

## **THE IMPACT OF TIME MANAGEMENT ON EXAMINATION ANXIETY OF UNDERGRADUATES AT PYAY UNIVERSITY**

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### **Abstract**

Effective time management is an essential skill for university students, as it helps to alleviate anxiety about exam. The primary purpose of this study was to explore the impact of time management on examination anxiety of undergraduates at Pyay University in Bago Region, Myanmar. A total of 395 undergraduates from Pyay University participated in this study, completing self-report questionnaires such as the Time Management Scale, Cognitive Test Anxiety Scale, and demographic surveys. The regression analyses indicated that students' time management skills significantly and negatively predicted their cognitive test anxiety levels. The results of this study will provide practical insights into time management and examination anxiety, helping university students manage their exam anxiety more effectively.

**Keywords:** time management, examination anxiety, undergraduates

### **Introduction**

Examination anxiety is a common issue among students in universities and other higher education institutions (Hyseni Duraku & Hohxa, 2018; Zhang & Henderson, 2014; Steinmayr et al., 2016). Exams serve as a formal method to assess students' academic performance and cognitive abilities (Umar & Haruna, 2021). While some researchers argue that moderate anxiety can enhance academic performance, significant anxiety can negatively impact both performance and well-being (Green et al., 2016; Gilavand, 2018).

Examination anxiety encompasses physiological arousal, psychological and behavioral reactions, tension, and pre-exam and during-exam symptoms like anxiety, worry, and fear of not succeeding the exam (Okogu, Osah, & Umodjere, 2016). Although it is common to feel anxious before an exam, excessive anxiety might be harmful (Dobson, 2012). Students prone to exam anxiety often struggle to concentrate on their academic work (Lena & Kent, 2012), which can affect their exam performance and learning efficiency (Elazizi, Nermin & Sanaa, 2012). Symptoms of exam anxiety include loss of appetite or sleep, sweaty hands, unusual food cravings, and difficulty concentrating (Huberty, 2009).

Several factors contribute to exam anxiety. External factors include uncomfortable test environments and unwelcoming examiner behavior (Sitzmann & Ely, 2011). Internal factors involve poorly written test questions, unclear instructions, lack of lecturer commitment and creativity, unsuitable teaching methods, and insufficient teaching experience. From the students' perspective, exam anxiety can result from weak test performance abilities, insufficient understanding of the course, poor critical thinking capabilities, ineffective time management, and poor study habits.

Cassady (2004) identifies additional causes of exam anxiety, such as poor preparation, negative thoughts, avoidance of social assistance, unsuitable stress relief practices, ineffective

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and weak mental imagery, poor self-study skill, harmful stereotypes, and inadequate ability to humor. Exam anxiety can manifest through poor preparation, last-minute cramming, poor study habits, lack of organization, or poorly structured test administration (Akanbi, 2013). Additionally, examination anxiety among undergraduates may be linked to poor time management (Lena and Kent, 2012).

Time is a valuable resource, with only twenty-four hours available each day, limiting what can be achieved. Effective time management is crucial for balancing work, social activities, and rest. Planning and scheduling time effectively can ensure tasks are completed efficiently. This skill is particularly important for college students, as effective time management is key to leading a successful life (Chaturvedi, 2016). Consequently, there is a strong emphasis on time management practices (Macan et al., 2000).

As noted by scholars, time management is crucial for undergraduate students' success in examinations. It is essential to use time wisely to attend classes, complete assignments, and study for tests. Time management encompasses values, practices, abilities, tools, and structures that help individuals maximize their time to achieve excellence (Aduke, 2015). According to Abd el-Aziz, Eid, and Safan (2012), it involves applying skills and methods to accomplish tasks, goals, and projects, such as setting goals, allocating time, analyzing, and organizing.

Effective time management needs to be learned as a crucial skill for every student (Peng and Kamil, 2017). They also suggested that it can become a habit and be effectively used in everyday life. Students have many tasks and need to meet the expectations of different lecturers, with their grades depending on the quality of their work. Time management involves setting goals that address upcoming requirements and targets to achieve these objectives (Burrus et al., 2013). Utilizing time logs can enhance time efficiency by setting both short-term and long-term goals, prioritizing tasks, creating to-do lists, and organizing the workspace (Hellsten, 2012).

Nasrullah and Khan (2015) identified three types of time management behaviors: short-range planning, long-range planning, and time attitude. Short-range planning involves systematically assigning tasks within a short timeframe. Long-range planning requires a long-term perspective, considering important dates and related objectives (Alay & Koçak, 2003). Time management practices are closely linked to an individual's awareness and attitude towards time, reflecting their sense of control over it. Thus, time attitude reflects the perception of having control over time, rather than just managing it efficiently (Karim & Kandy, 2011).

