Self-control and emotional intelligence as predictors of time management behaviour among employees of a Nigerian University

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Abstract

The wise use of time is a skilful practice required by everyone, especially workers, because it enhances efficient performance of tasks, helps maintain a positive personality outlook, reduces chaos, stress and work pressures, and results in the quick attainment of personal goals, among many other benefits. However, many workers are not adept at time management leading to unnecessary work pressures and work-family conflicts. This study, therefore, looked at the independent and joint predictors of self-control and emotional intelligence on the time management behaviour of the staff of a Nigerian university. It also investigated the mean differences in the time management behaviour of male and female employees, on one hand, and older versus younger employees, on the other. Three instruments: Brief Self-Control Scale, Emotional Intelligence Scale, and Time Management Scale were used in this study for data collection. The obtained results found support for the independent prediction of self-control (β= .56, t= 15.07, p< .05) and the joint prediction of both predictor variables on time management behaviour (F [2, 498] = 119.02, R^2 = .32, ΔR^2 = .32, p< .05). There was a significant mean difference between males (Mean= 47.57) and females (Mean= 49.30) on time management behaviour [t(499) = 1.17, p< .05)]. Also, there was a mean difference between younger workers (Mean = 44.66) and older employees (Mean= 54.46) on time management behaviour (t= 12.38, df= 499, p< .05). Therefore, it is recommended that workers should develop these valued human factors to help them live a fulfilled and well balanced life.

Keywords: *Ambrose Alli University, Emotional intelligence, self-control, Time management behaviour*

Introduction

Time is an inelastic natural resource which everyone must make conscientious efforts to manage well to execute the various tasks they need to perform (Daniel & Santeli, 2020). In the literature, there is no universally accepted definition of time management. In its simplest form, time management means making judicious use of time by consciously exercising control over the

amount of time expended on daily activities which have been proactively prioritised. It was defined by Gerald (2002) as a set of principles, practices, skills, tools, and systems that help individuals use their time to effectively accomplish desired goals. Time management is both a science and an art (Adebayo, 2015). According to Tracy (2013), the psychology of time management is based on a simple principle called the Law of Control. This law says that you feel good about yourself to the degree to which you feel you are in control of your own life.

In the extant literature, time management is a meta-dimensional construct (Britton &Tesser, 1991) involving three major behavioural components aimed at efficient and effective time utilisation. These are a time assessment (adapting) component, a planning (structuring) component and a monitoring (protecting) component (Aeon &Aguinis, 2017; Aeon et al., 2021). The time assessment component entails a self-awareness of one's time use in the past and accepting tasks and responsibilities that one can handle adequately in their present situation and future circumstances (Wratcher& Jones, 1998). The planning component involves using tools and practices (such as setting goals, using daily planners, planning and prioritising tasks, and grouping tasks) to achieve efficient time use (Macan, 1996). The monitoring component provides a structure for self-monitoring and time use by providing feedback loops when pursuing a goal and avoiding time wasters (Fox & Dwyer, 1996).

Effective time management is focused on solving problems such as inability to deal with distractions, deadline pressure, unplanned daily activities, procrastination, inability to say "no" to people, and so on (Arun & Srikumar, 2017). The methods used consist of tips and techniques to determine long- and short-term goals, how to plan and prioritise these goals into projects, tasks and activities, and how to avoid distractions (Akomolafe, 2005). The principle of effective time management is succinctly explained by the Pickle Jar Theory of Wright (2002). This theory reflects how people organize their tasks according to a scale of preference in order to reach their life's goals. The basic theory consist of a pickle jar which is first filled with rocks (our major responsibilities which should be given first priority), the spaces between the rocks are then filled with pebbles (our hobbies which should be given less time than our important goals), the spaces are then filled with sand (our daily chores which should fit into our goals and hobbies) and finally, water (the distractions that we face often) is poured over them. This theory relates to balance in a person's life which can only be achieved by setting goals, prioritizing them and proper time allocation.

Effective time management can be harnessed in academic and research institutions to yield beneficial results for workers, their colleagues, friends and family (Olejniczak, 2013). On one hand, academic and support staff of universities who can effectively manage their time are able to devote a balanced attention to personal and career goals, get more things done, reduce stress and workload strain, improve their self-esteem and bring about more control and balance in their lives (Gul et al., 2021). On the other hand, workers who waste time cannot handle their

work and life goals efficiently due to poor planning, prioritising and monitoring (Olejniczak, 2013).

