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# Improving Students' Performance with Time Management Skills

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**Abstract** – This paper examines the relationship between time management skills and academic performance among undergraduate students at Universiti Malaysia Perlis (UniMAP). The study focuses on three dimensions of time management: long-term planning ability, short-term planning ability, and time attitudes. A quantitative research design was employed, with data collected through questionnaires distributed to 152 respondents. Statistical analyses including reliability, correlation, and regression were conducted using SPSS software. The results reveal that long-term planning and time attitudes significantly influence student performance, while short-term planning demonstrates a weaker association. The findings are discussed considering the Pomodoro Technique and Pickle Jar Theory, emphasizing the importance of structured time management practices in enhancing student outcomes. This article contributes to the growing body of literature by offering empirical insights and practical recommendations for higher education institutions to design interventions that equip students with effective time management strategies. **Keywords:** “Time management”, “Students’ performance”, “Long-term planning”, “Short-term planning”, “Time attitudes”

## **1. Introduction**

Time management has long been identified as a critical factor in determining academic success. For university students, effective use of time is directly related to coping with academic challenges, reducing stress, and improving performance. Time management is defined as the process of planning, scheduling, and allocating time efficiently to meet academic and personal goals (Aeon & Aguinis, 2017). Without proper time management, students often face procrastination, poor academic results, and a lack of balance between studies and personal responsibilities.

The transition from high school to university typically requires students to adapt to greater independence. At this stage, students are often confronted with competing academic and social demands, and many fail to use their time effectively. Research highlights that poor time management is a common problem among undergraduates, leading to lower performance and increased stress (Nasrullah & Khan, 2015). Therefore, developing strong time management skills is a crucial aspect of academic success.

This study investigates how three core components of time management, long-term planning ability, short-term planning ability, and time attitudes which affect students' academic performance. The study also incorporates the Pomodoro Technique and Pickle Jar Theory to provide a theoretical lens for understanding how structured time allocation improves outcomes. By addressing this issue, the study contributes to the literature on student development and offers practical implications for higher education institutions.

## **2. Literature Review**

The literature on time management underscores its importance as a determinant of academic success. Academic performance is often measured through grades and overall achievement, reflecting the outcomes of teaching and learning activities (Maganga, 2016). Scholars argue that effective time management forms the backbone of student success, as it enables learners to balance study, personal, and social demands in increasingly competitive educational environments.

Strong time management skills allow students to prioritize tasks, avoid procrastination, and allocate sufficient time to academic activities. According to Britton and Tesser (1991), students who master these skills tend to demonstrate higher academic achievement than those who lack structured approaches. By efficiently managing their schedules, students not only complete tasks on time but also enhance the quality of their work, leading to better learning outcomes.

Long-term planning is one of the most critical dimensions of time management. It involves setting goals, developing strategies, and organizing tasks over extended periods such as semesters or academic years. Mohamed et al. (2018) emphasize that students with strong long-term planning skills are more likely to meet deadlines consistently and maintain stable performance. This structured approach reduces stress and fosters a proactive academic culture.

In contrast, short-term planning emphasizes immediate priorities, focusing on daily and weekly tasks. Adams and Blair (2019) found that short-term planning requires flexibility and adaptability, as students often need to adjust to unexpected academic or personal challenges. Research suggests that while long-term planning provides structure and direction, short-term planning allows for responsiveness and agility in fast-paced academic environments.

Another critical element of time management is students' time attitudes, which reflect how individuals perceive, value, and use their time. Filiz and Cemaloglu (2015) argue that students with positive time attitudes such as valuing punctuality and efficiency are more likely to achieve favorable academic results. Such students approach academic work with a mindset that maximizes productivity and minimizes wasted time.

Beyond these dimensions, several practical techniques have been developed to improve time management. The Pomodoro Technique, introduced by Cirillo (2006), promotes productivity by dividing work into short, focused intervals followed by breaks. This strategy enhances concentration, reduces mental fatigue, and mitigates procrastination. It has been widely applied in academic contexts where sustained focus is necessary.