However, Peng and Kamil (2017) noted that many students face academic challenges due to poor time management and often feel overwhelmed by their tasks. This leads to frustration and stress. Students frequently express concerns about not having enough time in their daily lives.

In our developing country, students often absence or are late to school due to social responsibilities and economic challenges. Technology also disrupts their study time with distractions like phone calls, texting, social media, and socializing, which delay assignments and study sessions. These issues lead to poor exam preparation, causing anxiety and stress. Recently, examination bodies have noted the poor academic performance of students. Thus, time management behavior and exam anxiety have become significant social problems for many university students in Myanmar. Immediate action is needed to sustain education in Myanmar. The purpose of this study was to explore the impact of time management on examination anxiety

of undergraduates at Pyay University in Bago Region, Myanmar. More precisely, we developed the following hypothesis based on the reviewed literature.

*Hypothesis 1:* Male and female undergraduates manage their time differently.

*Hypothesis 2:* Male and female undergraduates experience examination anxiety differently.

*Hypothesis 3:* Effective time management significantly reduces examination anxiety among undergraduate students.

## Methodology

### Participants

During the 2023-2024 Academic year, surveys were administered to 395 students from ten departments at Pyay University, including Myanmar, English, Philosophy, Psychology, Law, Economy, Chemistry, Physics, Zoology, and Geology. Out of these, 395 valid responses were collected, comprising 282 females (71.4%) and 112 males (28.4%), aged between 18 and 25 years ( $M = 1.72$ ,  $SD = 0.45$ ). The participants included 10.6% first-year students, 48.4% second-year students, 25.8% third-year students, and 15.2% fourth-year students.

### Measures

*Time Management:* The Myanmar version of the 18-item Time Management Scale, originally developed by Britton and Tesser (1991), was utilized to evaluate students' ability to manage their time. Participants rated their agreement with each item on a 5-point Likert scale, from never (1) to always (5). The TMS encompasses three dimensions: short-range planning, long-range planning, and time attitude. The items were translated into Myanmar and reviewed by a supervisor to ensure conceptual alignment with the original. Confirmatory factor analysis results indicated that the Myanmar version of the TMS identified three factors: short-range planning, time attitude, and long-range planning. Cronbach's alpha demonstrated acceptable reliability for the three dimensions in this study: .89 for time attitude, .80 for short-range planning, and .82 for long-range planning. A sample item for time attitude is "I find myself doing things which interfere with my college work simply because I hate to say no to people." A sample item for short-range planning is "I write a set of goals for myself for each day." A sample item for long-range planning is "I have a set of goals for the entire quarter."

*Examination Anxiety:* The 26-item Myanmar version of the Cognitive Test Anxiety Scale (CTAS), originally developed by Cassady and Johnson (2002), was employed to assess anxiety about examination. Participants rated each item on a 4-point Likert scale, from *not at all* (1) to *very typical of me* (4). Confirmatory factor analysis revealed that the Myanmar version of the CTAS identified a single factor, with a Cronbach's alpha of .90. For this study, the overall scores from the Myanmar version of the CTAS were used to measure general exam anxiety. An example item for CTAS is, "At the beginning of a test, I am so nervous that I often can't think straight."

*Demographic Variables:* The demographic questionnaires included demographic variables of particular interest (e.g., gender, age, class, major and accommodation).

### Procedure

Undergraduate students were randomly selected from various general units. Permission for voluntary participation during class time was obtained from the heads of ten departments at Pyay University, including Myanmar, English, Philosophy, Psychology, Law, Economy,

Chemistry, Physics, Zoology, and Geology. In July 2024, 400 undergraduates were gathered, and survey questionnaires were distributed to all students attending class on the designated day. The survey explained the study's purpose and requested taking part in a set of self-reported questionnaires. Undergraduates were informed their survey answers would stay anonymous and they could choose not to participate at any time. We assured them of confidentiality. Out of the 400 students, 395 provided valid responses, making up 98.75% of the participants.

## Results

### Correlation Analyses

The intercorrelation between the study variables are summarized in Table 1. First, gender showed a significant correlation with examination anxiety ( $r = .17$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and not significantly correlated with time management, that is, time attitude ( $r = -.09$ , ns); short range planning ( $r = .00$ , ns); long range planning ( $r = -.01$ , ns). Regarding student participants' behavior of time management (time attitude, short range planning, and long range planning), significant negative correlations, respectively, were found with cognitive test anxiety ( $r = -.65$ ,  $p < .001$ ;  $r = -.37$ ,  $p < .001$ ;  $r = -.50$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

### T-Test Analyses

In order to test hypothesis 1 and 2, the first *t*-test analysis examined whether there were significant differences in time management, encompassing time attitude, short-range planning, and long-range planning, between female and male students. As indicated in Table 2, regarding gender (between male students and female students), undergraduate students did not exhibit significantly different levels of short-range planning (22.62,  $\pm 6.42$ ; 22.63,  $\pm 5.18$ ), time attitude (19.47,  $\pm 6.09$ ; 18.28,  $\pm 5.90$ ), and long-range planning (17.06,  $\pm 5.12$ ; 16.95,  $\pm 4.58$ ). Regarding time management, there was no significant difference between female and male undergraduates. Thus, Hypothesis 1 was rejected.

