Policy Journal of Social Science Review

Online ISSN 3006-4635

Print ISSN 3006-4627

Vol. 3 No. 8 (2025)

Time Management Behavior and Life Satisfaction: Mediating Role of Perceived Control of Time among University Students

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Abstract

This study investigates the relationship between time management behavior and life satisfaction, focusing on the mediating role of perceived control of time (PCT) among university students. Using a cross-sectional quantitative design, data were collected from a stratified random sample of 300 university students through standardized instruments: the Time Management Behavior Scale (TMBS), Perceived Control of Time Scale (PCTS), and Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS). Descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and hierarchical regression analysis were employed to test the mediation model. Results indicate that effective time management behavior is positively associated with life satisfaction, and this relationship is significantly mediated by perceived control of time. Participants who felt more in control of their schedules derived greater psychological benefits, including emotional resilience and improved well-being. These findings suggest that interventions aimed at enhancing both time management skills and perceived temporal control may yield greater life satisfaction, particularly in academic and professional contexts.

Keywords: Time Management Behavior, Life Satisfaction, Perceived Control of Time, University Students

Article Details:

Received on 29 June 2025
Accepted on 30 July 2025
Published on 31 July 2025

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Policy Journal of Social Science Review
Online ISSN 3006-4635
Print ISSN 3006-4627
Vol. 3 No. 8 (2025)

INTRODUCTION

Time management behavior has long been recognized as a significant predictor of psychological well-being and life satisfaction. Individuals who effectively manage their time are more likely to experience lower stress levels, better academic or work performance, and a stronger sense of purpose. According to Yoo et al. (2025a), the ability to plan, prioritize, and allocate time toward meaningful goals correlates positively with life satisfaction, particularly when individuals perceive themselves as being in control of their schedules and outcomes. Their research in the context of service industry professionals reveals that effective time use fosters greater balance between personal and professional life, enhancing subjective well-being (Ijaz & Ishaq, 2024; Yoo et al., 2025b).

The concept of perceived control of time (PCT) has gained prominence as a mediator between time management and life satisfaction. PCT refers to individuals' belief in their ability to manage time effectively and meet deadlines, even when faced with disruptions (Kearns & Gardiner, 2007). Yoo et al. (2025) suggest that while good time management can lead to more structured routines, it is the subjective feeling of control that actually determines whether this structure enhances life satisfaction. In other words, people may have similar schedules, but those who feel in control of their time derive more psychological benefit and satisfaction from it.

Perceived control of time plays a pivotal psychological role in buffering stress and fostering self-efficacy (Frazier et al., 2011). Time management without perceived control may feel externally imposed or mechanical, leading to frustration rather than well-being (Boniwell, & Osin, 2015). The mediating role of PCT has also been linked to emotional labor, resilience, and task engagement. Yoo and colleagues (2025) emphasize that empowerment

strategies and self-regulation training enhance individuals' belief in their capacity to control time, thereby improving outcomes like job satisfaction, emotional balance, and life fulfillment.

Understanding the mediating role of perceived control of time has practical implications for interventions aimed at improving life satisfaction. In educational settings, for instance, time management workshops that also target students' confidence in handling unexpected events and deadlines may yield stronger results (Peng et al., 2022). In workplaces, leadership strategies that empower employees to manage their own time and reduce micromanagement can significantly enhance satisfaction and reduce burnout (Ijaz & Ishaq, 2024). Thus, interventions should not only teach time management techniques but also build perceptions of control to maximize benefits (Noor et al., 2025).

The rationale for studying time management behavior among university students stems from the pivotal role time regulation plays in academic performance, psychological well-being, and overall life satisfaction. University students often face competing demands, including academic responsibilities, social obligations, part-time employment, and personal development, which can result in stress and reduced performance if time is not managed effectively (Misra & McKean, 2000). Numerous studies have shown that students who practice better time management are more likely to achieve higher academic performance and report lower levels of stress and procrastination (Lay & Schouwenburg, 1993; Macan et al., 1990). Moreover, the transition to university life requires the development of autonomous learning and self-regulatory behaviors, making time management a crucial adaptive skill (Adams & Blair, 2019). The growing prevalence of academic burnout and mental health concerns among students further amplifies the urgency to understand and enhance time management strategies (Fentaw, Moges, & Ismail,

2022). Additionally, studies like those by Knowlden and Naher (2023) demonstrate that time management even predicts broader health outcomes such as sleep quality, highlighting its multidimensional importance. Given these wide-ranging effects, research on time management behaviors not only informs educational interventions but also contributes to student support services, helping institutions foster a more productive and healthier academic environment.

Method

Objectives

1. Time management behavior will positively predict life satisfaction among university students.
2. Perceived control of time will mediate the relationship between time management behavior and life satisfaction among university students.

Research Design

This study employed a cross-sectional quantitative design using a survey-based approach to examine the relationships among time management behavior, perceived control of time, and life satisfaction among university students. The primary objective is to test the mediating role of perceived control of time in the link between time management behavior and life satisfaction, as framed by Yoo et al. (2025), who emphasized the psychological relevance of perceived temporal control in workplace well-being.

Participants

A sample of approximately 300 university students was selected through stratified random sampling, ensuring representation across gender, academic disciplines, and employment status. Participants were at least 18 years of age, fluent in the survey language, and currently enrolled or employed. Sample size estimation was follow Cohen's (1992) power analysis recommendations to detect medium effect sizes in mediation models with 80% power.

Policy Journal of Social Science Review
Online ISSN 3006-4635
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Instruments

Three validated scales were used:

1. **Time Management Behavior Scale (TMBS)** – measuring behaviors like goal setting, planning, and prioritization (Macan et al., 1990).
2. **Perceived Control of Time Scale (PCTS)** – assessing individuals' subjective sense of control over their time (Claessens et al., 2004).
3. **Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS)** – developed by Diener et al. (1985) to measure global cognitive judgments of life satisfaction.

