Time Management Practices and Academic Success of the University Lecturers in Sri Lanka

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Abstract: It is hardly possible to find an empirical study relating to time management practice and academic success in the Sri Lankan context. The findings of this study will help to properly determine the concept of academic success of the university lecturers and Time Management Practice. Globally, many organizations and individuals practice time management to be effective. Hence, it is very important to examine the nature of time management practice. The main objectives of this paper are to identify the nature of the time management practice and academic success of university lecturers. And, the specific objective is to develop instruments to measure time management practice and academic success of university lecturers. The sample of the study consists of 30 university lectures from two Sri Lankan state universities. Qualitative methodology was followed. The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews to gather the qualitative data. The data analysis of the study involved thematic analysis. According to the thematic analysis results, it found four themes relating to the perception of time management. Based on these, it can be summarized that according to university lecturers in state universities, time management practices are "Planning, Punctuality, Work-life balance, and Effective use of time". Similarly, it analyzed the responses of university lecturers to their perception of the academic success of university lecturers. As a result of the final thematic map, it found four themes. Based on these themes, their perception of academic success of university lecturers can be identified as a high level of teaching including post-graduate level with high success rate, continuous involvement of research and publication activities, having industry link to improve the practical aspects, getting a good recognition from academic and other fields with a high level of citations, and obtaining awards from recognized bodies. Thus, this study will fill the existing gap relating operationalization of university lecturers' time management practice and academic success.

Keywords: Time management practice; academic success; university lecturers

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INTRODUCTION

There are many unique characteristics of time; time is limited, time is a unique resource, time is so special that it cannot be replaced by another thing (Opatha, 2010). Time management can be considered as the process by which an individual more effectively accomplishes tasks and goals, a process by which an individual obtains control over the timing and the context of what he does and as what can be accomplished with time (Hellsten, 2012). Furthermore, he has explained "Time management skill is depending on the extent to which we are able to identify the important activities from our day to day activities". The effective use of time has been recognized as a crucial factor for success in many different fields. As explained by Opatha (2010), "Time management is a special competence that one should possess in order to achieve success and progress of success on the job and other aspects of life". Further, he has explained that this competency is not possessed by many people. "Time-management skills are acknowledged to be

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important but there has been little actual research on this topic" (Trueman & Hartley, 1996, p. 199). Covey (1991) in his very famous book; "The 7 habits of highly effective people"; has mentioned time management can be explained using a phase "Organize and execute around priorities". Even in the Western context, lack of time is a common complaint (Hellsten, 2012; Lavilles & Robles, 2017; Suharti & Pramono, 2016). There are many time wasters, like lack of self discipline, inadequate planning, personal disorganization, ineffective delegation, attempting too many meetings, etc. These can be further explained as irrelevant meetings, meetings without an agenda, or meetings without an end time that may cause to waste many human hours in organizations. Also, unnecessarily lengthy discussions through telephone waste money and time. Similarly, if a person is not ready to delegate his or her time, he or she may also be wasting it.

Time-management is a critical skill for all. To manage time effectively, it is very critical to have clear objectives regarding what they are supposed to do and for which specific target date. Apart from that, other important matter is to respect their established priorities and they should try to minimize distraction from others. However, there is very little research on the topic of time-management skills. How to measure time-management skills is still not much clear. As explained by Trueman and Hartley (1996), there is an explanation on this. According to that; Weinstein, Palmer, and Schulte (1987), there were 8 items relevant to time management in their questionnaire. (Entwistle & Entwistle, 1992) had included four items in his questionnaire. Furthermore, there are few full length time-management scales. As mentioned by Trueman and Hartley (1996), there are mainly two published in America by Britton and Tesser (1991) and by Macan, Shahani, Dipboye, and Phillips (1990). Britton and Tesser (1991) has developed a 35-items instrument based on Britton and Glynn (1989). According to them, it has identified seven components of time-management as (i) choosing goals and sub goals (ii) prioritizing goals (iii) generating tasks and sub-tasks (iv) prioritizing tasks (v) Listing tasks on a To-do- list (vi) Scheduling tasks and (vii) carrying out tasks.