Similarly, the Pickle Jar Theory provides a metaphorical framework for prioritization. It suggests that critical tasks (the "rocks") should be handled first, followed by medium-priority tasks (the "pebbles"), and finally minor activities (the "sand"). By focusing on essential responsibilities, students can manage their workload more effectively and avoid being overwhelmed by less important tasks. Both theories provide practical solutions that complement conceptual understandings of time management.

Empirical evidence supports the positive association between time management and academic achievement. Alyami et al. (2021) showed that time management skills significantly improve students' outcomes, with short-term planning proving especially valuable in environments with tight deadlines. Kaya et al. (2018) further demonstrated that positive time attitudes reduce stress and increase motivation, which in turn improve academic results. These findings confirm that time management influences not only achievement but also psychological well-being.

Recent studies have expanded this discussion by highlighting mediating factors such as study engagement and self-efficacy. Fu et al. (2025) found that time management indirectly enhances academic performance by fostering self-control and engagement among Chinese university students. Similarly, Liu et al. (2024) revealed that time attitudes influence performance through the reduction of procrastination, with self-efficacy acting as a moderator. Together, these findings provide robust evidence that time management is not a stand-alone skill but part of a broader system of psychological and behavioral processes.

In the Malaysian context, Amir, Quayyum, Md Isa, Islam, and Razali (2024) provide localized evidence of the multidimensional nature of time management. Their study categorized time management into Behavioral and Interpersonal Skills (BIPS), Planning and Self-Management Skills (PSMS), and Professional Development and Application Skills (PDAS). Results indicated that all three dimensions significantly and positively affect academic performance, particularly when guided by the Pickle Jar Theory. This demonstrates that both global and local perspectives converge in affirming the critical role of time management in academic achievement.

Therefore, building upon both international and local evidence, it is hypothesized that:

H1: There is a positive relationship between long-term planning ability (IV1) and student performance (DV).

H2: There is a positive relationship between short-term planning ability (IV2) and student performance (DV).

H3: There is a positive relationship between time attitudes (IV3) and student performance (DV).

### **3. Methodology**

#### *3.1 Research Design*

This study adopts a quantitative, cross-sectional research design to examine the influence of long-term planning ability, short-term planning ability, and time attitudes on students' academic performance. A cross-sectional design is appropriate as it captures students' behavioral constructs and perceptions at a single point in time (Creswell, 2014). Data were collected using a structured, self-administered questionnaire, ensuring uniformity in responses. All constructs and measurement items were adapted from validated instruments in prior studies (Britton & Tesser, 1991; Adams & Blair, 2019; Filiz & Cemaloglu, 2015) to enhance reliability and validity.

#### *3.2 Sampling and Data Collection*

The target population for this study consisted of undergraduate students enrolled at Universiti Malaysia Perlis (UniMAP) across various faculties. A purposive sampling technique was employed to ensure that respondents met specific inclusion criteria. These criteria required participants to be aged between 20 and 25 years, enrolled in full-time undergraduate programs, and actively engaged in both academic and extracurricular activities that demand effective time management.

In total, 152 valid responses were collected through the distribution of an online questionnaire, which was disseminated via social media platforms including WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram. The instrument utilized a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Participation in the study was entirely voluntary, and respondents retained the right to withdraw at any stage without penalty. These measures were implemented to ensure that ethical considerations were fully upheld.

#### *3.3 Measurement of Variables*

The questionnaire was divided into three sections: demographic information, student performance, and time management constructs. Items were adapted and contextualized from past studies. Table 3.1 presents the measurement of variables.

