

# The Relationship between Time Management and the Academic Performance of Students from the Petroleum Institute in Abu Dhabi, the UAE

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**Abstract**—This research study is about time management and how it is related to academic performance the Petroleum institute (PI) in Abu Dhabi, the UAE. The study was made by surveying male freshmen and sophomore students regarding problems of procrastination, disorganization, interruptions and work load stress. The results obtained showed that time management is highly related to academic performance. Finally, by discussing the results, we came up with recommendations that can lead the PI students to a better level of time management.

**Index Terms**—Time Management, Academic Performance, GPA, Male Students

## I. INTRODUCTION

THERE is a huge difference between high school and university when it comes to managing time and academic responsibilities. In high school, there was the kind of learning that includes an explanation of everything, in other words, from A to Z. On the other hand, when students enter university, they find out that what they learn is a lecture, that only includes superficial information, and the rest is their job to know about and explore further. Time management is a skill that every student should not only know, but also apply. A lot of university students complain about running out of time when asked to do a certain task, they get frustrated because they are not able to make it before the deadline. On the other hand, others find enough time to meet their friends and complete their assignments with no struggle; those are whom we call excellent time managers, and who are spotted for our research. Time management is extremely important, especially when it comes to university students because it will boost their grades and enhance their productivity. However, most of the time students face problems like task aversion and uncertainty, so they start to procrastinate because they lack organizational skills. As a result, students will not be able to organize duties according to their priorities, so they get distracted easily, ending up procrastinating. As we can see, time management is quite essential to any university student, and it is one of the keys to a higher GPA. Therefore, this paper discusses its

relationship to a student's academic performance. In addition, it discusses ways to make students more organized and lead them to a better time management level.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

According to studies [1, 2, 3, and 4], we found out that time management plays a major role in a student's achievement along with his academic performance. This section will highlight the themes of the research studies briefly.

### A. Procrastination

Procrastination, to put off doing something, especially out of habitual laziness, is a result of a cultivated habit, and it impacts everyone. A lot of students tend to procrastinate at college. According to [1], they tend to do so mainly because of task-aversion. Studying, generally, is the last thing that a student would think to do. Having all kinds of entertainment and distractions, such as video games, social networks, and heard media, would really not make students get into study. It is most likely the student's responsibility, in other words, his ability to control his passion that makes the student progress and complete his tasks. Most of the students who live in the dorms, generally, can get distracted easily [1]. If students just spent ten minutes with each person there, imagine how much time would be left for them to study, even to do anything personal. More importantly, the student's uncertainty can really affect his progression at college. Hesitation will not make a student any better [1]. A lot of students spend a huge amount of time thinking about the topic they will discuss or write about, and sometimes about the way they are going to present it, and this will certainly lead them to procrastinate. Eventually, the student's Grade Point Average (GPA) will start to decrease the more he puts off the work. However, when he keeps delaying his work, stress will rise up and more pressure will be on the student, which will lead him to late submission and his grades will decrease [1].

### B. Mastering Time Management Skills

Students in universities must learn how to manage their time effectively. Fortunately, there are many techniques that can help them do that. First, students should arrange their schedule according to their priorities, which means that they

should look at the important dates, such as paper due dates and arrange them according to the size of the assignment and the date it is due, and then write them down on a calendar as a reminder note. This will make students see their whole semester a lot easier and simpler [2]. Second, students should get over any bad feelings that they might face during their educational life, and move beyond them. They should “schedule time for fun and relaxation just like they would schedule a class” [2]. Studies have shown that students get higher grades when they are in a good mood, and can get lower when they are stressed or upset. Finally, according to [2], students should take notes during class and ask the professor about anything they do not understand immediately which will save them a lot of time during learning on their own.

### C. Getting Organized

Source [3] says “according to a study commissioned by the temporary employment firm Accountemps, executives waste about five weeks a year looking for lost items.” Thus, there is no doubt that getting organized saves a lot of time. Nonetheless, getting organized means having your desk cleared, your papers filed, your tasks listed and your events scheduled. Furthermore, the ways to get organized or manage disorganization that are discussed in [3] include having an L- or U-shaped desk, keeping a diary as well as creating a “to-do” list. However, the most effective method of managing disorganization according to [3] is “ruthlessly” getting rid of what you do not need. As a result, by following these steps students will find it much easier to manage their time through organization.

