

Exploration of the Relationship Between University Students' Time Management Skills and Academic Self-Efficacy

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Abstract: This study explores the relationship between university students' time management skills and academic self-efficacy, aiming to uncover the mechanisms through which these factors influence academic performance and provide a foundation for optimizing academic development. Utilizing questionnaire surveys and quantitative analysis, the research evaluates the impact of varying levels of time management skills and academic self-efficacy on students' academic performance. Through case studies and literature reviews, the interplay between these two factors and potential optimization pathways are examined. The findings reveal that time management skills have a significant positive impact on university students' academic performance, while self-efficacy amplifies the effectiveness of time management by enhancing learning motivation. A notable synergistic relationship exists between the two, yet some students exhibit deficiencies in time planning and confidence-building, which affect the stability of academic performance. Simultaneous improvement in time management skills and academic self-efficacy through comprehensive strategies fosters their positive interaction, contributing to academic success and holistic development in university students.

Keywords: Time management skills; Academic self-efficacy; University students; Academic performance

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Introduction

The university stage is a critical period for shaping individuals' learning habits and personality traits, during which time management skills and academic self-efficacy play pivotal roles in students' academic performance. Time management skills directly impact learning outcomes by optimizing task allocation and efficiently utilizing time resources. Academic self-efficacy, reflecting students' belief in their ability to accomplish academic tasks, serves as a crucial driver of learning engagement and perseverance. However, many university students currently face academic pressure, exhibiting challenges such as uncertainty in time planning and a lack of confidence, which undermine the sustainability and efficiency of their learning. Recent studies on the relationship between these two factors have revealed that time management and self-efficacy not only independently influence academic performance but also amplify their positive effects on student development through interaction. Therefore, exploring the relationship between university students' time management skills and academic self-efficacy holds both theoretical significance and practical value. This research aims to uncover the pathways through which these factors contribute to academic performance, thereby providing targeted strategies for optimization.

1. The Importance of University Students' Time Management Skills and Academic Self-Efficacy

1.1. The Impact of Time Management Skills on Academic Performance

Faced with demanding academic tasks and complex social requirements, university students' time allocation structures and execution strategies significantly influence their learning progress. Proper scheduling of course preparation and review periods, effective coordination between extracurricular reading and practical activities, and a clear goal orientation help minimize unproductive efforts. Evidence suggests that organized schedules, supplemented by phased goal setting, enhance self-discipline, increase engagement intensity, and lead to consistent academic outcomes. Reducing procrastination tendencies enables students to concentrate on professional literature, precisely identify key chapters and critical knowledge points, and improve comprehension depth and memory quality. Prioritizing urgent tasks and adhering

strictly to deadlines reduces anxiety and fosters a positive feedback loop. Students proficient in time management techniques tend to perform better in consecutive assessments, achieve higher course completion rates and satisfaction levels, and lay a solid foundation for academic success^[1].

1.2.The Impact of Academic Self-Efficacy on Academic Performance

In the face of rigorous assessments and complex knowledge systems, students with strong self-efficacy are more likely to actively engage in deep learning. These individuals exhibit firm beliefs in their abilities, actively pursue advanced understanding, and persist in addressing challenging problems rather than retreating. Supported by strong convictions, setbacks are perceived as opportunities for growth, gradually expanding cognitive breadth and depth while facilitating a more thorough internalization of key concepts. Research indicates that individuals with high levels of self-efficacy experiment with diverse learning strategies and flexibly adapt cognitive approaches, enabling the identification of optimal solutions. Rather than abandoning efforts after temporary failures, they enhance focus and perseverance, establishing a virtuous learning cycle. Such experiences motivate these students to set higher personal goals, and through sustained effort, they achieve continuous improvements in cognitive skills, reflected in better outcomes across examinations, research projects, and academic writing^[2].

1.3.The Importance of the Relationship Between Time Management and Academic Self-Efficacy

When time management and self-efficacy mutually reinforce each other, overall academic performance becomes more stable. Precise scheduling of daily study periods and orderly task prioritization synergize with firm beliefs to create a dynamic interplay. Mastery of effective time allocation, coupled with a positive attitude, sustains learning momentum, enhances flexibility in tackling challenging concepts, and leads to the achievement of higher academic goals. Data analysis indicates that these factors are not isolated; their coordinated optimization improves focus, alleviates psychological stress, and supports consistent progress even in dynamic environments. This interconnected relationship fosters a progressively enhancing academic ecosystem, accumulates experiences of achievement and feedback resources, and inspires greater professional aspirations and research enthusiasm. These findings underscore that time management and self-efficacy are interdependent, enhancing both the efficiency and directionality of the learning process^[3].