Table 3.1: Measurement of Variables and Constructs

Construct	Items	No. of Items	Source
<b>Student Performance (DV)</b>	SP1: Current CGPA	3	Britton & Tesser (1991)
	SP2: Carry marks obtained in continuous assessments		
	SP3: Class participation and attendance consistency		
<b>Long-Term Planning (IV1)</b>	LTP1: Scheduling study weeks in advance	3	Mohamed et al. (2018)
	LTP2: Prioritizing semester goals		
	LTP3: Tracking long-term assignments		
<b>Short-Term Planning (IV2)</b>	STP1: Daily task scheduling	4	Adams & Blair (2019)
	STP2: Using to-do lists		
	STP3: Allocating study hours per day		
	STP4: Adjusting weekly plans		
<b>Time Attitudes (IV3)</b>	TA1: Punctuality in class	3	Filiz & Cemaloglu (2015)
	TA2: Value of time as a resource		
	TA3: Belief that time efficiency improves results		

### 3.4 Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS version 26. Preliminary analysis included descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, skewness, kurtosis) and Cronbach's Alpha to test internal consistency. Pearson correlation was used to explore bivariate relationships, while multiple regression analysis tested the hypothesized relationships between independent variables (long-term planning, short-term planning, time attitudes) and the dependent variable (student performance). A significance threshold of  $p < 0.05$  was adopted. The regression model is expressed as:  $SP = \alpha + \beta_1LTP + \beta_2STP + \beta_3TA + \mu$ ; where: SP = Student Performance, LTP = Long-Term Planning, STP = Short-Term Planning, TA = Time Attitudes,  $\mu$  = Error term

## 4. Findings and Discussion

This chapter presents the results of the statistical analyses conducted. It includes descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, correlation matrix, multicollinearity diagnostics, and regression analysis.

### 4.1 Descriptive Statistics

*Table 4.1: Descriptive Statistics of Dependent and Independent Variables*

Variable	Mean	Median	Std. Dev.	Skewness	Kurtosis
SP	3.98	4.00	0.52	-0.214	2.58
LTP	4.12	4.20	0.61	-0.302	2.74
STP	3.87	3.80	0.64	-0.118	2.45
TA	4.05	4.00	0.58	-0.266	2.67

*Note: n=152. SP = Student Performance; LTP = Long-Term Planning; STP = Short-Term Planning; TA = Time Attitudes.*

The mean values for all variables exceed 3.80, suggesting that respondents generally demonstrate strong time management practices. Skewness and kurtosis values fall within acceptable ranges (Kline, 2011), confirming approximate normality.

### 4.2 Reliability Analysis

*Table 4.2: Cronbach's Alpha Scores*

Variable	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Interpretation
SP	3	0.781	Good
LTP	3	0.812	Very Good
STP	4	0.874	Excellent
TA	3	0.768	Acceptable

All constructs exceeded the threshold of 0.70 (Nunnally, 1978), confirming internal consistency.

### 4.3 Multicollinearity Diagnostics

Table 4.3: VIF Values

Variable	VIF	1/VIF
LTP	1.52	0.657
STP	1.68	0.595
TA	1.49	0.671
<b>Mean VIF</b>	<b>1.56</b>	

All VIF values fall well below 5.0, indicating no multicollinearity issues (Hair et al., 2010).

### 4.4 Correlation Analysis

Table 4.4: Pearson Correlation Matrix

	SP	LTP	STP	TA
SP	1.000			
LTP	0.560***	1.000		
STP	0.406***	0.482***	1.000	
TA	0.523***	0.399***	0.375***	1.000

Note:  $n=152$ . SP = Student Performance; LTP = Long-Term Planning; STP = Short-Term Planning; TA = Time Attitudes. \*\*\* $p<0.01$ , \*\* $p<0.05$ ,  $p<0.10$ .

All variables exhibit significant positive correlations with student performance, with long-term planning ( $r = 0.560$ ) and time attitudes ( $r = 0.523$ ) showing stronger associations compared to short-term planning ( $r = 0.406$ ). This suggests that students who plan their studies in advance and maintain positive orientations toward time are more likely to achieve better academic results.

The relatively strong correlation between long-term planning and student performance ( $r = 0.560$ ) highlights the importance of structured academic preparation. Students who establish semester-long goals, prepare study schedules in advance, and consistently track progress appear to perform better academically. This finding aligns with Britton and Tesser (1991), who reported that strategic planning and proactive management of time lead to improved

GPA outcomes. Similarly, Mohamed et al. (2018) emphasized that long-term planning reduces uncertainty and supports consistent performance throughout the academic term.

