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The relationship between time management skills and the academic performance of nursing students at university of kerbala, Iraq

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Abstract: Time management is a fundamental factor for academic success, particularly in disciplines that require a balance between theoretical and practical aspects, such as nursing. This study aimed to explore the relationship between time management skills and the academic performance of nursing students at the University of Kerbala.

A descriptive-analytical study was conducted on 260 nursing students from both morning and evening programs. A structured questionnaire was used, consisting of two sections: socio-demographic and academic data, and the Student Time Management Scale (STMS), which includes 28 items categorized into four domains.

The findings revealed that the majority of students (71.5%) demonstrated moderate time management skills, while 14.2% exhibited either poor or good skills.ꞏKey weaknesses were identified in areas such as daily prioritization and preparation for activities. Regarding academic performance, most students achieved relatively high grades, with 30% attaining a "Very Good" GPA and 22% achieving "Excellent," reflecting generally good academic performance.

Results revealed that 71.5% of students demonstrated moderate time management skills, with weaknesses observed in essential areas such as goal setting, prioritization, and routine control. Despite these deficiencies, no statistically significant correlation was found between time management skills and academic performance (ρ = 0.019, p = 0.756). Additionally, socio-demographic factors, such as age, gender, marital status, and income, did not show any meaningful associations with time management skills or academic performance.

The conclusion of the study highlights that factors such as motivation, stress management, and study environment may have a more significant influence on academic outcomes compared to time management skills alone. To address the identified gaps, the study recommends integrating structured time management training into nursing curricula. This approach can help students better manage their time and succeed academically by giving them the tools they need to deal with the demanding nature of their education.

Keywords: Study habits, nursing students, academic performance, and time management.

Introduction: Research on the connection between nursing students' academic achievement and time management is crucial. For nursing students, who encounter particular difficulties during their academic journey, efficient time management is frequently associated with lower academic stress and better academic results (Sekizler et al., 2022). This shows that there is a positive correlation between those skills and academic performance. An example would be the study conducted by Ghiasvand et al. highlighting that teaching time management skills will reduce academic anxiety and boost students' interest in study (Ghiasvand et al., 2017). Kulkarni discovered a significant association between time management and GPA in medical students, inferring that improved time management approach relates to increased academic performance (Kulkarni, 2020). Additionally, Alshutwi et al. illustrated a positive relationship between time management abilities and academic performance in nursing students, supporting the idea that enhanced time management contributes to enhanced academic outcomes (Alshutwi et al., 2019).

Furthermore, the influence of time management reaches beyond academic outcomes that include the management of stress. Mirzaei et al. observed that nursing students frequently encounter significant stress stemming from their academic obligations, and that proficient time management strategies can alleviate this stress (Mirzaei et al., 2012). Others highlight the importance of managing academic stress levels to sustain academic performance in nursing students. Effectively managing time may reduce feelings of being overwhelmed, especially in nursing education, where the curriculum is both rigorous and demanding (Pacheco-Castillo et al., 2021).

In addition, the association between time management and academic performance is clarified by research exploring the wider context of academic stress. Lavoie-Tremblay et al. found that first-year nursing students face considerable stress while adapting to university life, and that effective time management can help eliminate this transition (Lavoie-Tremblay et al., 2021). In the same direction, Costa et al. discovered that nursing students who effectively manage their time are more adept at coping with the stressors correlated with their academic environment (Costa et al., 2013).

Overall, the evidence indicates that capable time management plays a vital role in improving academic outcomes for nursing students. Enhancing motivation and reducing stress through effective time management skills can significantly improve academic performance, highlighting its importance in nursing education programs.

METHODOLOGY

Overview

This section shows the research methods utilized in this study. It delineates the research concept, target population and sample, development and validation of the research instrument, and the data analysis methodologies applied. This method provides a full understanding of the research framework and the processes used during data collection and analysis, enhancing the results' veracity and reliability.