2. Challenges Faced by University Students in Time Management Skills and Academic Self-Efficacy

2.1. General Deficiencies in Time Management Skills Among University Students

Many university students lack clear logic in time allocation and prioritization, struggling to balance academics, personal life, and social activities effectively. When faced with multiple tasks, the absence of scientific planning often results in delays for critical assignments and excessive time consumed by trivial matters. Moreover, some students exhibit issues such as vague goals in study planning, weak execution, lack of specific timelines, and insufficient monitoring mechanisms, all of which contribute to reduced learning efficiency. Surveys indicate that a significant number of students fail to utilize their extracurricular time effectively for academic purposes. This is particularly evident during self-directed learning stages, where external distractions such as online entertainment or unnecessary social interactions frequently undermine focus. A lack of awareness regarding the value of time as a resource makes it difficult for some students to concentrate during crucial study periods, leading to missed opportunities for improving academic performance and deepening knowledge acquisition. Furthermore, students often experience conflicts between course schedules and extracurricular activities and appear incapable of reconciling these demands effectively. Misalignment between long-term goals and short-term plans causes some students to lack a sense of urgency, resulting in relaxed time management practices. This often culminates in academic pressure being concentrated at the end of the semester, which can negatively affect their mental and physical well-being. Additionally, some students display a lack of proactive awareness in time allocation, focusing excessively on short-term interests while neglecting the long-term benefits of in-depth learning. This approach hinders the sustainability of their academic achievements.

2.2. Deficiency in Academic Self-Efficacy

Many university students lack sufficient confidence and motivation when facing academic tasks, often doubting their own abilities, which significantly undermines their enthusiasm for learning. Students with low self-efficacy tend to exhibit fear and avoidance behaviors when confronted with challenging courses or tasks, rather than making efforts to overcome these difficulties. Survey data indicate that this group of students generally has lower expectations for their academic goals, making them prone to a cycle of low achievement and negative emotions, further impairing both their academic performance and psychological well-being. Of particular concern is that a lack of self-efficacy is not only reflected in doubts about mastering knowledge but also in low participation in academic activities. Some students, despite having access to ample learning resources, fail to utilize them effectively due to a lack of belief in their abilities. In scenarios requiring active participation, such as classroom discussions, research projects, and team collaborations, students with insufficient confidence often choose to withdraw, missing opportunities to enhance their skills. The absence of accumulated successful experiences further diminishes their confidence in tackling future academic challenges, making them more likely to give up rather than seek solutions when faced with difficulties. Low academic self-efficacy is also frequently accompanied by self-negation of their efforts, with this internal insecurity acting as a barrier to achieving long-term academic goals^[4].

2.3. Insufficient Interaction Between Time Management Skills and Academic Self-Efficacy

The lack of positive interaction between university students' time management skills and academic self-efficacy in real learning scenarios is a critical factor contributing to suboptimal academic performance. Deficiencies in time management skills often directly undermine the development of academic self-efficacy. For instance, when learning tasks are repeatedly delayed or accumulated over extended periods, students may begin to doubt their ability to complete these tasks, leading to a loss of confidence in their learning capabilities. Conversely, a lack of self-efficacy can diminish students' motivation or interest in practicing time management, creating a vicious cycle. The insufficient interaction between the two is further evident in the absence of systematic planning and reflection. Some students, despite attempting to use time management tools or techniques, fail to persist due to a lack of confidence. This is often driven by an excessive focus on short-term failures, overlooking the fact that improving time management and self-efficacy requires a cumulative process. In high-pressure situations, such as exam periods or major project deadlines, students without strong time management skills often struggle with frequent task delays, which further erodes their confidence in completing their work. A deeper issue lies in the educational and mentoring mechanisms, which frequently neglect the bidirectional relationship between time management and self-efficacy. Many interventions emphasize one aspect in isolation, failing to support students in achieving coordinated development. The lack of effective educational strategies and practical guidance prevents these two critical factors from working synergistically, thereby adversely affecting both academic performance and psychological well-being.