Shipman (1983) identified six principles of effective time-management. They are aware of self, structuring time appropriately, setting goals and priorities, increasing personal efficiency and effectiveness, scheduling time for activity, and scheduling relaxation time. Kelly (2003) explained time-management behavior as making list, organizing, goal setting, keeping and routinely evaluating one's schedule, and breaking down tasks into simpler parts. Moreover, they have mentioned that time-management is a skill that can be taught. Academic performance of students has been measured as the course-work marks, the examination scores, and a combination of these two Trueman and Hartley (1996). It can be found from several studies that have studied the impact of time-management practices on job performance (Barling, Cheung, & Kelloway, 1996). Hall and Hursch (1982) have found that time-management helps to improve job efficiency by supporting to allocate adequate time to their most productive works. On the other hand, effectiveness of time-management reduces job stress which has an indirect impact on job performance. As mentioned by Knight (1989), there is much literature examined regarding time in education domain. However, majority of them were referring to time management and students. It is very hard to find a study relating to university lectures and time-management practices (Hellsten, 2012).

Hellsten (2012)has identified sixteen commercially available instruments through the 'Buros Mental Measurements Year book'. Among them seven of the instruments have been developed for employee/ managers or organizational domain. Furthermore, they have found five structures for students. They have fund only one instrument for teachers. Hence, it is very significant to notice here there are very few instrument to measure the time management practices and academic success of the university lectures. Macan et al. (1990) have mentioned there are no psychometrically sound measures of time-management. Further, they have explained that there have been no systematic attempts to develop a psychometrically sound measure to assess conventional time-management behavior. Claessens, Van Eerde, Rutte, and Roe (2007) have done a review of the time-management literature and they have mentioned that "time-management has been defined and operationalised in a variety of ways and some instruments were not reliable or valid". Hence, they also have suggested that there is a need for more rigorous research into the mechanisms of time-management. Objectives of this paper are to identify the nature of Time-Management Practices, to identify the nature of academic success of university lecturer, to develop the instrument to measure Time-Management Practices, and to develop the instrument to measure the Academic Success of University Lecturers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Covey (1991, p. 159) has mentioned that "the challenge is not to manage time, but to manage ourselves". According to Hellsten (2012), there is currently a lack of agreement about the definition of time-management. As Mudrack (1997) explained, Time-Management is a multidimensional construct. Furthermore, Hellsten (2012) has mentioned that there is a lack of theoretical model of time-management. As explained by Hellsten (2012), there are some self-reported instruments to test the time-management skills but still, there has been no published psychometric review or comparison of these instruments of time-management. Moreover, he has explained that "Time-management is a habit developed only through determination and practice as prioritizing and respecting those priorities and as setting priorities and scheduling tasks"(p. 4). By citing Crutsinger (1992), Hellsten (2012) has mentioned that time-management involves determining what one should do by setting goals, deciding which events are the most important, and realizing that other activities will have to be scheduled around them. Opatha (2010, p. 154) has defined time management as "the totality of knowledge, attitudes, skills, techniques, and systems that assist to utilize your precious time to achieve what as a person of good personal character". As a conclusion, Hellsten (2012) have defined time-management as time analysis, planning, goal setting, prioritizing, scheduling, organizing, and establishing new and improved time habits. Explanation on time-management is not completing without presenting time-management matrix (Figure 1). As described by Covey (1991), people spend time in one of four ways.

Figure 1 *Time Management Matrix [Source: Covey (1991, p. 160)]*

These four ways he has explained using this time-management matrix as urgent, not urgent, not important, and important. According to him, urgent means it requires immediate attention. Another significant point he has stressed here is urgent matters are usually visible. On the other hand, important means what we have to do with results. They support us to achieve our goals. However, unknowingly, people tend to address urgent matters rather than important matters. In the above matrix, there are four quadrants and quadrant I represents both urgent and important. These things require immediate attention. Eisenhower Matrix (Figure 2), this quadrant has been identified as things have to be done "now". As explained by Covey (1991, p. 162), quadrant II is the heart of the effective personal management. The things included here are important but not urgent. The success of a person may be mainly depending on the successfulness of the activities relevant to this quadrant. Hence, proper self-discipline is a very significant factor.

In Eisenhower Matrix, this has been explained as the activities which are important but not urgent and need to be done on schedule date or as soon as possible. Covey (1991) has explained that effective people do not much involve into quadrants III and IV. All the activities included in these quadrants are not important. However, Eisenhower matrix explains the activities as urgent but not urgent can be delegated or can be deleted. Fourth category activities are not important and urgent. These activities are necessary and can be ignored.