The Study Design

A descriptive study was undertaken from September to December 2024 to investigate the correlation between time management and academic performance among nursing students at the University of Karbala. The descriptive design was selected for its capacity to examine the relationship between the specified variables without influencing the study's context. This design made the collection of accurate and adequate data regarding students' current time management abilities, giving a clear understanding of the challenges and opportunities for enhancing academic performance.

Population

The target population for this study consisted of all nursing students enrolled at the University of Kerbala, with a total of 701 students, including 262 in the morning program and 439 in the evening program. A sample of 260 students was selected from various academic years and levels of study.

Setting of the Sample:

The sample setting for this study was the University of Kerbala, Iraq, with nursing students enrolled in both the morning and evening programs. A convenience sampling method was used, where students were selected based on availability and willingness to participate. Data was collected through an online survey using Google Forms, allowing participants to respond remotely.

Study Instrument

The study employed a structured questionnaire divided into two sections. The first section collected socio-demographic data, including age, gender, academic year, type of study (morning/evening), monthly income adequacy, marital status, residential status, additional responsibilities, part-time work, participation in activities, and academic performance (percentage or GPA). The second section assessed time management skills using the Student Time Management Scale (STMS) developed by Balamurugan (2013). This scale, validated with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.885, includes 28 items grouped into four domains: scheduling and prioritizing, planning and goal setting, reviewing and record keeping, and organizing and controlling. Responses were rated on a 6-point Likert scale, providing detailed insights into students' time management strategies.

Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

Validity of the Questionnaire: To assess the content validity of the study instrument, the tool was presented to a panel of eight experts in nursing education to review the questionnaire to ensure that it effectively measures time management skills and academic performance and to assess the validity of the content. Modifications were made based on the experts' feedback, to make the questionnaire more suitable and understandable for participants.

Pilot Study: A pilot study was conducted to evaluate the reliability of the research instrument. It was applied to 30 nursing students from different academic stages during the period of 16 to 26 September 2024. The purpose was to identify any issues related to question clarity or relevance. Each participant took approximately 10 to 15 minutes to complete the

questionnaire. The pilot study sample was excluded from the final study sample.

Reliability of the Instrument: The internal consistency of the questionnaire items was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, which provided a strong reliability indicator for the instrument (α = 0.88). The findings demonstrated an adequate level of internal consistency and reliability, confirming the instrument's measurability.

Data Collection

Data collection took place from October to November 2024, commencing after the study received approval from the ethics committee. The study data were collected through a questionnaire that was converted into a Google Form and shared online with student groups across all stages, ensuring accessibility for all participants. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to their inclusion in the study sample.

The questionnaire remained open for responses until the required sample size was achieved. Upon completion of the data collection process, the responses were exported to Microsoft Excel and subsequently analyzed using SPSS software. To ensure the privacy of participants, the option to collect email addresses in the online questionnaire was disabled, and all responses were anonymized.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using Version 22.0 of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics, encompassing the mean, standard deviation, frequencies, and percentages, were utilized to characterize and delineate the sample's features. Inferential statistics, including Pearson's correlation coefficient (r), were employed to evaluate the strength and direction of the relationship between the independent variable (time management skills) and the dependent variable (academic performance). The significance of the correlation was evaluated using a p-value threshold of ≤ 0.05, considered statistically significant. Additionally, categorical variables were analyzed to explore their distributions and potential relationships within the dataset.

Ethical Considerations

The study followed ethical guidelines by obtaining approval from the University of Kerbala College of Nursing and ensuring the confidentiality and anonymity of participants throughout the research process. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and their participation was voluntary. The study also ensured that participants could withdraw at any time without any consequences. Data were securely stored and used solely for the purposes of this research.

Administrative Arrangements

The study's protocol and formal approval to perform it were obtained by the University of Kerbala College of Nursing, then the agreement of the scientific departments in the college, and the participant's students' agreement was obtained by writing through the paragraph of participant agreement that found with research instrument.