### D. The Relationships between Time Management and the Studies on It

Source [4] shows the relationship between time management behaviors, perceived effectiveness, and work-related morale and distress in a university context. For instance, in order for students to manage their time in a good way, they must have a clear purpose in their study, and be able to answer such questions as, “Are you clear about what is important for you to achieve in your study ? “ Moreover, [4] has shown that students are not able to manage their time as they do not have a clear purpose in their study, getting distracted and interrupted easily, being unorganized, and not able to plan and prioritize [4]. For example, having a clear purpose is positively correlated with perceived effectiveness and morale, and negatively correlated with distress [4]. In addition, avoiding distractions and interruptions such as procrastination correlates negatively with work related distress. On the other hand, estimating the time correctly needed for a task is positively related to perceived effectiveness. Moreover, being good at planning and prioritizing such as scheduling time and working to deadlines is also positively correlated with perceived effectiveness and work related morale [4]. Last but not least, being organized, such as maintaining a clear working place and emptying your e-mail inbox daily, is negatively correlated with perceived

effectiveness, morale, or distress.

## III. PURPOSE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

### *Research Study Purpose*

A huge number of the Petroleum Institute (PI) students complain about the lack of time they have to complete their assignments before deadlines. Time management is one of the factors that significantly affect the grade point average (GPA) of a student anywhere. Therefore, our team decided to do a research study to investigate the relationship between time management and academic performance at the P.I. In addition, we will try to solve problems that are highly related to time management such as procrastination, distraction, disorganization and workload pressure. Finally, this paper seeks to find effective ways that can lead the P.I students to better time management.

### *Research Study Scope*

In our research study, our team will mainly be targeting freshmen and sophomore male students that live in Abu Dhabi, considering a wide range of GPAs. These kinds of students were chosen for the following reasons:

- Students at this stage lack awareness and need academic guidance
- This is a transitional phase in the academic life of students (from high school to university)
- The GPA in the first two semesters is critical since it sets the foundation of the CGPA.

However, our team will not include female students, male students who live in dorms and any faculty member. We do this because they have different factors that influence the way they manage their time due to their different lifestyles.

### *Methodology*

Our team collected data mainly by conducting a survey directed to male freshman and sophomore students in the Petroleum Institute (P.I) who live in Abu Dhabi. The survey consisted of 22 closed-ended questions such as multiple-choice questions, Yes/No questions and ranking questions that helped us gather the quantitative data required. In addition, we included a couple of open-ended questions at the end of the survey to let the students express their opinions freely.

Our team did it at places where most students gather, during the lunch break, such as the student center and canteens. Moreover, we exploited the times when students are mostly free, such as in buses when they are coming to or leaving the P.I. After we received the results, we analyzed, arranged and displayed them through a complete interpretation process.

## IV. RESULTS

In order to answer our research question which looks for the relationship between time management and academic performance, our team conducted this survey investigating how the Petroleum Institute (PI) students manage their time.

The students surveyed were ten freshmen and ten sophomores, all living in Abu Dhabi. The data gathered was processed generating useful findings and results, which were classified into two categories according to the students' Grade Point Average (GPA): successful students (G.P.A above 3.5) and unsuccessful students (G.P.A below 3.5). Considering the results, some of them were just what our team had expected. For instance, all of the unsuccessful students find difficulties managing their time. Most of them let others do their work, and they always feel stressed about deadlines. On the other hand, some of the findings discovered were somehow unusual. Surprisingly, we found out that the majority of the successful students do their assignments just before deadlines, delaying them till the last moment. Another interesting result was that most of them study only on the last day of the weekend. However, all of them do find more time for extracurricular activities. Here are the main results our team obtained regarding each of our four research study issues.

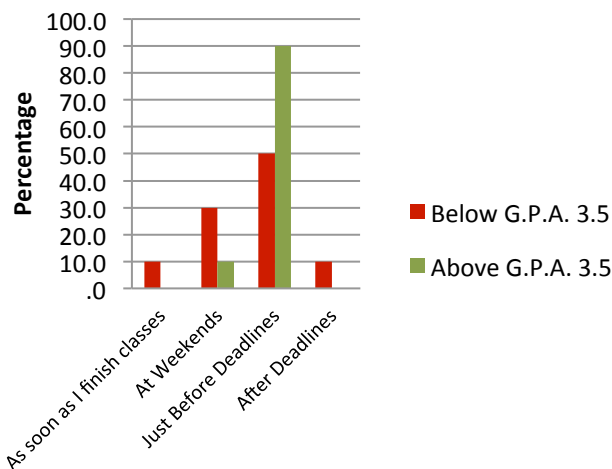


Fig. 1. Time at which students begin doing their assignments.

