Time Matters Strategy: Adaptive Group Counseling to Optimize Time Management for New Students

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Keywords	Abstract
time management, group counseling, new students, time matters strategy	*New students often struggle to manage their time effectively due to various academic and nonacademic demands. This study aims to determine new students' time management skills and test the effectiveness of the Time Matters Strategy through adaptive group counselling. The study employs a quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental one-group pre-test post-test design. The sample consisted of 5 new students selected through purposive sampling. The instruments used were a time management questionnaire and a self-evaluation questionnaire. Data analysis was performed using a paired sample t-test. The results showed a significant improvement in the time management skills of new students after participating in three sessions of Time Matters Strategy group counselling, with the average pre-test score of 74.80 increasing to 88.80 on the post-test ($p = 0.004$; Cohen's $d = -2.720$). In addition, participants reported positive changes in their thoughts, emotions, and behaviour, including reduced anxiety, increased motivation, and becoming accustomed to using effective time management methods. Group counselling with the Time Matters Strategy effectively improves the time management skills of new students, so it can be used as an alternative psychological intervention in higher education settings.*

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INTRODUCTION

New students face a variety of demands and increasingly diverse activities. They are focused on academic activities such as lectures and assignments and other activities such as organisations, communities, and part-time jobs. The dynamic nature of the lecture system, such as hybrid learning and project-based assignments, also requires good time management skills. New students are a vulnerable group regarding time management issues because they adapt to a new environment and learning system that differs from their high school experience. During the transition from high school to university, they face a more independent learning system, irregular class schedules, and the need to adapt to a new social and academic environment. New students struggle to set priorities, manage schedules, and allocate time effectively amid various activities they must undertake (Zega & Kurniawati, 2022).

The main problem that often arises among students is poor time management skills. Some problems that often occur include poor memory, decreased concentration, and difficulty managing time effectively (Zebua & Santosa, 2023). As a result, students feel that the time available is insufficient to complete various tasks and responsibilities (Zebua & Santosa, 2023). Unstructured time management patterns exacerbate the challenges faced by students (Zega & Kurniawati, 2022), as students tend to spend more time on unproductive activities such as social media, watching movies, or relaxing without precise planning. Unproductive activities contribute to poor academic performance (Zebua & Santosa, 2023).

The negative impact of poor time management affects academic achievement and students' mental well-being. Research by Lovin & Bernardeau-Moreau (2022) shows that 66% of students identify difficulty managing time as the main cause of stress. Poor time management often leads to students experiencing stress, frustration, fatigue, and difficulty adapting to the demands of university studies and campus life (Rofi et al., 2023).

Time management is a set of decisions that will gradually affect a person's life (Timpe, 2002:10). The main aspects of time management include minimising time-wasting habits, setting goals, setting priorities, good communication, managing procrastination, organisational rules, and assertiveness. In the context of students, time management skills include the ability to manage time, set priorities, schedule activities, and control distractions that can hinder productivity (Yunita et al., 2022). Students with good time management skills are more likely to complete tasks on time, allocate time for various activities in a balanced manner, and avoid stress and fatigue (Abi & Saadah, 2018).

Previous research has shown that group counselling services are effective in helping individuals overcome various problems. Dewi et al.'s (2014) research demonstrated increased self-confidence through group counselling techniques. Hasanah et al. (2023) found that group counselling effectively enhances the resilience of Generation Z. Meanwhile, Basuki (2015) demonstrated that group counselling interventions can strengthen the interpersonal communication skills of new students. These findings open up opportunities for group counselling methods with targeted strategies to help first-year students overcome time management challenges, as they develop self-management skills and provide the emotional support and social skills needed in a campus environment.

Good time management is not just about making schedules, but also involves skills in setting priorities, determining goals, controlling distractions, and evaluating time use (Yunita et al., 2022). Students with good time management skills tend to complete tasks on time, divide their time between various activities in a balanced manner, and avoid stress and fatigue.

