0 - 13)	3	10.00
Total	30	100.00

Time Management Program (TMP)

For the proposed improvement of the Time Management Program (TMP), there were two respondents, or 6.7 percent, for each suggestion: holding the TMP online, providing souvenirs such as a daily schedule book to each participant who attended the TMP, having the TMP in strategic areas such as in urban areas /school, conduct a TMP campaign by distributing attractive posters/advertisements to the public and do not suggest anything. Next, there is one respondent, an equivalent of 3.3 percent of respondents, who picked these suggestions: to invite famous individuals such as artists to TMP, hold TMP on weekends, create a free time management application on smartphones for TMP participants, and refer TMP participants who are identified to have chronic time management problems to specialists counselling.

Most respondents, or 16 people (53.3%), suggested teaching effective and easy-to-understand time management techniques through TMP. Table 8 shows that the number of respondents who suggested teaching effective and easy-to-understand time management techniques through TMP is the highest. The number of respondents who suggested inviting famous individuals such as artists to TMP, holding TMP on weekends, creating time management applications on smartphones for free to TMP participants and referring TMP participants identified to have chronic time management problems to counselling specialists.

Table 7

Number and percentage based on TMP improvement recommendations

Improvement Suggestions for TMP	Number (N)	Percentage (%)
Conduct TMP online	2	6.70
Invite famous individuals like artists to TMP	1	3.30
Teach effective and easy-to-understand time management techniques through TMP	16	53.30
Conduct TMP during weekends	1	3.30
Provide souvenirs such as a daily schedule book to each participant who attended the TMP	2	6.70
Create time management applications on smartphones for free for TMP participants	1	3.30
Refer TMP participants who are seen 1 to have chronic time management problems to counselling specialists		3.30
Hold the TMP in strategic areas such as in urban areas /schools	2	6.70
Conduct a TMP campaign by distributing attractive posters/advertisements to the public	2	6.70
No Suggestion		2
Total		30
		100.00

Discussion

Therefore, based on the questionnaire distributed to the respondents, it can be concluded that respondents with a high score in time management skills will have a low or moderate score in stress level. Most respondents were seen to get high scores for time management skills, indicating that most respondents are good at managing their time and use their time well to do beneficial activities.

The result of the score for the level of stress, which the majority of the respondents got a moderate score, shows that even though the respondents are young adults who are currently busy with their daily activities, such as doing assignments given by their university lecturers or those who are working, these respondents managed to control their level of stress by managing time wisely. However, two respondents face high stress and should seek help or treatment immediately. These 30 respondents have also suggested some improvements that can be made to increase the effectiveness of the Time Management

Program (TMP). Most respondents hope the next TMP will be conducted by teaching effective and easy-to-understand time management techniques to all Malaysians, especially students in all institutes of higher learning (IHL) in Malaysia.

The determination of this level is determined using the scoring table prepared with the findings of the study by Britton and Tesser in 1991, which has been improved by (Trueman and Hartley, 1996; Cohen et al., 1983). Based on the scoring found on the Time Management Questionnaire, a score of 38 and above is considered a high score, a score of 38-26 is regarded as a moderate score, and a score of 26 and below is considered a low score. For Perceived Stress Scale-10, a score of 40-27 is regarded as a high score, a score of 26-14 is considered a moderate score, and a score of 13-0 is regarded as a low score.

If this study's findings are compared with previous studies on time management skills, several studies obtain scores or levels of time management and stress levels that are more or less the same as this study. Among these studies are the research conducted by Ali et al. (2008), entitled Time Management Skills of Local University Students: Status and Its Relationship with Achievement. This research found that out of 3025 respondents from various public and private universities in Malaysia, the majority obtained a moderate level score in their time management skill level while at university. According to this research, the students who are the respondents have good time management skills in working according to priorities, performing essential tasks when the body is active, completing tasks on time and having goals for the tasks that need to be completed. The overall time management skill score for all study respondents from each university is also almost the same.

In addition, a study by Yusof and Azman (2013), entitled The Relationship Between Time Management and Stress Among Graduate Students At IPTA, showed similar results to (Ali et al., 2008). In this study, the respondents were 301 university students who obtained a moderate score for their time management skills while at university. According to this research, most students do a task orderly and efficiently. However, this moderate level shows that the level of time management skills among the respondents of the study is still not satisfactory and should not be allowed to happen.