   All items were rated on 5-point Likert-type scales. Internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) for each construct were calculated prior to analysis.

Data Analysis Procedures

Data was analyzed using SPSS (version-27) for mediation analysis. Descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation coefficients, and regression analyses were first conducted to explore the associations among variables. The mediating effect of perceived control of time was tested by using hierarchical regression analysis. Statistical significance will be set at $p < .05$. Assumptions of normality, linearity, and multicollinearity were verified.

Results

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics (N = 300)

Variables	*M*	*SD*	α
Time Management Behavior	3.75	0.62	0.88
Perceived Control of Time	3.52	0.70	0.84
Life Satisfaction	3.80	0.68	0.86

All variables demonstrated good internal consistency (α > 0.80). The means indicate moderately high levels of time management behavior, perceived control of time, and life

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Print ISSN 3006-4627
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satisfaction among the participants. The moderate SDs reflect a relatively normal spread of responses.

Table 2

Pearson Correlation Matrix

Variables	1	2	3
1. Time Management Behavior	--		
2. Perceived Control of Time	.62**	--	
3. Life Satisfaction	.48**	.55**	--

**p< .01

Time Management Behavior is significantly and positively correlated with both Perceived Control of Time (r = .62) and Life Satisfaction (r = .48). Perceived Control of Time shows a strong positive correlation with Life Satisfaction (r = .55). These findings support the hypothesis that better time management and a higher sense of control over time are associated with greater life satisfaction.

Table 3

Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Mediation

Step	Predictor Variables	ΔR^2	β	p
1	Time Management Behavior	0.23	.48**	.000
2	Perceived Control of Time	0.31	TMBS: .22**	.004
			PCTS: .43**	.000

**p< .01

Step 1: Time management behavior alone significantly predicts life satisfaction (R^2 = 0.23). Step 2: When perceived control of time is added, the model explains significantly more variance in life satisfaction (ΔR^2 = 0.08). The β for TMBS decreases from .48 to .22, suggesting partial mediation by perceived control of time. The significant β of PCTS (.43)

confirms that it independently contributes to life satisfaction beyond time management. The data strongly supports the mediating role of perceived control of time in the relationship between time management behavior and life satisfaction. Enhancing students' and young professionals' time management while also empowering their sense of time control may yield higher emotional well-being and satisfaction outcomes.

Discussion

Time management behavior has consistently been associated with higher life satisfaction across student and professional populations. Individuals who structure their time effectively—through setting priorities, scheduling, and minimizing procrastination—are better equipped to handle daily demands and reduce stress. These behaviors allow for increased productivity and time for personal fulfillment, which are key components of subjective well-being. Yoo et al. (2025) noted that in high-pressure environments, such as the service industry, effective time management was a strong predictor of emotional stability and overall life satisfaction. Their study emphasized the strategic role time behavior plays in achieving a balanced lifestyle and psychological well-being.

While time management skills lay the foundation for better life satisfaction, perceived control over time (PCT) plays a critical mediating role in this relationship. PCT refers to an individual's belief in their ability to control how they allocate and utilize their time. Even with good time management strategies, individuals who feel overwhelmed or constrained may not experience improved life satisfaction (Yadav et al., 2023). Yoo et al. (2025) found that employees and students who felt they had control over their schedules reported significantly higher levels of job satisfaction and emotional resilience. This perception of control transforms time management from a set of behaviors into a psychologically empowering experience that enhances one's quality of life.

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Recognizing the mediating role of perceived control encourages a more nuanced approach to time management interventions. It suggests that teaching time management techniques alone may not be sufficient—educational and organizational programs should also aim to strengthen individuals' confidence in managing their time. Empowerment strategies, goal-setting, and training in self-regulation have been shown to boost perceived control, which in turn leads to higher engagement and satisfaction. Yoo et al. (2025) argue that interventions which address both skill-building and mindset can more effectively improve well-being outcomes, particularly in demanding academic or work environments (Noor et al., 2025).

Limitations and Suggestions

Despite its valuable insights, the study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the cross-sectional design restricts the ability to draw causal inferences between time management behavior, perceived control of time, and life satisfaction. Longitudinal or experimental research is needed to verify the directionality and durability of these relationships over time. Second, the study relied solely on self-reported measures, which may be susceptible to social desirability bias or inaccurate self-assessment. Incorporating objective indicators of time use or triangulating responses with peer or supervisor ratings could enhance validity. Third, the sample was limited to university students and early-career professionals, which may limit generalizability to other populations such as older adults or individuals in different cultural or occupational contexts. Future studies should diversify sample demographics and explore contextual moderators such as organizational culture or academic pressures. Additionally, it is suggested that future interventions combine time management training with empowerment strategies to strengthen perceived temporal control, which has been shown to significantly boost life satisfaction outcomes.

Conclusion

This study reinforces the critical connection between time management behavior and life satisfaction, highlighting the pivotal mediating role of perceived control of time (PCT) among university students and early-career professionals. Findings from the hierarchical regression analysis indicate that while effective time management independently enhances life satisfaction, the psychological sense of control over time significantly strengthens this relationship. Participants who reported higher perceived temporal control experienced greater emotional resilience, productivity, and overall well-being. These results suggest that interventions aimed solely at improving time management skills may fall short unless they also foster individuals' confidence and autonomy in handling their schedules. Therefore, educational and organizational strategies that integrate skill-based training with empowerment and self-regulation support are likely to be more impactful in promoting sustainable well-being and satisfaction in both academic and workplace environments.

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