

Time Management by Medical Students of FMDC in Deadline Bound Projects

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ABSTRACT

Objective: To assess how students manage their time when working under a deadline and to find if deadlines cause stress in students.

Methodology: This cross sectional study was conducted for six months from Aug 2017 to Jan 2018 at Federal Medical & Dental College Islamabad. Total 218 students were enrolled for the study and selected by simple random sampling. A self-generated questionnaire was used to collect the data. Students were asked about their study hours, procrastination, stress caused by time limits and external time wasters to assess overall time management. Data was analyzed through IBM SPSS version 20.

Results: Interpretation of analysis revealed that 180 (82.6%) students' study for less than four hours daily, 130 (56.9%) students do time wasting activities for more than 4 hours. 130 (56.9%) students start working a day or two before deadlines and 37 (17%) students work on last night. Time limits cause at least some degree of stress in about 202 (92.7%) students. Social media is the greatest hindrance to the work according to 103(47.2%) students. Students who make timetable are more satisfied and are better at meeting deadlines.

Conclusion: Timetable is an indispensable tool when it comes to working under deadlines. Majority of students waste their time in useless activities and start work near deadlines that caused some degree of stress among students.

Key words: Time management, Deadlines, Procrastination, Timetable, Satisfaction.

Authors' Contribution:

¹Conception; Conception of the work idea, data collection, ²analysis and interpretation, drafting the manuscript, ³reviewing and final approval, accountable, ⁴Data collection, analysis and interpretation, ⁵writing the manuscript, reviewing and final approval, accountable

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Introduction

Time management is the act of influencing one's behavioral dimensions to complete as many tasks as possible within a specified amount of time. These behavioral dimensions include work organization and the continued application of time management techniques.¹

Time Management is an important skill and challenge for medical students. The right approach towards time management enables students improve their study-life balance by

making the right choices.² Medical students have to balance their time between multiple commitments including teaching, clinical attachments, exams, extra-curricular activities and social life. The combination of academic workload and immersion into a clinical environment can threaten medical students' work-life balance and wellbeing.³

Most of the time, the projects given to Medical Students are bound by a deadline. Projects given to Medical Students in our college include



sketches, practical, written assignments, tests and exams.

Closely related to deadlines is the concept of procrastination, in which one intentionally delays or puts off a task or decision that should be done in a timely manner. Procrastination can be detrimental to the work as it adds anxiety and low self-esteem in students. It is a part of human nature to change his usual behavior when met with a challenge or confronted with a deadline.⁴

Most of the students adopt different time managing techniques when they have to face a deadline. Thus, challenges posed by deadlines can only be counteracted when time is properly managed by students.

self-administered questionnaire filled by students. Date was calculated and results were analyzed by using IBM spss v.20. Analysis included frequencies for qualitative data including gender, class year and time spent on different tasks. Cross tabs were used to further compare categorical variables.

Results

A total of 218 medical students of all classes of MBBS in Federal Medical and Dental College, Islamabad were participated in the study. There were 82 male and 136 female students. The number of students was different from each class and highest number was of 4th year medical students (Table 1)

		N	%	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1st year	45	20.6	20.6	20.6
	2nd year	23	10.6	10.6	31.2
	3rd year	58	26.6	26.6	57.8
	4th year	59	27.1	27.1	84.9
	final year	33	15.1	15.1	100.0
	Total	218	100.0	100.0	

It is considered that if time is managed properly when working under deadlines it will lead to better outcomes and decreased stress in the students. So, we wanted to assess the role of time management in improving student's academic performance and their level of satisfaction with their work as no such study was previously conducted in our population.

Methodology

A cross sectional study was conducted in Federal Medical and Dental College from Aug 2017 to Jan 2018. Medical students of all five classes enrolled during study period, who were willing to participate in study and gave an informed consent. The sample size, as calculated by open EPI calculator and confirmed by the biostatistician was 218 students.⁵ Students were selected by simple random sampling. Our study was approved by Ethical Review Board of SZABMU (F.1-1/2015/ERB/SZABMU/). Data was collected by a

Out of 218, 110 respondents make timetable. Of them 31 were male and 79 were female respondents. Majority of the students 180 (82.6%) study for four or less hours daily. More than half (52.7%) students use social media, watch TV and do other activities for more than four hours. A little over a half of students (56.9%) start working a day or two before reaching deadlines, 17% students work on last night and only 26.1% students start working long enough (3 days or more) before deadlines. Deadlines cause substantial stress in 44%, mild stress in 48.70% and no stress in 7.30% of the respondents (Figure 1). About one-thirds (34.9%) of the students claimed that deadlines had an adverse effect on the quality of their work.