Furthermore, poor time management behaviour among workers in higher educational institutions (HEIs) can be related to procrastination, self-control problems, and an inability to plan and manage time well resulting in failure to keep to lecture schedules, conduct researches, attend to administrative tasks, underachievement, withdrawal from important tasks (Balduf, 2009); missed deadlines, growing workloads and just-in-time production systems (Garhammer, 2002); a high level of anxiety, lack of confidence, stress, and bad habits in terms of time usage (Gul et al., 2021; Olejniczak, 2013).

The time management behaviour of university workers depends on several psychological and social factors. Two very important psychological factors are self-control (Tangney et al., 2004) and emotional intelligence (Asare, 2016). Some of the social factors include the environment, gender, age, and so on (Aeon et al., 2021). Self-control refers to the ability to control one's feelings, behaviours and desires in order to obtain some rewards or avoid punishment, in the face of external demands (Diamond, 2013). Its synonyms include self-discipline, self-restraint, and self-mastery. It is an essential factor in efficient time management and life, career and academic goals achievement. A wide spectrum of behaviours and interpersonal processes are influenced by self-regulatory decisions. On the positive side, good adjustment, secure attachment, perceived control of time, academic achievement, focus and other favourable psychological states, result from self-control (Olowookere et al., 2015; Tangney et al., 2004). On the negative side, inadequate self-control leads to behavioural and impulse-control problems like indiscipline, failure at work, unmet deadlines, overeating, alcohol and drug abuse, crime and violence, overspending, mediocre performance, and poor time management (Vohs&Fabu, 2007). In this study, it was explained with the objective self-awareness theory of Duvel and Wicklund (1972). It consists of an orientation of conscious attention to "self", "standard" and "focus" as the essence of self evaluation and control.

The interdependence of self-control and good time management cannot be overemphasised. Good time management is important in coping with the pressures of modern living. Therefore, learning how to manage time efficiently helps individuals to feel relaxed, focused and in control of valued tasks that make a significant difference to their life goals. For example, time management behaviour was positively related to perceived control of time, job satisfaction, health, and negatively to stress (Sahito et al., 2016). However, for there to be effective time management, a corresponding high level of self-control is necessary.

Emotional intelligence (EI) has its roots in social intelligence (Thorndike, 1990). It refers to a multi-dimensional concept that links an individual's ability to recognise, monitor and manage their personal emotions and cognitions in their relationship with others (Asare, 2016; Reeds, 2005). Goleman (1998) categorised emotional intelligence into self awareness (emotional

self awareness), self management (managing one's own emotions), social awareness (developing empathy leading to better emotional stability) and relationship management (managing emotions in others). He also believed that though EI seems genetically fixed, it can be learned and continuously developed as people think about their experiences and grow more adept at handling their emotional states and empathising with others.

Emotional intelligence was found to be effective in directing managers' behaviours, thoughts, relations with peers, superiors, and clients, and using time optimally to improve outcomes (Bokharaeian et al., 2014). Slaski and Katrite (2002) found that emotional intelligence had a direct and significant relationship with time management while Mazinani (2009) found that emotional intelligence ameliorated the stresses of life, which in turn, led to better use of time by educational administrators.In this study, it was explained with the ability model of emotional intelligence of Salovey and Meyer (1990), which views emotions as useful sources of information that people use to make sense of and navigate the social world.

This study is appropriate at this time because recent studies show that time pressure is getting more critical for overworked university staff (Rao &Azmi, 2018). Poor time management by university academics in Nigeria, most often, result in their inability to meet up with deadlines, failure to keep to lecture schedules, conduct research, attend to project students, prepare adequately for lectures, seminars and conferences. There is also an inability of non-academic staff to render efficient and timely administrative services, such as dispatch memos, issue receipts, sign clearance forms, among others. These ultimately rub off on the academic performance and satisfaction of students (Kayode&Ayodele, 2015). They also affect the quality of graduates produced by HEIs, who in recent times, have been described as lacking the essential skills and attributes needed by contemporary workplaces or for sustainable employment (Edinyang et al., 2015; Sodipo, 2014).