As we can see in figure 1, most students start working on their assignments just before deadlines, surprisingly, they are mostly the successful ones. Also, some of the unsuccessful students begin doing their work at the weekends; while a few of the successful ones start doing so at that time. Moreover, a negligible amount of unsuccessful students work on their assignments as soon as they finish classes, or even after the deadlines.

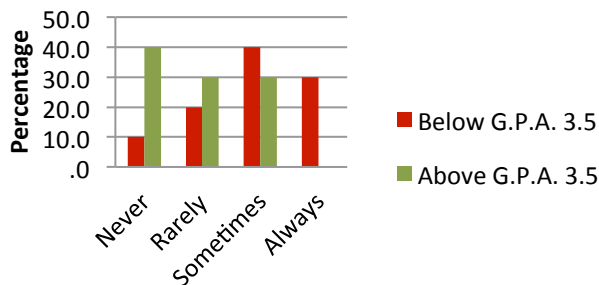


Fig. 2. Time spent finding lost notes and papers.

As figure 2 shows, the students that always spend a lot of time looking for lost notes and papers are the ones with a GPA below 3.5. Moreover, a few of them rarely or never spend time looking for certain papers. On the other hand, the majority of the successful students never or rarely spend time looking for lost notes.

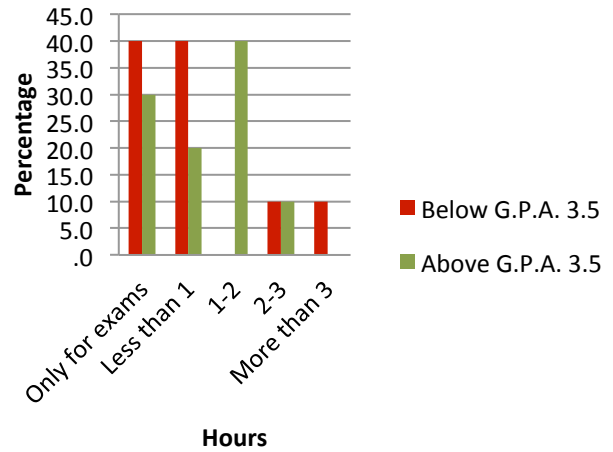


Fig. 3. Hours spent studying daily.

Clearly, the majority of the students surveyed study only for exams. Also, the majority of the successful students, in particular, study for 1-2 hours a day. None of the students with GPA below 3.5, studies for that amount of time a day. However, most unsuccessful students, as expected, study for less than an hour a day. Surprisingly, 20% of the students with GPA below 3.5, study for more than 2 hours a day. Furthermore, interestingly, successful students do not study for more than 3 hours a day.

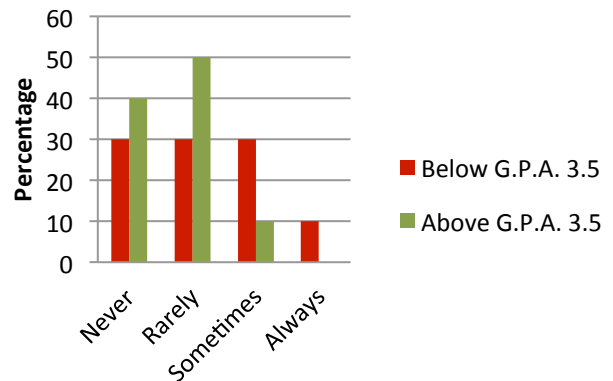


Fig. 4. Studying without interruptions.

Finally, none of successful students study without getting interrupted. Rarely do most of them study without getting interrupted. That is, most successful students usually get

interrupted when they study. Very few of them, 10%, get interrupted sometimes when they study. More than half of the unsuccessful students never or rarely study without getting interrupted. A third of them sometimes study and get disrupted, and only a few always study with no interruptions.