The correlation between time attitudes and student performance ( $r = 0.523$ ) further underscores the motivational and psychological dimensions of time management. Students who view time as a valuable resource, maintain punctuality, and avoid procrastination tend to be more engaged in their studies. Liu et al. (2024) also found that positive time attitudes reduce procrastination, while Filiz and Cemaloglu (2015) argued that valuing time enhances productivity and goal attainment. These results suggest that beyond planning, the way students *perceive and value time itself* is integral to academic success.

Although short-term planning also shows a positive relationship with student performance ( $r = 0.406$ ), the association is comparatively weaker. This indicates that while day-to-day scheduling and weekly task management are beneficial, they may not fully capture the broader academic success unless linked with long-term strategies. Adams and Blair (2019) argued that short-term planning often supports immediate tasks but may lack sustainability if not aligned with broader goals. Thus, students who rely solely on short-term scheduling might experience improvements in performance, but not at the same level as those who integrate both short-term and long-term planning.

The inter-correlations among the independent variables (LTP–STP,  $r = 0.482$ ; LTP–TA,  $r = 0.399$ ; STP–TA,  $r = 0.375$ ) indicate moderate but significant associations. These results suggest that effective time management is multidimensional and interconnected. Students who demonstrate strong long-term planning are often also competent in short-term scheduling and hold positive time attitudes. This resonates with the Pickle Jar Theory, which emphasizes the need to prioritize critical tasks (long-term goals) while balancing smaller daily activities (short-term tasks), supported by a mindset that values time.

Overall, the correlation analysis provides robust evidence that student performance is positively associated with all three aspects of time management. However, the relatively stronger influence of long-term planning and time attitudes highlights the importance of strategic foresight and psychological orientation over mere daily task management. These results are consistent with past research (Alyami et al., 2021; Kaya et al., 2018; Amir et al., 2024) and strengthen the argument for adopting a holistic and theory-driven approach to time management in higher education.

## 4.5 Regression Analysis

Table 4.5: Regression Results

Variable	Coeff.	Std. Error	p-value
LTP	0.365	0.072	0.000***
STP	0.124	0.083	0.138
TA	0.227	0.089	0.045**
<i>Adj. R<sup>2</sup></i>	<i>0.49</i>		

Note:  $n=152$ . SP = Student Performance; LTP = Long-Term Planning; STP = Short-Term Planning; TA = Time Attitudes. \*\*\* $p<0.01$ , \*\* $p<0.05$ ,  $p<0.10$ .

The regression model explains 49% of the variance in student performance, indicating a moderately strong explanatory power. Long-term planning ( $\beta = 0.365$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) emerged as the strongest predictor, highlighting that students who plan their academic tasks and semester goals in advance perform significantly better. This finding is consistent with Britton and Tesser (1991), who demonstrated that students who adopt structured long-term planning strategies are more successful academically. Likewise, Mohamed et al. (2018) reported that students who engage in consistent goal-setting and forward planning exhibit higher achievement and lower stress levels.

Time attitudes ( $\beta = 0.227$ ,  $p = 0.045$ ) also showed a significant effect, suggesting that students who value time, respect punctuality, and perceive time as a resource to be used wisely tend to achieve stronger academic results. Filiz and Cemaloglu (2015) earlier highlighted that students with positive time orientations display higher productivity and motivation. Similarly, Liu et al. (2024) found that positive time attitudes reduce procrastination, which in turn improves performance, particularly when mediated by academic self-efficacy.

Short-term planning ( $\beta = 0.124$ ,  $p = 0.138$ ), however, was not statistically significant, implying that daily or weekly scheduling alone does not necessarily translate into better academic performance. This result aligns with the observations of Adams and Blair (2019), who argued that short-term planning, while useful for immediate deadlines, often lacks the structural support of long-term goal-setting. In other words, without integration into broader planning and positive time attitudes, short-term scheduling risks becoming reactive rather than strategic.