Group counselling for time management is important because it serves as a forum for providing materials and training and as a safe space for students to share experiences, gain motivation, and learn practical strategies for prioritising and scheduling activities. Group counselling is expected to enhance new students' time management skills, help them cope with various academic demands and campus life, and balance academic and non-academic activities throughout their studies.

The Time Matters Strategy program measures participants' time management skills. The Time Matters Strategy is a group counselling-based intervention approach designed to improve students' time management by applying their strategies. A time management questionnaire is distributed via Google Forms and completed before the initial and final counselling sessions. The Time Matters Strategy program consists of three sessions, each focusing on discussing participants' time management issues, evaluating the strategies they have implemented, identifying the challenges they face, and practising applying new time management strategies tailored to their individual needs. The Time Matters Strategy program aims to help participants find effective time management solutions that align with their circumstances.

METHODS

The study used a quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental design in the form of a one-group pre-test post-test design. This design aimed to describe changes in students' time management levels after participating in group counselling sessions with the Time Matters Strategy intervention. The research subjects were selected using purposive sampling based on the following criteria: (1) active first-year students in the 2024 academic year, (2) aged 17–18 years, (3) experiencing difficulties in managing time, (4) willing to participate in group counselling, and (5) residing in Semarang. The study population included all new students in the X Study Program at Universitas Negeri Semarang in the 2024 cohort.

The research instruments consisted of two questionnaires, a time management questionnaire and a self-evaluation questionnaire. The time management questionnaire contains 35 items using a 1–4 Likert scale, based on the aspects of time management according to Timpe (1999). The self-evaluation questionnaire contains four items administered before and after the counselling session to assess participants' feelings, problem conditions, messages and impressions, and suggestions. The research instrument has undergone content validity testing by experts (expert judgment) to ensure construct representativeness. The questionnaire was completed online via Google Forms before and after group counselling.

Next, participants will undergo three sessions of Time Matters Strategy group counselling. The first session focuses on the initial stage, which involves building rapport, introducing participants, and exploring participants' problems. Participants will be asked to complete a pre-test time management questionnaire. Techniques used include seating, goal setting, using I terms, go-arounds, brainstorms, and thank you. At this stage, participants are encouraged to get to know each other, share experiences, and express their time management problems. The second session enters the transition and work stages with seating, go-around, brainstorming, goal setting, and thank you techniques. The primary focus of the second session is to identify problems more deeply, explore psychological and physical impacts, and evaluate the time management strategies that have been implemented. Participants are also encouraged to take responsibility for their own progress. The third session is the final stage, which uses goaround, seating, brainstorming, thank you, and summarising techniques. In this session, the researcher and participants summarise the results of the counselling process, evaluate the strategies practised, reflect on the overall effectiveness of the

intervention, and participants are asked to fill out a post-test time management questionnaire. Participants will be asked to complete a self-evaluation questionnaire in each group counselling session.

Data were analysed using the Paired Sample t-test with the assistance of the JASP application version 0.18.0.0 to compare time management scores before and after the intervention, thereby determining the effectiveness of the Time Matters Strategy intervention.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Group counselling activities were carried out offline in November 2024 with three meetings; the participants of this activity were five people (4 women and 1 man). The following is a description of the results of group counselling activities.

Table 1. Baseline Participant NA

Participant: NA			
	First baseline	**Mid-baseline**	**Final baseline**
Cognitive	1. Forgot the plan that was set due to other activities. 2. Confusion about prioritising when faced with multiple tasks.	1. Start to be open to solutions from others in the group.	1. Gaining new knowledge about time management methods that suit them. 2. Feeling supported by the counselling group.
Emotional	1. Anxiety	1. Feeling happy and helped because they feel they are not alone.	1. Feeling more stable after knowing the method that suits them.
Behaviour	1. Difficulty completing tasks on time. 2. Actively participating in organisations 3. Difficulty dividing time 4. Unsuccessful in implementing the to-do list made	1. Started trying to improve the to-do list method that had been done before, but it was still not optimal	1. Start implementing the to-do list time management method by utilising related apps.