In addition, there are very few time management behaviour studies among employees in the university sector. It is therefore important to know the level of self-control, emotional intelligence and time management behaviour of university employees. Consequently, this study assessed the influence of self-control and emotional intelligence on the time management behaviour of staff of a Nigerian university. The study also assessed the differences in the time management behaviour of male/ female employees on one hand, and older/ younger employees of the same university, on the other, especially as results from previous studies have been inconclusive. While several studies reveal that female respondents reported better time management skills and behaviour than males (Al Khatib, 2014; Botha, 2013; Trueman& Hartley, 1996), others detected no significant difference (Akcoltekin, 2015; Dalli, 2014). In addition, Dalli (2014) and Khanam et al. (2017) found no significant difference in time management as a result of age, whereas, Trueman and Hartley (1996) found that older respondents reported

significantly better time management skills than the younger respondents. Based on the above literature review, this study hypothesized that:

H1: There will be a significant independent and joint prediction of self-control and emotional intelligence on the time management behaviour of staff of Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma, Nigeria.

H2: Female respondents will score significantly higher on measures of time management behaviour than male respondents.

H3: Older respondents (30 years and above) will score significantly higher on measures of time management behaviour than younger respondents (below 30 years).

Methods

Participants

The respondents comprised 501 staff of Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma, Nigeria made up of 239 males (47.70%) and 262 females(52.30%); 188 unmarried persons (37.50%) and 313 persons (62.50%) who were either married, separated/ divorced or widowed. Their age was categorised as "Young" (below 30 years) and "Old" (30 years and above). Respondents in the 'Young' category were 306 persons, representing 61% while the 'Old' category was made up of 195 persons (39%). Of the 501 respondents, 285 (56.90%) were Christians, 163 (32.50%) were Muslims, while 53 respondents (10.60%) said they were neither. Also, 245 respondents were academics (48.90%) while 256 (51.10%) were support staff.

Instruments

Three instruments were used in this study for data collection.

Brief Self-Control Scale(Tangney et al., 2004) was used to measure Self-control. It is a 13- item scale presented on a Likert's format bounded by "Not at all like me" (1) to "Exactly true" (4). For this study, the scale had a Cronbach alpha of 0.86.

Emotional Intelligence Scale (Salovey& Mayer, 1990) was used to measure Emotional Intelligence **i**n this study. It is a 25-item scale designed in a 5-point Likert's format ranging from "Strongly Disagree" (1) to "Strongly Agree" (5). For this study, the scale had a Cronbach alpha of 0.73.

Time Management Scale by Britton and Tesser (1991) was used to measure time management in this study.It is an 18-item measure with three subscales measuring short range planning, long range planning and time attitudes, designed in a 5-point Likert's format ranging from "Never" (1) to "Always" (5). It had a Cronbach alpha of .70 in this study.

Also collected were demographics of the respondents including age, gender, marital status, religion, and staff category.

Procedure

Ethical approval was obtained from the management of the institution, after which potential respondents were approached during regular working hours. Each questionnaire had an ethical form to be signed by the respondent. The opening section stated the purpose of the study and assured them of the confidentiality of their responses and the fact that they could withdraw from participation at any time. Attempts were made to cover the various academic faculties and administrative units of the university. A total of 600 questionnaires were distributed to workers of the institution, who indicated a willingness to participate in the study by signing the consent form. The number of questionnaires retrieved after a week (to give the respondents time to respond to them without feeling pressurised) was 538, yielding an initial response rate of 89.67%. After eliminating improperly filled questionnaires during data cleaning, 501 questionnaires with complete data sets were found useful for analysis.

Design and Statistics

The study utilised a cross-sectional survey design which permits the use of inferential statistical methods. The independent variables of the study are self-control and emotional intelligence while the dependent variable is time management behaviour of staff of Ambrose Alli University, Nigeria. Standard multiple regressions analysis and T-test for independent means were used for data analysis using Statistical Package for Social Sciences(SPSS) version 23 to test hypothesis at a 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Table 1: Zero-order correlation showing the relationship between self-control, emotional intelligence and time management behaviour

		Mean	Std. Dev.	1	2	3
1	Self-control	97.04	15.23	-		
2	Emotional intelligence	76.14	8.97	.15*	-	
3	Time management behaviour	48.48	9.86	.57*	.12*	-

* Correlation is significant at the .05 level

The results in Table 1 revealed that there is a significant positive relationship between self-control and emotional intelligence (r= .15, p< .05), between self-control and time management

behaviour (r= .57, p< .05), and between emotional intelligence and time management behaviour (r= .12, p< .05). These results implied that all the variables understudy have robust psychometric properties, hence there were used in standard multiple regressions analysis.