RESULTS

Table (1): Distribution of Students according to their Socio-demographic Characteristics

List	Characteristics		F	%
1	**Age (year) M±SD= 21.3 ± 4.8**	17 – 26	238	91.5
		27 – 36	15	5.8
		37 – 46	7	2.7
2	**Sex**	Male	85	32.7
		Female	175	67.3
3	**Grade**	First	102	39.2
		Second	73	28.1
		Third	44	16.9
		Fourth	41	15.8
4	**Study**	Morning	110	42.3
		Evening	150	57.7
5	**Perceived family income**	Adequate	115	44.2
		Partially adequate	115	44.2
		Inadequate	30	11.5
6	**Marital status**	Unmarried	224	86.2
		Married	28	10.8
		Divorced	5	1.9

		Widowed	3	1.2
7	**Living with**	With family	234	90.0
		Student dorm	12	4.6
		With relatives	12	4.6
		Private housing	2	.8
8	**Responsibility**	Yes	81	31.2
		No	179	68.8
9	**Work**	Yes	57	21.9
		No	203	78.1
10	**Activity**	Yes	91	35.0
		No	169	65.0
11	**Tools**	Phone	90	34.6
		Papers	98	37.7
		Nothing	72	27.7

f: Frequency, %: Percentage, M: Mean, SD: Standard deviation

The table shows the socio-demographic distribution of students participating in the study. The majority of students are aged 17-26 years (91.5%) and are predominantly female (67.3%). Most students are in their first year of study (39.2%), with a nearly even distribution between morning (42.3%) and evening (57.7%) sessions. Regarding perceived family income, 44.4% reported it as partially adequate. In terms of marital status, 86.2% of students are unmarried, with most living with their families (90%). Additionally, the majority of students do not bear additional responsibilities (68.8%) and do not work (78.1%).

Table (2): Assessment Items Student Time Management Scale (28 Items)

List	Items	M	S. D	Assessment
1	I postpone the tasks.	3.85	1.752	Moderate
2	I give up easily, when I can't succeed in completing my tasks.	4.62	1.662	Moderate
3	I use diary for planning my activities.	2.92	1.784	Poor
4	I modify my short-term goals according to the demands.	2.20	1.349	Poor
5	I keep my bag ready for the next day.	2.34	1.656	Poor
6	I set priorities for my daily tasks.	2.05	1.346	Poor
7	I write reminder notes every day.	3.30	1.756	Moderate
8	I keep record of completed tasks.	3.38	1.926	Moderate
9	I make a list of things to be done every day.	3.23	1.885	Moderate
10	I plan for tasks a week in advance.	3.47	1.906	Moderate
11	I have long-term goals in my mind.	2.30	1.573	Poor
12	My plans get cancelled at times.	2.45	1.348	Poor
13	I get stuck in daily time scheduling.	3.22	1.613	Moderate
14	I consider time has high value in life.	1.92	1.346	Poor
15	I review my daily activities.	2.75	1.633	Poor
16	I find it difficult to keep my schedule.	2.67	1.511	Poor
17	I take too many tasks at the same time.	2.50	1.541	Poor
18	I have set short-term goals for my future.	2.43	1.591	Poor
19	I feel I spend too much time on entertainment.	3.22	1.763	Moderate
20	I am punctual to school.	1.79	1.257	Poor
21	I have difficulty in completing my tasks.	2.56	1.447	Poor
22	I am bored with my daily activities.	2.70	1.575	Poor
23	I think scheduling the task is waste of time.	4.53	1.682	Moderate
24	I allot time for my hobbies.	3.22	1.738	Moderate

25	I submit my home works, assignments etc. well in advance.	2.78	1.610	Poor
26	I feel unimportant tasks consume my time.	2.59	1.707	Poor
27	I have control over my daily routine works.	2.49	1.451	Poor
28	I adopt short cut ways to finish the tasks.	2.42	1.506	Poor