The results can also be explained using theoretical frameworks. The Pickle Jar Theory emphasizes the importance of prioritizing critical academic tasks (the “rocks”) before

attending to less important activities (the “sand”). This framework resonates strongly with the finding that long-term planning is the most significant predictor of performance. Students who first allocate time to essential academic goals, such as preparing for major examinations or completing key assignments, are less likely to be overwhelmed by minor distractions, thereby improving overall performance (Amir et al., 2024).

Furthermore, the Pomodoro Technique (Cirillo, 2006) provides practical support for the role of time attitudes. By breaking tasks into short, concentrated intervals, this method reinforces the value of time and reduces procrastination. Research shows that when students internalize the importance of effective time use, they not only become more productive but also achieve better academic outcomes (Aeon & Aguinis, 2017; Kaya et al., 2018). The significant relationship between time attitudes and performance in this study suggests that adopting such time-conscious strategies can meaningfully enhance academic achievement.

These findings underscore the importance of structured, long-term planning and cultivating positive attitudes toward time in higher education. They extend the existing literature (Britton & Tesser, 1991; Alyami et al., 2021; Amir et al., 2024) by confirming that effective time management strategies are multidimensional. Successful students do not merely engage in surface-level scheduling but instead adopt a holistic approach that balances strategic planning, prioritization, and respect for time as a limited resource.

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study concludes that time management skills significantly influence student performance, with long-term planning ability and time attitudes emerging as the most impactful predictors. Students who adopt structured, forward-looking strategies and who value time as a resource tend to achieve better academic outcomes. In contrast, short-term planning ability, although beneficial in managing immediate tasks, was found to be less influential when considered independently. These findings suggest that effective time management is not merely about day-to-day scheduling but rather about adopting a holistic approach that integrates strategic foresight and positive psychological orientations toward time.

The application of the Pomodoro Technique and the Pickle Jar Theory provide valuable interpretive frameworks. The Pomodoro Technique reinforces the role of time attitudes by emphasizing the efficient use of small, focused intervals, thereby reducing procrastination and enhancing concentration. The Pickle Jar Theory aligns with the significance of long-term planning, illustrating how prioritizing critical tasks (“rocks”) before secondary ones (“sand”) ensures that essential academic goals are achieved. Together, these theories highlight that effective time management involves both *practical strategies* and *cognitive orientations*.

From a practical standpoint, the study's implications are clear. Universities should integrate structured time management programs into student development initiatives. These may include workshops on strategic planning, training modules on prioritization and task management, and mentoring programs designed to foster positive time attitudes. Embedding these skills into orientation programs or academic advising could prepare students to manage their academic workload more effectively, thereby enhancing performance and reducing stress.

In terms of theoretical contribution, this research confirms and extends prior studies (e.g., Britton & Tesser, 1991; Alyami et al., 2021; Liu et al., 2024; Hassan et al., 2024) by providing localized evidence from Malaysian undergraduates and highlighting the nuanced roles of different time management dimensions. It demonstrates that long-term planning and time attitudes are more decisive in shaping academic success compared to short-term scheduling, offering fresh insights into the multidimensional nature of time management.

However, this study is not without limitations. The use of self-reported measures may introduce response bias, and the focus on a single institution (UniMAP) limits the generalizability of the findings. Future research could address these gaps by incorporating multiple universities, including cross-cultural comparisons, or adopting longitudinal designs to observe changes in time management behaviors over time. Additionally, experimental or intervention-based studies could test the effectiveness of specific strategies, such as the Pomodoro Technique or Pickle Jar-based prioritization training, in real-world academic settings.

In conclusion, the findings underscore that time management is a crucial determinant of academic success, but not all dimensions are equally impactful. By fostering long-term planning and cultivating positive time attitudes, higher education institutions can play a pivotal role in equipping students with essential life skills that extend beyond academics and into their future professional lives.

Limitations of this study include its focus on a single university and reliance on self-reported data. Nevertheless, the results provide valuable insights into how students can improve their academic outcomes through better time management practices.

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