Figure 2 *The Eisenhower Matrix*

To measure the level of time-management practice is very significant. In existing literature, there are several time-management questionnaires. For example, Britton and Tesser (1991) Time-Management Questionnaire (TMQ) can be illustrated. In this questionnaire, he has identified dimensions under three categories; short range planning, long-rang planning, and time attitudes. According to Ziapour, Khatony, Jafari, and Kianipour (2015), Time-Management behaviors consist of four domains and each has 8 items. The four domains they have identified are 'setting objectives and prioritization', 'mechanics of time management', 'control over time' and 'maintaining order and organization'. Hellsten (2012) has done a literature survey on what is the time-management behavior and skills. He has used empirical research, popular books, and articles on time-management. Among them, "setting priorities" has been identified as an important time-management skill by 71% of the reviewed articles. Planning, use of time-management documentation, and scheduling also have been identified as very important time-management skills and behaviors.

METHOD

According to Hellsten (2012), there are few qualitative studies relevant to time-management. Out of 100 studies, five studies have used qualitative methodology. Furthermore, he has found that 27 studies examined the relationship between time-management and other variables using quantitative methodology. For this study, qualitative data were collected through interviews. Sample of this study was selected conveniently representing lecturers from two state universities. 30 state university lecturers participated as respondents of this study. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore their views relating to time-management practices and academic success of university lecturers. Secondary data used in this study were collected through websites, books, magazines, conference proceedings, and journal articles. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis provides a way into qualitative research that teaches the mechanics of coding and analyzing qualitative data systematically which can then be linked to broader theoretical or conceptual issues. According to them, thematic analysis involves a six-phase process; familiarization with the data, coding, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and writing up.

Data Analysis

According to available literature, there are many ways to analyze qualitative data. One of the most common approaches to qualitative data analysis is thematic analysis (Bryman, 2008). Since Thematic Analysis is a foundational method for qualitative analysis, this method provides a flexible and useful research tool which can potentially provide rich, detailed, and complex data. Thematic analysis is identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organizes and describes the dataset in (rich) detail. The researcher of this study prefers to use thematic analysis (Opatha, Sanjeewani, & Dissanayake, 2016). Braun and Clarke (2006) have mentioned it as a flexible and uncomplicated technique which gains new insights. Gathered data were cored from ULTM1 to ULTM30 without any

sequential order. For example, a senior lecturer in a state university in Sri Lanka explained time-management practice as "assessing the work load and achieve that works with a proper plan" and also further, he mentioned "balancing personal and professional life is very important", ULTM 12. . According to the initial thematic map relating to perception of time-management which was developed based on the answers given by the 30 lecturers in two state universities in Sri Lanka. It has identified 5 themes, namely Planning, Work-life balance, Huddling Urgent Matters, Punctuality, and Time allocation. Then, these themes have been further investigated and finalized into four main themes which are indicated in final thematic map in (Figure 3). The finalized themes are Planning, Punctuality, Work life balance, Effective use of time.
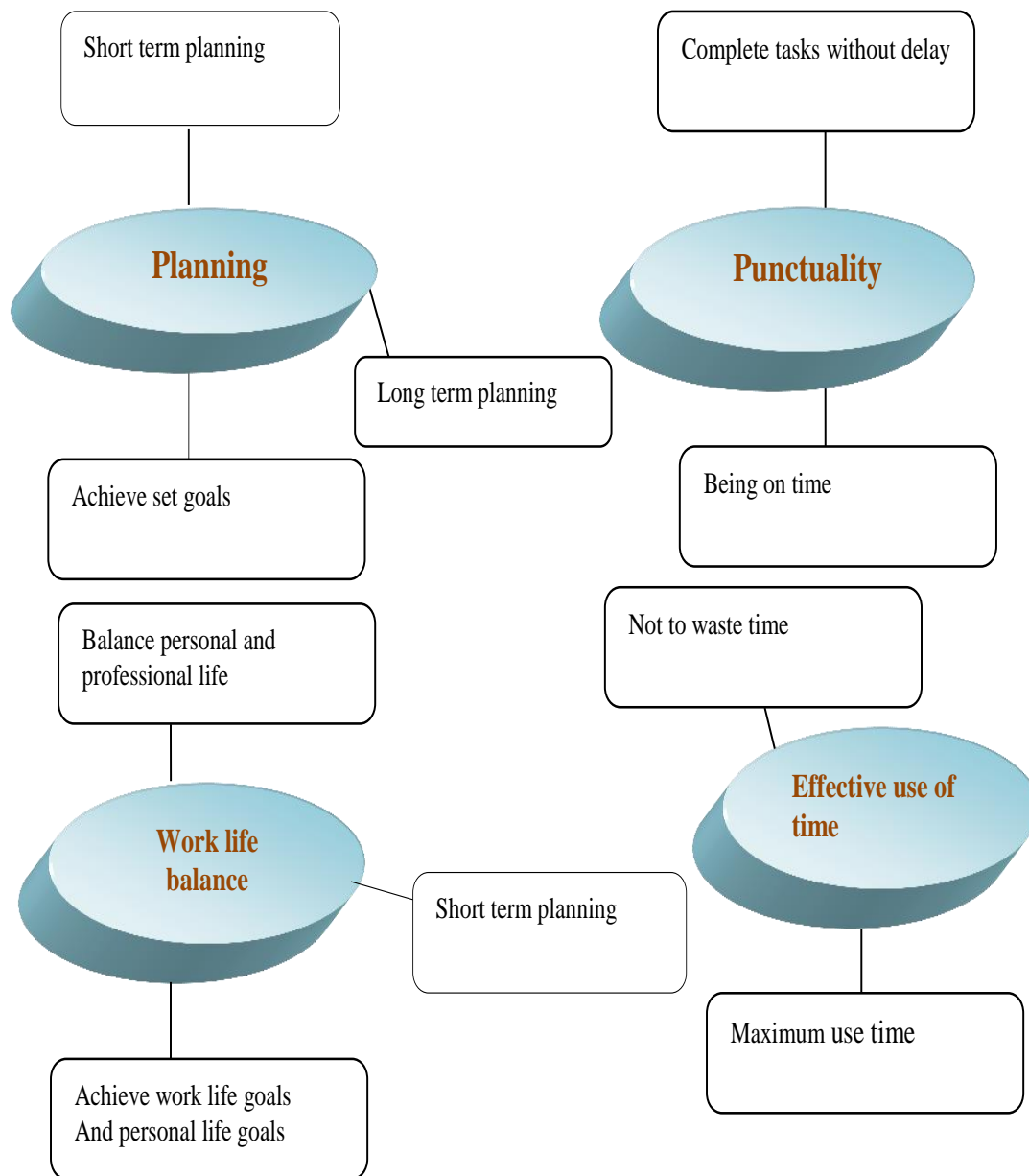

