UNIVERSITY STUDENT’S PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT TIME USING, AND HOW TO DEAL WITH THEIR DAILY LIFE STRESS: AN INVESTIGATION FROM TURKEY

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ABSTRACT

This purpose of the study to investigate the attitudes, thoughts and perceptions of fulltime university graduate students at tourism management department, about time management, time using and its effects on their daily life. Participants (N=235) were the students attending the department of Tourism Management Department of three different universities. A questionnaire with 4 sections was developed by applying to past researches in order to collect data for the study. As well as analysing arithmetic mean and standard deviation, ANOVA and independent samples t-test were used to point out differences about perceptions and attitudes of students depending on their characteristics as gender and age.

The results showed that most of the students believed the importance of time, and they could manage time by themselves. On the other hand, they pointed out they weren’t given any information about how to manage the time, in their schools or daily life. In additionally, results indicated that there were meaningful differences among students about time using and procrastination behaviour.

KEYWORDS

time management, time using, time pressure, stress, students

INTRODUCTION

Time can be explained as the whole of life and is irreversible, irreplaceable and also cannot be tied down by definition or confined inside a formula. Time management is important and different for everyone. It is not only how to get more out of a person’s time, but also how to use his/her time effectively. In the recent years, many researchers and academicians has been interested in this subject. Most of them have tried to explain how to use people (students, workers, etc) time effectively and what it impacts on life and stress.

Technology and also globalisation affect all the people about using their time more efficient in their private or working life. Issues of time and timing have become more and more essential to managers and employees. Especially in the last two decades, as a result of expanding global competition and increased demands for immediate availability of products and services, the temporal dimension of work has become more important (Orlikowsky and Yates, 2002). Time management has been a bigger challenge in today's world where life seems to be a speeding train that stops for no one. It refers to a range of skills, tools, and techniques utilized to accomplish specific tasks, projects and goals. It means, people need to plan, to analyse of time spent, to set goals, to organize and also to monitor, because of being successful in their business life to reduce stresses effects. In last two decades, many researchers have begun to discuss procrastination behaviour with time using. In the past researches, some of researchers argued that procrastination behaviour affected people negatively; (Owens and Newbegin 1997; Tice and Baumeister 1997) while some did positively as Chu ve Choi (2005).
Tourism is a vital and an important part of the economy. Many countries try to get more revenues from tourism and to increase their GNP by using all resources they have. The development of the tourism industry has played an important part in the economy of the world in recent years. In 2008 there were 922 million tourists travelling to foreign countries (reflecting 2% growth year on year) where they spent US$ 944 billion, according to the World Tourist Organization. Of course, 2009 is to bring a decline in tourism due to the recession - in the first four months of the year there were 8% less people travelling around our globe in comparison to the same months of 2008. Still, by 2010 international arrivals are estimated to reach 1.6 billion. Since tourism is essentially a service industry it is labour intensive, it is a major employer. Turkey is an important tourism country by getting 30 million tourist and about 20 billion dollars every year. And Turkey is a unique country around the world with 2% rate of growth in tourism in 2009.

Due to the characteristics of tourism, many units operate 24 hours a day and 7 days a week. It makes the time fundamental and valuable for tourism workers. It is not easy to service the guests for workers and it causes some physiological pressures as stress. Many managers try to overcome this cause by using different kinds of techniques and skills for their personnel. In addition this, many researchers try to explain how to use time efficiently in business life in their investigation.

In the globalizing world, using the time effectively and efficiently depends on the efficient management of time. With his statement about the time management, which follows as, “Time is a scarce source, if it is not managed properly, then nothing is considered to have been managed well”, Peter F. Drucker emphasized the importance of time management. (Mackenzie 1985: 14, Guven ve Yesil 2004: 59).