Table 2. Baseline Participant RA

Participant: RA			
	First baseline	**Mid-baseline**	**Final baseline**
Cognitive	1. Lack of motivation to complete tasks	1. Starting to learn about other participants' time management methods and their evaluations	1. They have a group that supports implementing the chosen time management method. 2. More motivated to complete tasks.
Emotional	1. Anxiety	1. Happy	1. Anxiety decrease
Behaviour	1. Putting off work with the stipulation '5 more minutes'.	1. Sharing experiences with other participants. 2. Finding out the appropriate time	1. Know the time management method that suits him/her. 2. Accustomed to making a schedule of activities on

		management method. 3. Start applying time management methods with the help of Google Calendar.	Google Calendar and doing it when a notification appears
	2. Difficulty adapting to a more flexible lecture schedule		

Table 3. Baseline Participant IZ

Participant: IZ			
	First baseline	**Mid-baseline**	**Final baseline**
Cognitive	1. Often forgetting to do something	1. Realising the problems experienced	1. Knowing the causes and obstacles of the time management method that has been applied
Emotional	1. Feeling unstable	1. Feeling relieved	1. More stable
Behaviour	1. Closed and difficult to express their feelings 2. Procrastinating on doing work 3. Make a list of activities that must be done every day 4. Lack of flexibility when having impromptu activities	1. Started to be open in expressing feelings during the session 2. Tried using an app to make a to-do list	1. More open with his/her feelings 2. Getting used to making a to-do list with the help of the app

Table 4. Baseline Participant SH

Participant: SH			
	First baseline	**Mid-baseline**	**Final baseline**
Cognitive	1. Forgetting the set plan due to other activities.	1. Mind is more relieved.	1. Gained new knowledge regarding the advantages and disadvantages of time management methods that other participants have applied. 2. Found a solution to the problem
Emotional	1. Anxiety 2. Confused	1. Enjoyed being able to delve deeper into the problem to explore its impact	1. Stable 2. Feelings of anxiety are starting to decrease
Behaviour	1. Difficult to adapt to the time difference. 2. Often missing prayer times 3. Doing coursework on the verge of the submission deadline 4. Applying the time blocking method, but not optimally	1. Applying time blocking and a to-do list on personal WhatsApp chat.	1. Applying the time management method with a to-do list in more detail every hour.

Table 5. Baseline Participant DF

Participant: DF			
	First baseline	**Mid-baseline**	**Final baseline**
Cognitive	1. Easily distracted 2. Difficult to maintain concentration	1. Gain new insights	1. Gained new knowledge about time management
Emotional	1. Unstable	1. Happy	1. More stable
Behaviour	1. Often postpones work 2. Easily distracted by gadgets 3. Likes to play online games 4. Not being able to utilise free time well 5. Does not apply any time management methods	1. Share experiences with other participants 2. Started dabbling with suitable time management methods	1. Start implementing time management methods that suit him/her 2. Started to control oneself by avoiding distractions (online games)

At the group level, with the same problems, most participants felt the same psychological dynamics related to the emergence of negative emotions. Negative emotions felt in the form of stress due to not running activities as desired, responsibility for tasks that pile up, and time that feels so fast. Stress often triggers feelings such as bad mood, overthinking, upset and self-blame due to participants' inability to manage time effectively. Covey (2004) states that ineffective time management will trigger stress in individuals.

Participants revealed that they often felt physical impacts, such as dizziness, due to not being used to college life. During the counselling session, the five participants realised that the problems they experienced were not unique, meaning that other people also felt the same problems as a new student. Participants are still in the adaptation phase with new activities and the environment. Their time management skills will gradually improve as they become students (Macan, 1990), and their efforts to habituate themselves to appropriate time management methods. Group counselling with a time matters strategy creates a sense of togetherness while recognising that the problems experienced cause various psychological and physical impacts.

