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Time Management Skills as a Tool for Reducing Academic Procrastination both in the Classroom and During Academic Internships

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Time Management Skills as a Tool for Reducing Academic Procrastination both in the Classroom and During Academic Internships

Time management is the process of dividing one's time between specific tasks through planning and organization (Mind Tools, n.d.). Alveraz, Ferrero and Ugidos (2019) concluded "the decisive factor is not the amount of time available but the management that is made of it." Possessing the ability to effectively manage one's time can result in an increase in productivity and efficiency, an increase in opportunities for advancement, and reduce stress. Just as good time management produces positive outcomes, poor time management may result in decreased productivity, poor work quality, missed deadlines and higher stress levels (Mind Tools, n.d.).

Academic procrastination occurs when students fail to complete assignments due to not starting or completing a task. This procrastination can be due to lack of motivation (Sepehrian, 2012) or fear of not receiving the desired grade (Hen & Goroshit, 2012). Many times students may not understand the assignment or the task may not interest them so they may look for other things such as watching T.V. or social media outlets (Akinsola et al., 2007). Another issue seen with academic procrastination is excessive multitasking, even in the classroom, to the point productivity decreases. Tassonne, Liu, Reed and Vickers, (2020) used an educational classroom intervention to demonstrate to students that multitasking between relevant course information and other information such as websites and texts would decrease student performance. While the intervention did not actually decrease multitasking in the classroom meaning students continued to multitask with non-relevant tasks, most students did feel that multitasking would decrease their grades. These researchers were able to correlate those students with higher grades did multitask less and paid more attention in class.

Time management translates to academic procrastination as students must plan and decide how and on what they will spend their time. Many students today must juggle classwork, jobs, family and other extracurricular activities which can all be very time consuming. If students manage their time well, productivity increases as do grades (Karakose, 2015). However, academic procrastination is a struggle among students of various populations (Zarrin, Gracia, and Paixão, 2020; Karakose, 2015).

Like many programs at many colleges and universities, time management and academic procrastination are a concern in the Health Studies program at University of Louisiana at Monroe (ULM). Students in this program are offered a Health Sciences Practicum. The course is mandatory for Health Studies Management/Marketing majors, both traditional and online, but it is an option for Health Studies Pre-Professional majors which includes those students who wish to pursue a professional graduate program in a health field such as physical therapy, physician's assistant, and even medical school. The practicum class is a web-based senior level course that is typically taken in the last semester before graduation. One advantage behind scheduling the course in the last semester is in hopes of an offer of employment by the Practicum site to the student. Students must complete 104 hours on site with a healthcare facility and complete administrative tasks. These tasks range anywhere from assisting in human resources to running a social media campaign for a marketing department. Students must also submit weekly assignments in the course itself. This course is typically taken in conjunction with other courses and many times students have additional commitments previously mentioned making good time management essential for successful completion of this practicum experience.

Over time, time management has been brought to the forefront where students' course assignment submission, as well as practicum tasks completion is concerned. Practicum site

preceptors and courses instructors alike were noticing punctuality and timely submissions seemingly going by the wayside. From this, there arose a need to find out 1) why students felt punctuality was not a priority, 2) how students view time management, and 3) what can faculty do to better prepare and equip students to manage their time to reduce academic procrastination?

The project is constructed to introduce three time management interventions to help students learn to manage his/her time in a more efficient manner. The pre-assessments are based on Bandura's Self-Efficacy for Self-Regulated Learning (Bandura, 2006) and the Swedish version of Assessment of Time Management Skills (ATMS-S) scales (Janeslätt et al., 2018).

The first intervention is a goal setting worksheet with SMART verified goals. Students are to identify one personal, school, and career goal. Listed under each goal, students are asked to list 3 subtasks that will help them reach the big goal. Under each subtask, students are to list 3 smaller tasks that will help him/her achieve the previous listed subtask. This allows students to not only identify tasks, but also to see the details and time involved in accomplishing the goals.

The second intervention given is two-part: day reconstruction worksheet and reflection paper. Students are to choose any day of the week and reconstruct the day hour by hour and record each activity, mood level and company kept during the time. Once that is complete, students are to write a reflection paper regarding the day reconstruction. This intervention allows the students to identify patterns such as wasting time versus taking a break and/or mood patterns when completing different tasks.

Third and final intervention is also two-part: picture submission of daily planner and another reflection paper. At the beginning of the class, students are to purchase a planner. No instructions regarding this planner are given (i.e. type, brand, ability to make notes within it,

etc.). Two weeks before the assignment is due, students are asked to write down each upcoming activity and/or due dates for school. Student are asked to write a reflection paper regarding the planner that is chosen. The some of the questions for the reflection paper include: how and why was this specific planner chosen, is it helpful, does it help decrease stress while using it, and will they be using the planner in the future?

Once all interventions are complete, students will take the same post-assessments (Bandura & ATMS-S) with a three qualitative questions regarding the interventions. The goal of the interventions are to assist students in developing time management skills that will allow for increased productivity in both the classroom and workplace while decreasing academic procrastination.

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