Three fourths (74.3%) students rush because of the time constraints. Only a third of students (32.2%) are satisfied with the way they use their time and 54.6% of the respondents are able to keep up with the schedule.

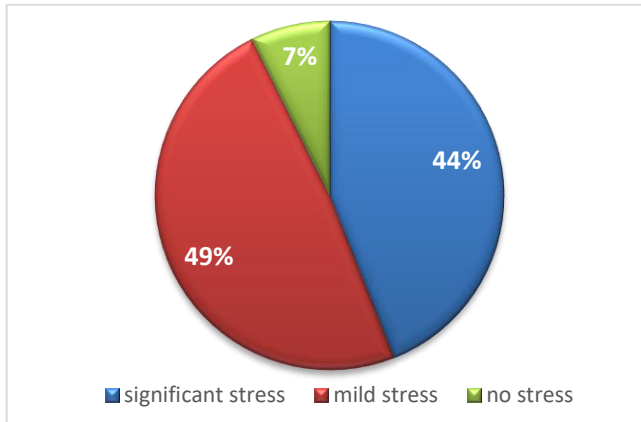


Figure 1. stress caused by deadlines.

The greatest source of distractions as reported by the students is shown in the graph (Figure 2) below. Social Media was the greatest hindrance according to them.

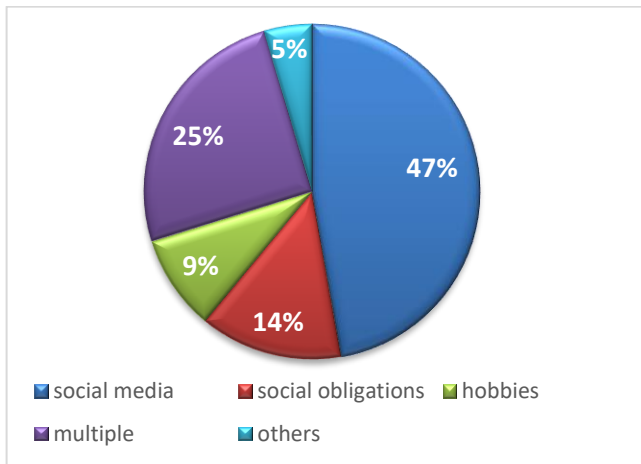


Figure 2. Greatest hindrance in work.

Students who make timetables show higher levels of satisfaction with their work as shown below.

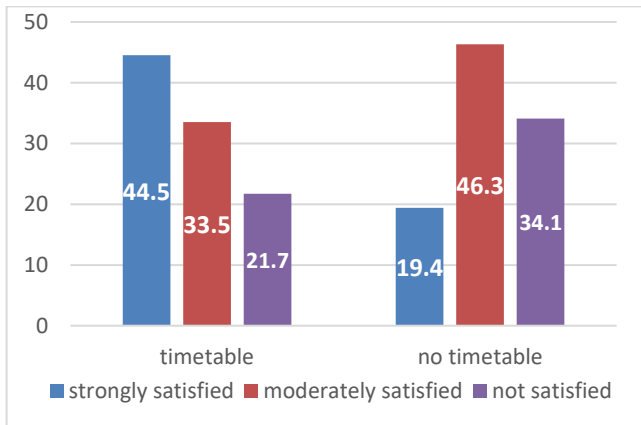


Figure 3. Self Reported Levels of Satisfaction in Percentage.

It was also observed that students who start their work fairly long before (3 or more days prior) deadline show a better work life balance than those who start their work a day or two prior and those who work only on last night. 47.5% of students, who start their work fairly long before deadline, reported a very good work life balance as opposed to only 27% of the students who work on last night report their work life balance as very good. Students who start their work fairly long before deadlines were more satisfied with the way they use their time. 54.4% of students starting their work fairly long before were highly satisfied as opposed to only 13.5% of students who start work a night before.