## V. DISCUSSION

### A. Discussion of the Number of Hours Spent Daily Studying

Considering the results related to the number of hours spent daily studying by a student, most of them were as our group had expected, and a few were somehow surprising. As expected, the majority of the successful students study on a daily basis for one to two hours which is, as our group see, reasonable and good enough. Those students are able to manage their time well, and schedule their daily activities, giving their studies a portion of time each day. Another result was that successful students do not study for more than three hours a day. They do not spend a huge amount of time studying; however, they focus and plan before starting which makes them study for a shorter period. Also, the results show that most of the unsuccessful students study only before exams and that explains their low grades. They tend to delay their college duties. Eventually, they get shocked when they see that a huge amount needs to be studied, and unfortunately they fail to do so. According to [1], which perfectly matches our conclusions, task-aversion and responsibility affects the student's grades.

On the other hand, a surprising result was that 20% of the students with a Grade Point Average (GPA) below 3.5 study for more than 2 hours daily. A possible reason behind that could be related to the students' attention in class because they might not be concentrating which will only make things harder for them, since they will have to study what they missed on their own. Finally, studying the unnecessary detailed information for a quiz could confuse the student and might not help him, but instead, waste his time.

### B. Discussion of Lost Notes and Papers

One of the most important factors affecting students' academic performance is finding lost notes and papers. Finding lost notes and papers wastes a lot of time that a student can use to study his important materials instead. In our results, we found that most of the unsuccessful students always spend their time looking for lost notes and papers which are important for their studies. There are a lot of reasons that might cause them to lose their important papers. One main reason is that the unsuccessful student might be careless and disorganized, which will affect him severely, especially if he studies only for exams.

On the other hand, the majority of the successful students rarely or even never spend any time looking for lost notes and papers, and therefore, they are considered careful and organized. Organization will make students feel less stressed, getting them more into studying without wasting any of their important time finding lost items, resulting in more efficient studying time.

### C. Discussion of the Time in Which Students Start Studying

Few of the surveyed students start working on assignments as soon as their classes finish. Although they have good time management skills, they are unsuccessful. A possible reason can be that these students are not focused on their studies. In other words, they get distracted a lot when they study. For example, they text on their phones, they study in front of a TV screen, or they answer their friends' calls. Another reason may be that they do not concentrate in class. Also, it could be because they study hard but not smartly; they do not know how to look for the important things. These students definitely feel disappointed and upset about their grades.

Furthermore, we found that the majority of the students start working on their assignments just before deadlines, and surprisingly enough, they are the successful students. Even if this has worked for some students, it is wrong. That is because procrastination results in good but not great work, since it is last minute work.

### D. Discussion of Interruptions

One of the main factors which affect students' time management during studying is interruptions. In general, the unsuccessful students (GPA 3.0) always study with interruptions from many common reasons. To begin with, noises around them always make them lose concentration. Another reason is that they spend a lot of time on social networks. In addition, mobile phones, music and friends create a huge interruption for them. On the other hand, there are unsuccessful students who study without getting interrupted and still get low grades. One reason for that can be that they cannot focus on their studies.

On the other hand, there are other students that study with interruptions and always get high grades (GPA greater than 3.50). One of the main reasons can be that they have good learning skills and they prefer to study under pressure. Furthermore, they get highly concentrated while studying even though there is a lot of noise that keeps disturbing them. They also concentrate very well during class and consult their instructors during their office hours. However, the main reason behind the success of successful students in avoiding interruptions is that they know their studying goals well and the time to finish them.

## VI. CONCLUSION

All in all, we found out that time management is related to the academic performance of the Petroleum Institute (PI) male students. That is, as our research study has shown that successful students are good time managers. These results, however, can be generalized to male engineering students living in the United Arab Emirates. Finally, we would suggest further study on the female engineering students.

## VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

After a deep understanding of the problems that students face regarding time management, here is what we recommend for both students and professors to help solving them.

Students:

- Do your assignments as soon as you get them, and divide them into small portions.
- Keep important notes and papers in places where they can be easily found.
- Consult a professor or a more experienced friend about the important things to study.
- Put all personal devices such as mobile phones, iPods and blackberries away while studying.
- Fight procrastination by making a deal with yourself that you will study for 10 or 15 minutes only. After these few minutes, you will find yourself ‘engaged’ and you will continue studying.

Professors:

- You can help by creating a semester plan and sharing it with the students in the beginning of the semester, so that students can plan ahead.
- You can give advice in class on the topic of time management, especially that it is obvious now that it is a very important topic, as it directly affects the performance of your students.
- You can encourage students to read more about time management, so they can understand how important and influential it is.
- You can be the example. Be punctual. Have an organized office. Grade tests as soon as they are over. Never procrastinate.

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