

## PRIORITIZATION AND ACADEMIC SUCCESS OF THE UNIVERSITY LECTURERS IN STATE UNIVERSITIES IN SRI LANKA

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### ABSTRACT

*Many authors have explained there are several books on prioritization and time management. However still most of the people are often involving things which are not in a high priority. Specially, university lecturers who are having some academic freedom, they should focus on their goals and achieve the academic success. Hence, this paper attempted to identify the relationship and impact of prioritization and academic success of state university lecturers. The study was a quantitative study with 180 state university lecturers belongs to management faculties in four state universities in Sri Lanka. Regression analysis results revealed that there is a high correlation and significant impact of prioritization on academic success of state university lecturers. Hence, it can be concluded that as one of the important time management practices, prioritization is very critical to identify most important tasks from the urgent tasks, which may not support to achieve the goals and objectives for their personal and professional lives. As an implication, it can be further improved the time management skills of university lecturers. And as a future research suggestion, this type of study can be conducted with undergraduate students or other types of higher educational students in order to identify the relationship and impact of the prioritization on their higher educational academic success.*

**Keywords:** Academic success, Prioritization, University lecturer

### INTRODUCTION

As explained by the author in year 2018 (Sajeevanie) there are only few studies on time management in Sri Lanka. Hence, Sri Lankan context based time management study brings more value and fills empirical gap while supporting to enhance the existing literature on time management. Several authors have explained the birth of time management. There are some evidences as the Benedictine monks have followed the basic tools of time management (Hall and Harsch, 1982). “Until the fourteenth century there were no clocks in regular use, and it wasn’t until the late seventeenth was developed to make reliable time pieces. In addition, they have highlighted use of clocks did not become widespread until the eighteen century. Benjamin Franklin, the father of time management has explained his approach of time management as “If you want to enjoy one of the greatest luxuries in life, the luxury of having enough time, time to rest, time to get things done and know you have done them to the best of your ability, remember there is another way. The enough time to think and plan things in order of their importance”. Here it can be seen he has identified and highlighted the importance of poetization. Claessens et al. (2007) have mentioned there are several limitations in the existing literature. As they explained time management has not properly defined and operationalized. Moreover, there is no reliable or valid instrument to manage time management practice. In Sri Lankan context, it is hardly possible to find an empirical study relating to prioritization and academic success of university lecturers. Thus, this study will fill the existing gap relating to how to improve the practice of prioritization specially among state university lecturers in Sri Lanka. The main objective of the study is to find out

whether there is a significant effect of prioritization on academic success of the university lecturers in state universities in Sri Lanka.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

It can be identified time management as time analysis, planning, goal setting, prioritizing, scheduling, organizing and establishing new and improved time habits (Trueman and Hartley, 1996; Rai,1991; Davies, et al., 2015). Explanation on time management is not completing without presenting time management matrix (Figure 1). As described by Covey (1989) people spend time in one of four ways.

	URGENT	NOT URGENT
IMPORTANT	<b>ACTIVITIES: I</b> Crises Pressing Problems Deadline-driven projects Production problems	<b>ACTIVITIES: II</b> Prevention Relationship building Recognizing new opportunities Planning Recreation Production capability problems
NOT IMPORTANT	<b>ACTIVITIES: III</b> Interruptions, some calls Some mail, some reports Some meetings Popular activities Pressing matters	<b>ACTIVITIES: IV</b> Trivia, busy work Some mail Some phone calls Time wasters Pleasant activities

Source: Covey S.R (1989, p.160) The 7 Habits of Highly Effective

**Figure 1. Time Management Matrix**

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 matter rather than important matters. In the above matrix there are four quadrants and quadrant I represent the both urgent and important. These things required immediate attention. Eisenhower Matrix this quadrant has been identified as things has to be done “now”. As explained by Covey (1989, p.162) quadrant II is the heart of the effective personal management. The things include 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 very significant factor. Hence, it is required to prioritize the work accordingly. Prioritization is really a challenge. As explained by Wang, Xie & Goh (2010) decision makers can select the prioritization matrix. Smart people need to understand the trade - off between what not to do and what to do (Lidow, 2017). In addition, he has explained three kinds of priorities called: Critical, Important, and Desirable. Prioritization Matrix is a useful technique to identify which problems are the most important to work on solving first. On the other hand, mentioned two perspectives of prioritization criteria called strategic importance and ease of implementation. Hence, he has explained strategic importance means a measurement focused on value to be delivered to the organizations and its customers and ease of implementation means a focus on new ready the organization is to acquire or develop and implement the change. Covey (1989) has mentioned people spend time in four ways called urgent, not urgent, important, and not important. As explained by him, urgent matters require immediate attention. Moreover, important matters support to achieve the goals. The most important

point here is to highlight can be identified as people pay their attention on urgent matters while neglecting important matter. According to Claessens et al., (2007) time management behaviors relate positively to perceived control of time, job satisfaction, and health and negatively to stress. In addition, they have explained through proper time management training enhance time management skills, and further they have explained time management training has not transferred to better performance. To do list play major role in time management practice. Zahariades (2005) has mentioned there are most common eight reasons people fail to get through their lists. First reason is misunderstood the goal of to do list. According to Zahariades (2005) the main purpose of to do list is to help you to organize your tasks, project, and highlight the important staff. Further, it has been explained by writing a list. It is possible to gain birds – eye view of your biggest priorities. The second reason he has mentioned as ‘you neglect to assign deadlines’ Scott has described a to- do list without death lines is a wish list. Deadlines help us to prioritize tasks and projects based on the amount of time we have to complete them. He has nicely explained deadlines are the enemy of procrastination. Since they motivate us to work and complete the task. Further, it can be mentioned ‘Deadlines help us to decide where to spend our limited time and attention and as Parkinson’s Law explained ‘Work expands so as to fill the time available for its completion’.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This is a quantitative study, the independent variable of this study ‘prioritization’ was operationalized by adapting Jackson (2009) and it was measured using 12 questions. These items were answered on a five – point response scale consisting of the responses; always, frequently, sometimes, infrequently, and never with higher values on the scale corresponding to better time management practice. That instrument consisted with questions like ‘I prioritize my “to do list” in order to importance, not urgency, my actions are determined primarily by me not by circumstances or by other people’s priorities, I find it easy to identify which tasks are most important than others’.