3. Strategies to Optimize University Students' Time Management Skills and Academic Self-Efficacy

3.1. Enhancing University Students' Awareness and Skills in Time Management

Effective time management hinges on establishing clear goals, implementing them efficiently, and fostering an awareness of the value of time. To enhance students' time management consciousness, institutions can organize targeted seminars, workshops, and discussions to emphasize the significance of time management for academic achievement and future growth. For example, students can be guided to evaluate their time usage quantitatively, identify specific steps that lead to time wastage, and gradually develop habits for effective time utilization. On the skill development level, universities and educators can introduce practical time management tools and methods. Teaching students prioritization techniques, such as the Eisenhower Matrix, enables them to classify tasks into categories like urgent and important or non-urgent but important, thereby optimizing time allocation. Simulated courses or practical training sessions can help students learn to

break down complex tasks, set short-term and long-term goals, and progressively enhance their planning abilities. Combining task segmentation with phased feedback mechanisms can assist students in real-time adjustment of their study plans, alleviating psychological pressure from task accumulation. Integrating time management into curriculum instruction is another effective way to enhance these skills. Classroom task designs can encourage students to create and execute their own schedules, reinforcing planning abilities through practical exercises. Additionally, institutions can offer time management courses and interactive guidance via online platforms, blending theoretical knowledge with practical applications to help students internalize time management concepts and skills gradually.

3.2. Enhancing University Students' Academic Self-Efficacy

Enhancing academic self-efficacy requires efforts in both psychological development and environmental support. On the psychological level, strategies such as helping students recognize their potential, motivating them to face academic challenges, and gradually fostering positive academic beliefs are essential. For instance, providing constructive feedback from teachers and peers after completing academic tasks can help students acknowledge their accomplishments and generate a positive self-efficacy cycle. Psychological counseling can also be instrumental for students who experience fear of academic difficulty, aiding them in identifying their strengths and creating tailored improvement plans. Optimizing the academic environment can offer additional support. Establishing academic groups or learning communities enables students to feel the strength of collective support, thereby boosting academic motivation. Universities can also design diverse extracurricular projects, offering opportunities for students to engage in real-world research or social practice. By completing tasks in such projects, students gain a sense of achievement, which directly translates into academic confidence. Incorporating phased goal assessment mechanisms into curriculum design can significantly enhance self-efficacy. Achieving clear, incremental goals allows students to build confidence through practice, bolstering their ability to tackle long-term academic challenges. Teachers should also focus on recognizing and rewarding student progress, providing platforms for students to showcase their abilities and experience the value and significance of their efforts^[5].

3.3. Promoting the Interactive Enhancement of Time Management and Academic Self-Efficacy

The interaction between time management and academic self-efficacy is significant, and optimizing their relationship requires the design of comprehensive interventions from a synergistic perspective. Improved time management can enhance students' sense of control over their studies, thereby fostering the growth of academic self-efficacy. Institutions can integrate self-efficacy-building elements into study planning guidance, such as combining time management tools with visual progress tracking to help students perceive their task completion progress intuitively, thus increasing their confidence in their academic abilities. Guiding students to set challenging yet attainable learning goals can further strengthen the interaction between time management skills and self-efficacy. For instance, in course instruction, group tasks requiring students to allocate roles and independently plan schedules can foster collaborative learning. This approach allows students to experience a sense of accomplishment upon completing complex tasks, thereby boosting their academic confidence. Another pathway to enhance this interaction is by providing sustained external support. Teachers and academic advisors can assist students through regular progress reviews and individualized mentoring, helping them adjust time management strategies and reinforcing their beliefs. Timely interventions during periods of difficulty—offering practical suggestions for time adjustments and providing encouragement—can gradually build students' sense of mastery over academic tasks. Comprehensive interventions may also include targeted support in educational policies, such as the introduction of online intelligent learning platforms that integrate modules for time management and self-efficacy development. Leveraging technology to offer precise guidance can further enhance these skills. The synergistic optimization of time management and academic self-efficacy is not only crucial for individual student development but also a vital factor in improving the overall quality of education.

4. Conclusions

Time management skills and academic self-efficacy are two critical variables influencing university students' academic

performance. Their absence not only represents a common issue within the education system but also serves as a key factor contributing to suboptimal academic outcomes. This study reveals a clear reciprocal relationship between the two: improved time management skills enhance academic self-efficacy, which in turn facilitates the optimization of time management practices. This positive interaction has significant implications for students' academic achievement and mental well-being. The optimization strategies proposed in this study adopt a multi-faceted approach, including fostering awareness of time management, skill training, confidence-building, and educational environment enhancement. These measures aim to help university students better manage academic pressure, strengthen their academic capabilities, and improve their competitiveness. Future research could further integrate diverse disciplinary contexts and the characteristics of different student groups to explore more targeted educational interventions, providing valuable insights for enhancing the quality of higher education.

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