The importance of time management and time practices have been increasing day by day and especially there is lack of studies related to time management and academic achievement (Macan et al., 1990; Britton and Tesser, 1991; Trueman and Hartley, 1996) and also student’s daily life. Numerous studies have investigated what time management mean and how to refer to. For instance, Adams & Jex (1999), Jex & Elacqua (1999), Davis (2000), Macan, et al. (1990), Macan (1996) and Mudrack (1997) have referred to time management as techniques to manage time. While Orpen (1994), Slaven & Totterdell (1993), Woolfolk & Woolfolk (1986) have explained it as a technique for effective time use, especially having enough time to accomplish the many tasks required. Time management has been referred by others as a planning and allocating time (Burt & Kemp, 1994; Francis-Smythe & Robertson, 1999); the degree to which individuals perceive their use of time to be structured and purposive (Bond & Feather, 1988; Strongman & Burt, 2000; Vodanovich & Seib, 1997); a way of getting insight into time use (Koolhaas, et al., 1992); a technique to increase the time available to pursue activities (King et al., 1986); time management practices intended to maximize intellectual productivity (Britton & Tesser, 1991); an application of self-regulation processes in the temporal domain (Griffiths, 2003); coping behaviour in at-risk populations (King et al., 1986); self-regulation strategies aimed at discussing plans, and their efficiency (Eilam & Aharon, 2003); the use of procedures that are designed to help the individual to achieve his or her desired goals (Hall & Hursch, 1982); ways to assess the relative importance of activities through the development of a prioritization plan (Kaufman-Scarborough & Lindquist, 1999); clusters of behavior that are deemed to facilitate productivity and alleviate stress (Lay & Schouwenburg, 1993). Some authors gave no definition at all (Barlow, Kelloway, & Cheung, 1996; Simons & Galotti, 1992; Trueman & Hartley, 1996). (Claessens, et al., 2004)

Today the use of time or managing time is a critical issue both for individuals and organizations. The value of time management is not control of time per se, but the ways people can use time to improve their life (Mackenzie, 1990). An individual, who cannot effectively manage time, cannot manage his professional life and daily life (Gautschi, 1988). Time is the most precious resource available to may business owner and unless it is carefully managed, nothing else can be. It is well known fact that planning promotes performance (Hassanzabeh and Ebadi, 2007). Time management makes success by reducing stress, maintaining balance, increasing productivity and also setting and trying to reach goals. From this broadened perspective, people can see that the real value of time management is that it enhances their lives in all dimensions (Alay and Kocak, 2002).

The question of why time management is a problem for people has only recently attracted the attention of researchers. In particular, economists and psychologists (Fischer, 2001; Koch & Kleinmann, 2002; O’Donoghue & Rabin, 2001) have developed theoretical arguments about why time management is difficult for many people. Most studies have only examined zero-order correlations between time management behaviours and stress-related outcomes (Jex ve Elacqua 1999: 183). As Macan (1994) showed, however, time management behaviours are related to stress-related outcomes because they enhance employees’ feelings of control over time. It is also possible that engaging in time management behaviour moderates the relation between stressors and strains, although only Lang’s (1992) study has examined this possibility. Many work stressors lead to an increase in time demands on employees. For example, if an employee is faced with many job demands, or if job demands are conflicting, this will likely lead to increased time pressure.
At the University level, students are regarded as adults and are assumed therefore to be capable of making appropriate decisions on time allotment and utilization (Ogonor and Nwadiani, 2006). However, research findings have shown that students in tertiary institutions particularly first timers find management of time stressful and the most difficult aspect of university life to cope with. (Oquinonez et al. 1997). Dipboye and Phillips (1990) showed that university students who had more sense of purpose and structure in their use of time reported greater psychological well-being and more efficient habits of study. Also, Vodanovich and Seib (1997) illustrated that procrastinators tend to have weak, if any, structure in their time use. Despite the fact that it can be measured time, the perception of time is a truly subjective experience (Macan, 1994). Lay (1990) found passive procrastinators to underestimate the overall time that was required to complete tasks. Consequently, they often failed to complete tasks on time, triggering the perception of reduced control of time (Lay & Schouwenburg, 1993).

For example, several researchers have linked time –management skills with successful college performance, including higher achievement scores and greater maturity (Britton & Tesser, 1991; Trueman & Hartley, 1996). There have been fewer examinations of issues of time -management with students who have disabilities. Manganello (1994) stressed the importance of such skills for older students with learning disabilities and provided strategies, including use of a time-management log, to promote better skills. Sowers, Rusch, Connis, and Cummings (1980) examined the impact of training in time –management skills with three adults who had mental retardation and basic time-telling abilities, finding that these individuals could be taught to engage in independent time-management (Davies et al, 2002).

**METHOD**

As an exploratory study, this research aimed to investigate the student’s perceptions and attitudes about time using, procrastination behaviour and evaluate how procrastination’s affected them on their daily life. Based on the relevant literature, several open-ended interviews were conducted with students studying at department of Tourism Management in three universities were called Istanbul, Kocaeli and Sakarya. Based on these interviews, a survey was drafted. The survey consisted of three sections. The first section included 5-point Likert scale (1; never, to 5; always) concerning 37 items about time using and time management behaviours. The second section included also 5-point Likert scale statements about the time pressure and its effects on daily life with 9 items. The statements in those two sections were taken from Choi and Moran (2009) and Stainton and et al, (2000). And the last sections were concerned about the characteristics of participants. A Cronbach’s Alfa reliability of 0.85 was obtained for the questionnaire in a pilot test with 45 students in Sakarya University and based on the test results, items in each section were revised, and some of them were removed.