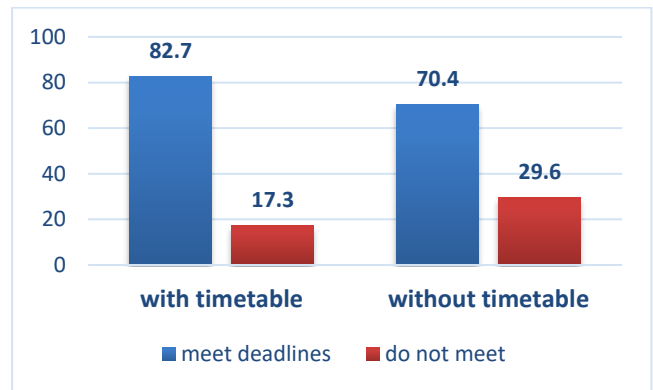


Figure 4. Percentage of students meeting deadlines.

As seen in the above graph, people who make timetable are much better in meeting deadlines. Students who make timetables also reported decreased procrastination. Figure 5

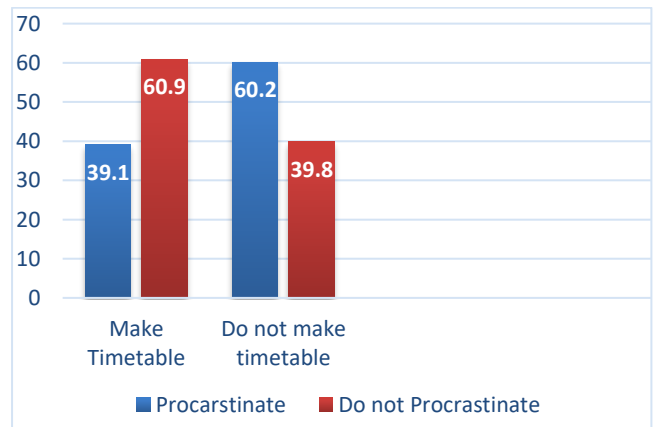


Figure 5. Percentages of Students reporting Procrastination.

Discussion

Through our research we found that making time table is quite an effective way of managing time. Good time management, such as setting goals and priorities, can facilitate productivity and success, contributing to work effectiveness, maintaining balance and job satisfaction. Conversely, poor time management has been associated with poor quality of work, low productivity, negative influence on the career path, and high levels of stress.¹ This is supported by a research conducted in 2015 by Yamada M et al which showed that perceived control of time resulted in improved performance and decreased stress.⁴ Excessive workload, difficulties with studying and time management, conflicts in work-life balance were considered major stressors in medical student's life.⁶ This study revealed that having deadlines causes some degree of stress in 92.7% of the respondents thus it is imperative that time should be managed properly so that the stress caused by deadlines can be curtailed.

Research conducted in five states of USA: Los Angeles, Denver, Atlanta, Chicago and Fort Lee in 2008 calculated the time management in middle school students.⁷ Study revealed that females scored better at meeting deadlines but not in planning. Similar findings are reported by Sultana et al.⁸ This is in contrast to our study which indicates that females are better in dividing their time and are more satisfied with the way they use their time. So, further studies should be conducted to evaluate gender related variability and if it has some significance in further strategy making.

Another research about the impact of externally imposed deadlines on intrinsic motivation showed that deadlines caused loss of interest in the game.⁹ Another research conducted in Sydney, Australia and New Jersey, United States covered the importance of time management in part-time and full-time community college students. It revealed that time management was more critical

for non-traditional students as the results concluded that time management was a significant mediator for a part-timer than for a full-timer.¹⁰ A study concluded that people are willing to impose deadlines upon themselves to overcome procrastination and that self-imposed deadlines are quite effective in improving the performance. It also revealed that when students allocate different time slots to tasks, it resulted in improvement of their performance.¹¹

Literature revealed that students with perceived control of time were reported to have better performance and less work load and procrastinate less often.^{4,12} Time tables allow students to divide the limited time available effectively.

This study revealed that students who make time table procrastinate less often. This shows that people who divide their time have a better grasp of their work load and thus do not put off important tasks.

Social media was found as being the greatest source of distraction with more than half (61.5%) of students keeping their gadgets like smart phones with them even while they are working.

Conclusion

Timetable is an indispensable tool when it comes to working under deadlines. Majority of students waste their time in useless activities and start work near deadlines that caused some degree of stress among students. Further research is indicated on this specific topic to enlighten different behaviors and preferences of students and their impact on over all well being.

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