Meanwhile, other similar studies chose a different route by investigating more profound about the level of time management skills among teachers in Malaysia. An example is a study by Hizan and Rodzalan (2020) entitled The Relationship between Time Management and Work Stress among Secondary School Teachers in Melaka. They found that out of 388 teachers, the respondents of their study, the majority scored high in time management skills. According to the research, planning is the most dominant time management factor affecting a teacher's work pressure. This study supports Douglas et al (2016) study that an employee who makes a time management plan can complete the work given in the allotted time, and the work results are better. The study results showed that most teachers do tasks orderly and efficient. In addition, the teacher's preference for organization is also at a high level, making the preference for organization essential to overcome the work pressure of teachers.

Next, looking at the comparison between previous studies with the analysis of this study's results in terms of stress levels, some studies have shown similar results. Among them is a study by Yusof and Azman (2013) entitled The Relationship Between Time Management

and Stress Among Graduate Students At IPTA. This research focused on determining the stress levels among graduate students in local universities. Results of this study showed that the level of stress among Master's students is at a moderate level, which is based on the five stress level constructs used, with the self-burden construct showing the highest mean score value. The results also show that most respondents often experience stress due to the burden or pressure they carry or put on themselves, for example, the desire to succeed, anxiety about something, and anxiety when facing tests or exams.

Some studies have examined the stress levels among local university students who had to adapt to some new Teaching and Learning system norms during Malaysia's Movement Control Order (MCO). An example is a study by (Aziz et al., 2021) entitled A Survey of the Stress Level of University Students During the COVID-19 Pandemic. They found that out of 400 university students who were their respondents, the majority of university students had a moderate level of stress. According to the study, university students are a group that is more vulnerable to stress and can have adverse consequences that lead to mental health problems. According to Arnett (2000), university students show moderate stress in the face of the COVID pandemic because their level of thinking is more mature than students in primary and secondary schools.

Finally, the stress level among high school teachers was scrutinized in Hizan and Rodzalan's (2020) The Relationship between Time Management and Work Stress among Secondary School Teachers in Melaka. The study again found that teachers experienced a moderate stress level, and these results were not ideal. The results of their study are also consistent with the study conducted by Yusof and Azman (2013), who found that secondary school teachers experience moderate work pressure. In addition, based on research conducted by Ahmad & Amir (2018) also supports that the level of work pressure among secondary school teachers as a whole is at a moderate level. This study shows that teachers still do not have effective time management skills, and the level of teacher work pressure is moderate and worrying.

Conclusion and Suggestions

There are a few conclusions that can be drawn based on the findings of this preliminary study. The results show that respondents who obtained a high score in time management skills will also obtain a low or moderate score in the level of stress. Most respondents received high scores for time management skills, indicating that most are good at managing their time and using it well to do beneficial activities. The result of the score for the level of stress is that the majority of the respondents got a moderate score. This score shows that even though the respondents are young adults who are currently busy with their daily activities, such as doing assignments given by their university lecturers or working, they still manage to control their stress levels by managing their time wisely. However, two respondents were experiencing a high stress level, and they should seek help or treatment immediately.

Therefore, among the suggestions given by the students in this study are to hold more exciting and frequent time management workshops or programs in the future. The time management program should contain information and techniques that are more effective in managing time for university students. The invited panel should also use a way of presenting information that facilitates students' understanding and techniques that need to be taken to

become great student in managing time while at university. The techniques suggested by Aznan (2014) seem relevant to the findings. He suggested that the program should start by determining goals, identifying goals and listing priorities concerning essential things that need to be implemented first. Therefore, students can manage their time effectively and reduce stress indirectly. On the other hand, the university also needs to increase and expand campaigns on time management for their students while at university. Although the results of the analysis conducted on the respondents of this study show that there are still many students who are good at managing their time well, the university must not be complacent and arbitrarily let the students who are still lagging continue to sink into the bottom. Therefore, once again, it is emphasized that all parties should shoulder their respective responsibilities in dealing with this issue especially in reduce stress among university students.

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