The sample consisted of 235 full-time undergraduate students at Tourism Management Departments of Istanbul University, Kocaeli University and Sakarya University. The sampling frame chosen was especially from upper second class. Respondents were randomly selected. The main reason of selecting upper second class students was to choose the participants who had some experiences in tourism industry as trainees or workers. Thus, they could compare themselves both in schools and in industry about their time management skills and time using affects on stress.

Of the total 270 surveys prepared and were given to the students, 254 completed questionnaire were returned, yielding a response rate of 94%. Consent for participation was obtained prior to the survey. During the 2009 Spring Semester, data was collected from undergraduate students concerning with their attitudes and perceptions related to the time management skills and also the affects of time using on stress. Input was collected completely from those universities students (Kocaeli University with 72 students and Sakarya University with 106 students and Istanbul University with 57 students, totally 235 students).

The data gathered from the university students and they were tested by spss 13.0 program. Depending upon the certain distribution of data and using 5-point Likert scales for questions, parametric tests were applied. Student t-tests and ANOVA were used to examine gender and age differences in perceptions and attitudes of students about time management and time pressures.

**FINDINGS**

The characteristic of the subjects is given in Table 1. Of the total number of participants 45,1 (N=235) were from Sakarya University. Among the participants, 56 percent were female and 44 percent were male.
respectively. The age of participants ranged from 18 to 27, and the average age was 21.3 years with 91 percent of them were between 19 and 24. 94 of them were in 3rd or 4th class.

Table 1. The Characteristics of the Subjects in the Study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>class</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sex</td>
<td>prep</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>female</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>55.7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>male</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>44.3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>65.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>age</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>28.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 and under</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19-21</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>41.7</td>
<td>University</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22-24</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>48.9</td>
<td>Istanbul U.</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>24.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-27</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>Kocaeli U.</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>30.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36 or older</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>Sakarya U.</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>45.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It can be seen on Table 2, the beliefs and thoughts of the students about time and time management also with their behaviours about how to use time effectively. 37 items are chosen and were given to the students to rate themselves on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5. The results were listed in the table according to the scores of them. The results indicated that items such as “I prioritize the tasks I have to do during the day according to their importance and urgency”, “I know what my time is worth”, and “I have to wait for the right mood to do creative work” were given high scores (4 or up) by the students. On the other hand, items such as “I have difficulty finishing activities once I start them”, “I make a list of tasks to accomplish each day”, and “I have a list of long range personal objectives” were seen with low average scores.

Interestingly, about a half of them (44%) determined that they didn’t make a list of tasks, 63 percent interpreted that they concentrated on one important task a time. 50% of them expressed that they had no knowledge and any systems about how to solve their time management problems. 63 percent indicated that the worth of the time in their life.

To test preference differences about time management and time using habits among participants’ demographics, independent t-test and ANOVA were performed. And results of analysis showed that there were meaningful differences about student’s perceptions and attitudes between groups in demographic. While, “I postpone things which aren’t very urgent, even though they may be”, was significantly higher among female respondents, “I have a list of long range personal objectives” and “I plan for tomorrow” were higher among male (0,05<p) as a results of t-test. ANOVA analysis of our survey data shows that there are meaningful differences about students thoughts such as “I concentrate on only one important task at a time”, “I keep track of the use of my time (with devices such as a time log)”, “Unnecessary socializing takes up too much of my day”, “Most people would say they are fast starters”, “I have to wait for the right mood to do creative work”, “I know when to cut my losses” and “I invest time to make time” according to their age group (0,05<p).