The data collection results on 5 participants were then analysed for normality to determine the data distribution. The Shapiro-Wilk normality test showed that the data were normally distributed with a p value of 0.729 (p > 0.05) on the pre-test and post-test scores. With the assumption of normality fulfilled, the analysis continued using the paired samples t-tes.

There was a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores after the Time Matters Strategy intervention, with a p-value = 0.004 (p < 0.05). The mean score of time management skills increased from 74.80 to 88.80, with the standard deviation also decreasing. The Cohen's d value of -2.720 indicates that the intervention has a huge effect, so it can be concluded that it effectively improves new students' time management skills.
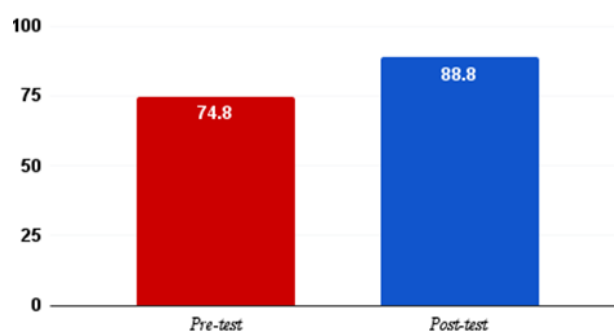
Figure 1 Pre-test and Post-test Results

The results of the data analysis indicate that the Time Matters Strategy intervention has a positive impact on improving time management skills in new students. Thus, this intervention is effective in helping students manage time in a more structured and efficient manner. Based on the results of filling out the self-evaluation questionnaire after each group counselling session. In the initial session, participants rated their self-condition with an average score of 3 out of 5, indicating that the time management problems experienced tended to affect their condition. In the middle stage, the results of the self-evaluation questionnaire showed an average rating of 3.4 out of 5, per the counselling results, which revealed the psychological impact felt. Based on the questionnaire results, it can be concluded that group counselling sessions are needed to improve participants' time management skills so that they can carry out activities and complete academic tasks more optimally. The results of this study can be supported by Shelsiyanti et al.'s research (2024), which states that group counselling for students can help solve time management problems, students can complete their main tasks and do other activities effectively and efficiently.

Based on the theoretical basis and hypotheses previously described. Researchers tested the hypothesis using the Paired Samples T-test. The Shapiro-Wilk normality test showed that the data were normally distributed with a p value of 0.729 ($p > 0.05$) on the pre-test and posttest scores. Paired Samples T-test results showed a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of time management skills. The p-value = 0.004 ($p < 0.05$), with an average pre-test score of 74.80 and an average post-test score of 88.80. The value of Cohen's d = -2.720, indicating that the intervention effect is enormous. Thus, since the significance value (p) is smaller than 0.05, the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected and the alternative hypothesis (H_a) is accepted. That is, the application of the Time Matters Strategy has a significant effect on improving time management skills in new students.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of the Time Matters Strategy group counselling over three sessions showed positive results in improving the time management skills of new students. The average time management questionnaire scores increased. Additionally, the self-report questionnaire scores of the five participants also improved over the three counselling sessions, accompanied by changes in their thoughts, emotions, and behaviours in managing time. At the individual level, the psychological dynamics that emerged included stress, guilt, confusion, bad moods, and dizziness due to difficulties in scheduling, procrastination, and distractions from other activities. Each participant exhibited different problem characteristics but experienced emotional and physical impacts due to ineffective time management. At the group level, most participants experienced similar negative emotions, such as stress due to piling tasks, feeling time was short, and the inability to meet daily targets. The counselling process fostered awareness that these issues were shared, fostering a sense of

camaraderie, emotional support, and motivation to share solutions. Group counselling can create a supportive environment and help participants find more appropriate time management strategies. These findings highlight the importance of developing time management theories considering emotional, behavioural, and cognitive factors. Additionally, the Time Matters Strategy group counselling approach has proven effective and is worthy of consideration as a reference in psychological interventions within the field of education.

Acknowledgement

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