Figure 3 *Final Thematic Map Showing University Lecturer's Perceptions on Time Management Practice (Source: Interview Data)*

One of the important facts is majority of the respondents have not identified prioritizing as an important time-management practice. However, there were many lecturers who have identified planning as a time-management practice. Next, it raised the question of what do you mean by academic success of university lecturers from the state university lecturers. They responded to this question very clearly and interestingly.
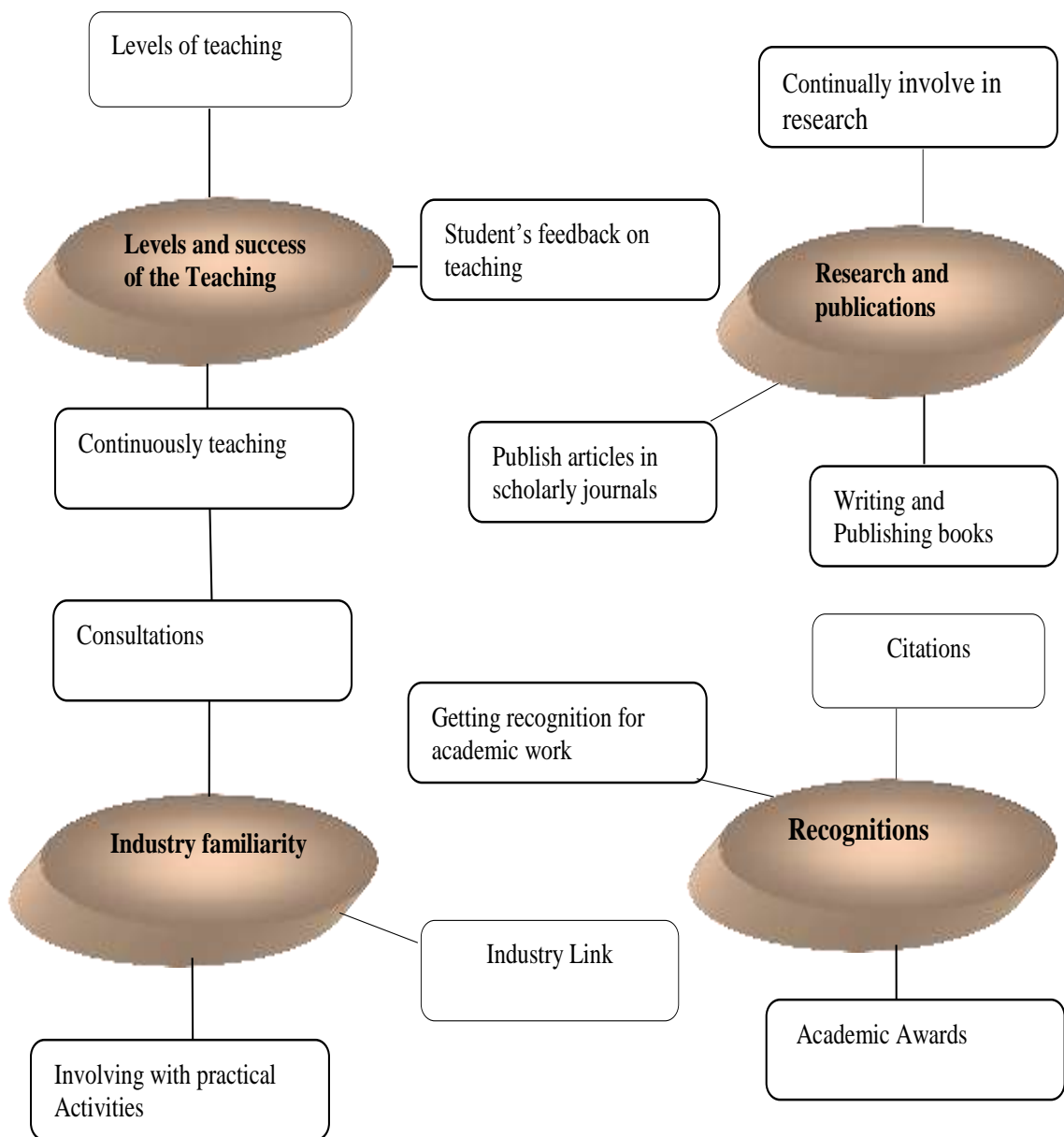
Figure 4 *Final Thematic Map Showing University Lecturer's Perceptions on Academic Success of University Lecturer (Source: Interview Data)*