Table 2. Student’s thoughts about the time management and their behaviours how to use their time (N=235)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>St.Dev.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I prioritize the tasks I have to do during the day according to their importance and urgency</td>
<td>4.02</td>
<td>.998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know what my time is worth</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>1.071</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have to wait for the right mood to do creative work</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>1.207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do things right the first time</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>1.019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do complete work. I finish what I start</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>1.085</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I keep everything in its proper place at work | 3.75 | 1.110
I concentrate on only one important task at a time | 3.66 | 1.014
I obtain all the facts of every situation before I make a decision | 3.65 | .981
I schedule some time during the day for personal time alone (for planning, meditation, prayer, exercise) | 3.64 | 1.038
I take care of my body | 3.60 | 1.098
I do redundant “busy work” at one set time during the day | 3.59 | 1.031
I tend to do the quick, easy, enjoyable things first | 3.58 | 1.092
I can find quiet, non-interrupted time whenever I need it | 3.56 | 1.121
I can develop a high energy level quickly and maintain it a long time | 3.54 | 1.102
I produce many of my results with and through others | 3.54 | 1.129
I plan for tomorrow | 3.49 | 1.095
I don't procrastinate. I do it today when it needs to be done. | 3.46 | 1.163
Most people would say they are fast starters | 3.45 | 1.050
I know when to cut my losses | 3.37 | 1.064
I allow enough recovery time to maintain my energy | 3.35 | 1.016
I limit excessive socialization during business hours | 3.35 | 1.073
I invest time to make time | 3.28 | 1.040
I take a period of quiet time each day for concentration and creative thinking | 3.26 | 1.062
I don’t do well if I have to rush through a task | 3.23 | 1.078
I make appointments with myself | 3.20 | 2.473
I use techniques to maximize the value of my commute time | 3.14 | 1.159
I have a list of all the smaller tasks, jobs, and assignments that need to be handled over the next few weeks | 3.00 | 1.175
I do multiple trivial tasks at once (like signing letters while talking on the phone) | 2.98 | 1.052
I take notes and don’t rely on my memory | 2.95 | 1.188
It’s usually easy for me to say “no” to other people | 2.94 | 1.256
I postpone things which aren’t very urgent, even though they may be important | 2.87 | 1.063
In order to make better use of my time, I intentionally put off some tasks | 2.86 | 1.142
I don’t have to interrupt the time I need to spend with my family in order to get church-related work done | 2.83 | 1.194
I make a list of tasks to accomplish each day | 2.66 | 1.118
I have a list of long range personal objectives | 2.63 | 1.203
I’ve investigated how to solve time management problem | 2.58 | 1.179
I have difficulty finishing activities once I start them | 2.56 | 1.136

As presented in Table 3, a half of all participants had no information about time management and 53 percent of them pointed out that no information about time management were offered them while they worked in tourism establishments. Interestingly, more than half determined that they could arrange their time was related to their duties and a higher percentage (80.9%) of them expressed that they believed the importance of time management. 58 percent of them pointed out that they could arrange their time about duties.

Table 3. Participants’ thoughts about time management

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you have any information’s about time management?</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>yes</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>48.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>51.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have any information’s about time management offered you as a part of trainee in establishments you worked in?</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yes</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>16.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>53.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a little bit</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>30.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can you arrange your time about your duties?</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yes</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>58.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The overall scores (mean) and standard deviations of 9 expressions about student’s thoughts towards time pressure are shown in Table 4. 35% of them didn’t feel themselves on time pressure, while 27 percent did. As it can be seen from the table, many students’ thoughts such as “I can make my duties at time”, “I can have a break if I need” and “I can find enough time for me” are with high arithmetic mean scores. According to answers of students, it can be said that they can control their time in their daily life. ANOVA analysis of our survey data shows that there are meaningful differences (0.05<p) about students thoughts such as “I can find enough time for myself “ and “I can make my duties at time” depend on their age level. The age group of 21-24 had given higher scores than younger participants. More than a half (57%) expressed that they could their duties at time. And female participant’s scores are higher than others. According to the results of analysis, it can be expressed that many students could manage time and didn’t feel any stresses on their daily life that was caused by time pressure.

Table 4. Thoughts of students about time using and time pressures on their daily life with ANOVA results between age groups. (N=235)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I can make my duties at time</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>1.009</td>
<td>3.191 .014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can find enough time for myself</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>1.091</td>
<td>2.936 .021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can have a break if I need</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>1.022</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t feel myself under time pressures</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>1.115</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I needn’t to delay my duties</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>1.115</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t feel any pressures about long working hours</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>1.091</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t think about I must work fast</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>1.008</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t feel myself that I am under heavy work pressures</td>
<td>3.06</td>
<td>1.108</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I find the working hours flexible</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>1.085</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CONCLUSION

The first aim of the study was to point out student’s thoughts and perceptions about concept of time management, and second was to investigate how to manage their time and time pressure effects on their daily life stress. When the results of the study are considered as a whole, it is seen that time management skills haven’t been completely placed at universities. However, students’ thoughts and perceptions emerged positively about time management. Interestingly, most of them indicated that they knew the worth of their time and they could prioritize their tasks. According to the t-test there is no significant difference between the means of female and male students. The similar results can be seen between age groups as a result of ANOVA. On the other hand, there are significant differences between age groups on time pressures and its effects on stress, while there is no significant difference between female and male students. Female participants had lower average means than male about finding enough time while the opposite situation on making duties at time.

As a result of study, it can be said that many students weren’t given any information about time management skills and how to use their time effectively. So it should be developed and implemented some special programs to increase students’ awareness of time and time management skills.
REFERENCES