The second *t*-test analysis examined whether there was a significant difference in examination anxiety between male students and female student. A significant difference was observed in examination anxiety observed between female (62.73,  $\pm 13.02$ ) and male (57.70,  $\pm 14.63$ ) (see Table 3). Based on result showing female students have been to be highly associated with examination anxiety than male students. Therefore, Hypothesis 2 was supported.

**Table 1: Correlations among time management and examination anxiety**

|            | 1      | 2      | 3      | 4      | 5    | 6       | 7       | 8       | 9 |
|------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|------|---------|---------|---------|---|
| 1. Gender  | -      |        |        |        |      |         |         |         |   |
| 2. Age     | .04    | -      |        |        |      |         |         |         |   |
| 3. Edu     | .03    | .69*** | -      |        |      |         |         |         |   |
| 4. Major   | .07    | .12*   | .36*** | -      |      |         |         |         |   |
| 5. Accomm. | .09    | -.04   | .03    | .22*** | -    |         |         |         |   |
| 6. TA      | -.09   | .02    | .04    | .04    | -.03 | -       |         |         |   |
| 7. SR-P    | .00    | .01    | -.02   | .03    | .04  | .34***  | -       |         |   |
| 8. LR-P    | -.01   | .02    | .02    | -.01   | -.00 | .42***  | .45***  | -       |   |
| 9. CTA     | .17*** | -.06   | -.08   | -.01   | .07  | -.64*** | -.38*** | -.50*** | - |

\* $p < .05$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

Note: Gender (male=1, female=2), Edu (First Year=1, Second Year=2, Third Year=3, Fourth Year=4), Major (Art=1, Sc=2), Accomm. (live with parents=1, live on-campus=2, live off-campus=3 and other=4), TA (time attitude), SR-P (short-range planning), LR-P (long-range planning), CTA (cognitive test anxiety).

**Table 2: Analysis of time management based on the gender of undergraduates**

|                      | 1<br>Male       | 2<br>Female     | t- Value   |
|----------------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------|
| Time Attitude        | 19.47<br>(6.09) | 18.28<br>(5.90) | 1.80 (ns)  |
| Short-Range Planning | 22.62<br>(6.42) | 22.63<br>(5.18) | -0.03 (ns) |
| Long-Range Planning  | 17.06<br>(5.12) | 16.95<br>(4.58) | 0.21 (ns)  |

**Table 3: Analysis of Examination Anxiety based on the gender of undergraduates**

|                        | 1<br>Male        | 2<br>Female      | t-Value  |
|------------------------|------------------|------------------|----------|
| Cognitive Test Anxiety | 57.70<br>(14.63) | 62.73<br>(13.02) | -3.34*** |

\*\*\* $p < .001$ 

### Regression Analysis

To test hypothesis 3, regression analyses were conducted. In each analysis, gender, age, year, major and accommodation were included as control demographic variables in the first step. In the second step, cognitive test anxiety scale as students' anxiety about examination anxiety were regressed on one of the three factors of time management (time attitude, short-range planning, long-range planning). The predictive effect of time management on examination anxiety is shown in regression equation 1 in Table 4. All the variables together accounted for 45% of the variance. After accounting for demographic variables (gender, age, education, major and accommodation), time attitude significantly accounted for 41% of the variation. Time attitude emerged as a negative predictor of cognitive test anxiety ( $\beta = -.64$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

Collectively, the variables accounted for 19% of the variance in the dependent variable, as shown in regression equation 2. After adjusting for demographic indicators (gender, age, education, major and accommodation), short-range planning significantly accounted for 15% of the variance. Short-range planning was inversely related to cognitive test anxiety ( $\beta = -.38$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

Regression equation 3 indicated that all variables together accounted for 29% of the variances. After adjusting for demographic variables (gender, age, education, major and accommodation) long range planning significantly accounted for 25% of the variances. Long range planning was negative related to cognitive test anxiety ( $\beta = -.50$ ,  $p < .001$ ), supporting Hypothesis 3.