The first hypothesis stated that there would be a significant independent and joint prediction of self-control and emotional intelligence on the time management behaviour of staff of Ambrose Alli University. This hypothesis was tested using standard multiple regressions analysis and the result is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Regression table showing the independent and joint prediction of self-control and emotional intelligence on time management behaviour

Predictors	β	t	p	R	R^2	ΔR^2	F	p
Self-control	.56	15.07	< .05					
				.57	.32	.32	119.02	.05
Emotional intelligence	.04	1.03	>.05					

The result revealed that self-control and emotional intelligence jointly predicted time management behaviour among the respondents (F (2, 498) = 119.02, R^2= .32, ΔR^2= .32, p<.05) such that the predictor variables jointly accounted for 32% variance in the time management behaviour of the respondents. Also, the results indicated that self-control (β= .56, t= 15.07, p< .05) independently predicted time management behaviours among the respondents accounting for 56% variance in the total observable variance on the time management behaviour among the respondents. This implies that better time management will be exhibited with higher levels of self-control. However, emotional intelligence did not independently predicted time management behaviour among the respondents (β= .04, t= 1. 03, p< .05). Therefore, hypothesis one is partially supported.

The second hypothesis stated that female respondents will score significantly higher on measures of time management behaviour than male respondents. The hypothesis was tested using T-test of independent sample mean and the result is presented in Table 3. The results showed a low but significant difference (t = 1.97, df= 499, p< .05) between males (Mean = 47.57) and females (Mean= 49.30) on time management behaviour.

Table 3: Summary table of t-test for independent measures showing gender and age on time management behaviour among the respondents

Variable		N	Mean	SD	t	df	p
Time management behaviour	Male	239	47.51	9.91	1.97	499	.05
	Female	262	49.30	9.75			
	Young	306	44.66	8.76	12.38	499	.05
	Old	195	54.46	8.42			

Hypothesis 3 stated that older respondents (30 years and above) will score significantly higher on measures of time management behaviour than younger respondents (below 30 years). The results reveal that there is a significant difference t(499) = 12.38, p< .05) between younger (Mean= 44.66) and older (Mean= 54.46) respondents on time management behaviour. The hypothesis was supported.

Discussion
The major objective of this study was to examine self-control and emotional intelligence as predictors of time management behaviour among staff of Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma, Nigeria. It also assessed the differences between male/ female and older/ younger respondents on their time management behaviour.

The result of the regression analysis showed that only self-control independently predicted time management behaviour among the staff of Ambrose Alli University.The independent influence of self-control on time management behaviour reflects the findings of Masud and Mohammadrahim (2014) and Strickland and Galima (2001). For example, the latter found that the use of self set goals helped to structure the work pattern of workers resulting in less switching between tasks and less cognitive interference in their efforts to achieve their goals. The results obtained also showed a joint prediction of self- control and emotional intelligence on time management behaviour of respondents. This finding supports those of Bokharaeian et al. (2014) who found a significant joint prediction of self- control and components of emotional intelligence with time management behaviour. The result of the t-test for independent measures of female and male respondents on time management behaviour showed that female respondents

had better time management behaviour than males. This supports several past studies (Al Khatib, 2014; Botha, 2013; Trueman& Hartley, 1996). Analysis of the time management behaviour of older and younger respondents showed that older respondents reported better time management behaviour similar to the findings of Trueman and Hartley (1996).

Recommendations of Study

University staff play a vital role in communicating with students, thus it is important to know their level of self-control, emotional intelligence and time management behaviour. Results of this study show the relevance of self-control in conjunction with emotional intelligence on the time management behaviour of university staff in Nigeria. It is recommended that university authorities should have validated personality screening tests to be administered to applicants during recruitment, selection and appointment stage to determine their levels self-control and emotional capabilities. At the meso-level, universities should provide organisational and work cultures and climates that enhance structured work patterns; that allow for work plans, prioritising and monitoring of work activities; and work-family balance. At the micro level, individual employees should undertake time management training to enhance their knowledge of time use tips and techniques.

Limitations of study

This study is limited to some extent because only self-report questionnaires were used to collect data which allows for biased responses. The population of this study is limited to one university in Nigeria which makes generalisation of these results difficult. Finally, the sample size is relatively small compared to the population of the staff in Nigerian universities. Therefore, future researchers should extend their studies to cover these lapses.

Conclusion

This study shows that there is an independent prediction of self-control on respondents' time management behaviour. It also shows that there is a joint prediction of self- control and emotional intelligence on respondents' time management behaviour. In addition, it shows that female respondents and older respondents have better time management behaviour than male and younger respondents, respectively.

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