The dependent variable of this study is academic success, which was operationalized with three dimensions called teaching, research and scholarly work, and academic awards. These dimensions were identified based on schemes of recruitment of professor. The study is a quantitative study and the sample of the study is 180 in state university lecturers belongs to management faculties in four state universities in Sri Lanka. Basic components of research design are, purpose of the study (exploratory, descriptive, hypothesis testing), type of study, extent of researcher interference (the extent to which it is manipulated and controlled by the researcher), study setting (its location), time horizon (its temporal aspects), unit of analysis (the level at which the data will be analyzed) are as follows (Opatha, 2003; Sekaran and Bougie 2010).

Studies may be either exploratory in nature or descriptive, or may be conducted to test hypotheses. The type of this research is descriptive, since this study was done in order to establish relationships between independent and dependent variables. Unit of analysis is individual. According to Sekeran (1992) there are two types of research study based on its time. The time horizon may be either cross sectional or longitudinal. The current study is cross sectional. In order to measure the internal reliability of the instrument the inter-item consistency reliability the Cronbach’s Alpha test was used.

## **RESULTS**

### **Demographic Information**

Age of the respondents was grouped into five levels ranging from less than 30 years to over 60 years. The respondents have been asked to mark their age under the categories of less than

30 years, 30-39 years, 40-49 years, 50- to 59 years and 60 and over. Accordingly, majority of the respondents was 40 to 49 years.

To determine the experience of the university lecturers under the study, the survey study gathered information regarding the total experience of the lecturers. The experience of the respondents was grouped into five levels as 1-5, 6-10, 11-15, 16-20 and more than 20 years. Majority of the respondents belongs to the category of more than 21 years' of experience. To identify the designations of the university lecturers under the study, the survey study gathered information. The designations of the respondents were grouped into five levels as probationary lecturers, lecturers, senior lecturers grade II, senior lecturers grade I and professors. Majority of the respondents belongs to the category of 'lecturers'

**Reliability**

As mentioned above in order to test the internal reliability Cronbach's Alpha test was done. As a rule of thumb, the scale is considered reliable when Cronbach's alpha is greater than 0.7. An alpha value of more than 0.7 would indicate that the items are homogeneous, measuring the same construct. The Cronbach's Alpha value of 'Prioritization' was 0.789 and Academic success was 0.870. Hence, there was an adequate degree of internal reliability concerning the constructs. Then, it can be concluded that all constructs have high internal consistency.

**Impact of Prioritization on Academic Success**

The objectives of this study is to find the impact of prioritization on academic success of the university lecturers in state universities in Sri Lanka. Simple regression analysis was used to test the impact. The results are shown in Table 1. The results show that the regression coefficient (R) of the independent variables and academic success of the university lecturers was 0.607 and R square was 0.368. The results suggested that 36% of the variance (R Square) in academic success of university lectures has been significantly explained by prioritizing practice of university lectures. In order to determine whether the impact is statistically significant or not, F value from ANOVA test was considered. F value is 15.581 that was significant at .05 as well as 0.01 level. Hence, the impact of the Prioritization practice of university lectures on the in academic success of university lectures was statistically significant.

**Table 1. Impact of prioritization on Academic Success of the university lecturers**

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	F Value	Sig F	B- constant	b-value
0.607	0.368	0.341	0.510	15.581	0.000	1.338	0.534

**DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

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. In addition, it was found there is an impact of Prioritization on academic success of the university lecturers. Hence, it is concluded that in order to be academically success all academic members should priorities their work. According to Eisenhower Matrix, effective people do not much involve with quadrants III and IV. The reason is no activities included in these quadrants are important. That mean they do not support to achieve the goals and objectives of a person. The findings of this study also align

with this explanation. It can be elaborated as if the lecturers academic success is very high that mean they are properly prioritize their works. They have identified the important tasks while minimizing unimportant tasks.

### **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 programs 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.

It is very important to improve the knowledge on time management practices, specially junior academics can improve their time management skills. As an implementation, university lecturers can publish books on “Managing Time”. It is very rare to find a text book published in Sri Lankan context on “Time Management”. Moreover, the results of the study are very important to university lecturers. Specially young university lecturers benefiting from this because they can share senior lecturer’s experiences when they planning their career progress. University lecturers with academic freedom should be more concerned with their focus. And it is very critical to identify the priorities which supported to achieve their career goals. Unless they may be misused by others (other institutions, private universities). Those activities may be harmful to the university lecturer’s real career success. As disseminators of knowledge if they develop themselves it will be a support to develop students, many other people in the society and directly and indirectly support to develop the world. Hence, the managing time is highly significant to university lecturer’s success.

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 use 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. In addition, it is very important to study on how to promote time management practice in deferent contexts in the world.

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