**Table 4: Results of regression analysis using the time management scale to predict cognitive test anxiety scale**

|                              | <b>R<sup>2</sup></b> | <b>R<sup>2</sup> change</b> | <b>ß</b> | <b>F</b> |
|------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|----------|----------|
| <b>Regression equation 1</b> |                      |                             |          |          |
| Gender                       | .04                  |                             | .17***   | 3.15**   |
| Age                          |                      |                             | -.01     |          |
| Education                    |                      |                             | -.06     |          |
| Art/Sc                       |                      |                             | .01      |          |
| Accommodation                |                      |                             | .04      |          |
| Time Attitude                | .45                  | .41                         | -.64***  | 49.57*** |
| <b>Regression equation 2</b> |                      |                             |          |          |
| Gender                       | .04                  |                             | .17***   | 3.15**   |
| Age                          |                      |                             | .01      |          |
| Education                    |                      |                             | -.09     |          |
| Art/Sc                       |                      |                             | -.02     |          |
| Accommodation                |                      |                             | .08      |          |
| Short-Range Planning         | .19                  | .15                         | -.38***  | 14.17*** |
| <b>Regression equation 3</b> |                      |                             |          |          |
| Gender                       | .04                  |                             | .17***   | 3.15**   |
| Age                          |                      |                             | -.01     |          |
| Education                    |                      |                             | -.06     |          |
| Art/Sc                       |                      |                             | -.04     |          |
| Accommodation                |                      |                             | .06      |          |
| Long-Range Planning          | .29                  | .25                         | -.50***  | 25.66*** |

\*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001

### Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of time management on examination anxiety of undergraduates at Pyay University, Bago Region in Myanmar. According to the results, this study found that gender does not impact undergraduates' time management behaviors. This means that male and female students manage their time similarly. Previous research supports this finding, indicating no gender differences in time management among college students (e.g., Saketi & Taheri, 2010; Razali et al., 2018; Agormedah et al., 2021). Conversely, several studies (e.g., Saketi & Taheri, 2010; Pehlivan, 2013; Kaushar, 2013; Al-Khatib, 2014; Khan et al., 2020) have identified notable differences in time management behaviors between male and female students.

Moreover, differences between genders were found in examination anxiety that female students were more likely to experience in examination anxiety than male students in Pyay

University. This finding aligns with previous research indicating that females exhibit greater examination anxiety compared to males (Adewuyi & Olley, 2012). They proposed that hormonal changes during the menstrual cycle, which male do not experience, could be a factor. Núñez-Peña et al. (2016) also assumed that the distinct social roles assigned to men and women contribute to this phenomenon. Females often face greater academic pressure than males, leading to a heightened fear of failure in exam situations. Another explanation is that men tend to be more defensive about admitting anxiety, as it may be perceived as a threat to their masculinity (Núñez-Peña et al., 2016). The study also revealed no statistical differences in time management between male and female university students. This result is consistent with earlier research, which also found no differences in perceived control of time between male students and female students (Sultana & Shakur, 2022).

The regression analyses revealed that undergraduate students' time management behavior, i.e., time attitude, short-range planning, and long-range planning was negatively associated with their examination anxiety. The current findings support the previous studies. Some researchers explained that effective time management and thorough test preparation can reduce students' stress during exams. Poor time management can cause numerous issues, but with proper time management, students can avoid last-minute cramming (Mani, 2010). Time management skills are considered crucial in the learning process, as they are considered strategic skills that significantly contribute to goal attainment in both professional and academic domains (Claessens et al., 2007).

### **Conclusion**

The results of this study carry several significant implications. Initially, this research presents noteworthy implications for understanding the impact of time management on examination anxiety of undergraduates at Pyay University. The findings highlight significant gender differences in exam anxiety, with female students experiencing more anxiety compared to their male counterparts (Adewuyi & Olley, 2012; Núñez-Peña, Bono, & Suárez-Pellicioni, 2016). This result indicates the need to implement intervention programs and support plans specifically designed to help students with insufficient time management skills cope more effectively with exam-related stress.

The findings of this study indicate that the influence of time management factors—such as time attitude, short-term planning, and long-term planning—on examination anxiety underscores the importance of promoting effective time management skills. Integrating time management training into university programs can assist students in lowering exam-related stress and enhancing their academic success (Mani, 2010). The outcomes of the study also point to that universities should adopt a multidimensional perspective to student support, addressing both academic and psychological needs. This could include workshops on time management, stress reduction techniques, and counseling services to help students balance their academic and personal lives.

While this study provides valuable insights into the effect of time management on the examination anxiety experienced by undergraduate students at Pyay University, multiple limitations should be taken into account when evaluating the results. The study was conducted

with a limited sample size from Pyay University, which may not be representative of all university students in Myanmar. Consequently, the findings may not be representative or applicable to other groups. Furthermore, this research is based on data obtained from self-reports, which could lead to biases that include a preference for socially desirable responses and problems with memory accuracy. Participants may have over- or under-reported their levels of examination anxiety and time management practices.

The study opens avenues for further research to explore the underlying causes of gender differences in examination anxiety and to develop targeted interventions. Moreover, future research could explore the long-term impacts of enhanced time management on academic achievement and overall well-being.

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