After familiarizing the gathered data, they were numbered as ULAS1 to ULAS30 without any sequential order. Following comment made by one of the professors in a state university in Sri Lanka. "Academic success is not only teaching and researching; it is about the student's success from our teaching. So, to be a successful academic, it is very important to get student's feedback and, in the long run, consider their character quality and employability" ULAS 14. Their responses were coded and organized in the initial thematic map. There were seven themes in the initial thematic map. They are Qualifications, Student's satisfaction, Teaching, Link with industry, Researching, Publishing Books, and Voluntary works. Then, it further reviewed and identified four themes which are presented in the final thematic map in (Figure 4). Accordingly, it identified four themes that are Level and success of the teaching, Research and publications, Industry familiarity, and Recognitions.

RESULTS

According to the results of the thematic analysis, it found four themes relating to the perception of time-management. Based on these, it can be summarized that according to university lecturers in state universities, time-management

practices are "Planning, Punctuality, Work-life balance, and Effective use of time". Similarly, it analyzed the responses of university lecturers of their perception on academic success of university lecturers. As a result of the final thematic map, it found four themes. Based on these themes, their perception of academic success of university lecturers can be identified as a high level of teaching, including post-graduate level with high success rate, continuous involvement of research and publication activities, having industry link to improve the practical aspects, getting a good recognition from academic and other fields with a high level of citations, and obtaining awards from recognized bodies. Third objective of the study was to develop an instrument to test the time-management practices. After completing the qualitative analysis of gathered data and conducting rigorous literature review, it developed an instrument to test the time-management practice. Specially, it has developed by adapting some items from time-management scale developed by Trueman and Hartley (1996). This instrument has developed on four dimensions namely Self discipline, Planning, Prioritization and Punctuality.

Fourthly, it set an objective to develop an instrument to measure the academic success of university lecturers. Data analysis results of the qualitative data have identified three themes. When developing an instrument to measure the academic success of university lecturers, qualitative results have been considered. And also presently, the available professor scheme is considered as a base for the scale developed to measure the academic success of university lecturers.

IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH SUGGESTIONS

This study collected data on perception of university lecturers on time-management practice. Majority of them have not identified prioritization as an important component of time-management practice. It is very important to organize staff development programmes to support them to develop their time-management practices. On the other hand, the university lecturers responded on their perception on academic success of university lecturers, and there were several new aspects to be included under the dimensions of academic success of university lecturers. When amending the staff evaluating form of promotions and specially amending the professor schemes, these inputs can be considered. A future research study can be done to test the developed instrument to ensure the validity and reliability in a large sample. The developed instruments can be tested in their context and used to conduct a research on time-management practice and academic success. Another qualitative study can be done on time-management practice of university lecturers, university students and identify the realities relevant to their time-management practices. Also, it is very important to study on how to promote the time-management practices in different contexts in the world.

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