M: Mean, s.d:Std. Deviation , Poor (1 - 2.99), Moderate (3 - 4.99), Good (5 - 6)

Table (2) highlights the assessment of students' time management skills based on 28 items. The results show a predominance of poor evaluations in most items, with the lowest score in this category being "I am punctual to school" (M = 1.79) and the highest score being " I use diary for planning my activities " (M = 2.92). In the moderate category, the lowest score was for three items (M = 3.22), while the highest score was for " I give up easily, when I can't succeed in completing my tasks " (M = 4.62). The absence of items in the "good" category emphasizes the urgent need to enhance time management skills. This can be achieved by fostering awareness of the importance of planning, goal setting, and effectively organizing daily activities.

Table (3): Overall Percentage of Distribution by Time Management Skill Levels

Time Management Skills	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std. Deviation
Poor skills	37	14.2	1.62	.494
Moderate skills	186	71.5		
Good skills	37	14.2		
Total	260	100.0		

Poor (28 - 74), Moderate (75 - 121), Good (122 - 168)

The table presents the overall distribution of students based on their time management skill levels. The majority of students (71.5%) demonstrate moderate time management skills, while equal proportions of students exhibit poor (14.2%) and good (14.2%) time management skills.

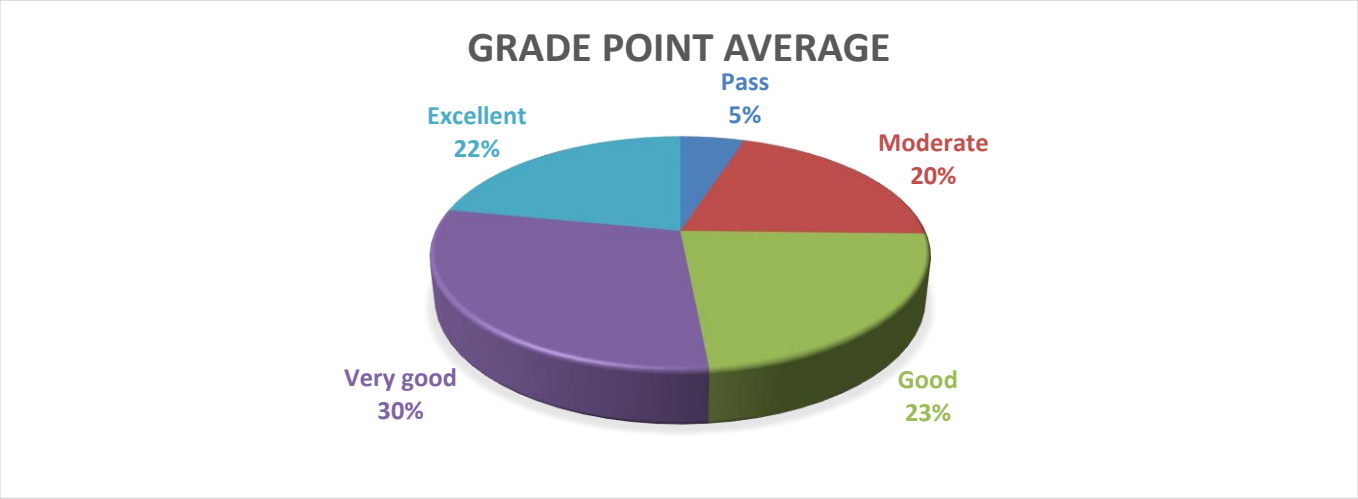

Figure (1): Overall assessment Grade point Average

Figure (1): Distribution of students based on their Grade Point Average (GPA). The largest proportion of students achieved a 'Very Good' GPA (30%), followed by 'Good' (23%) and 'Excellent' (22%). Moderate performance was observed in 20% of the students, while only 5% achieved a passing GPA. This distribution indicates a generally high academic performance among the students.

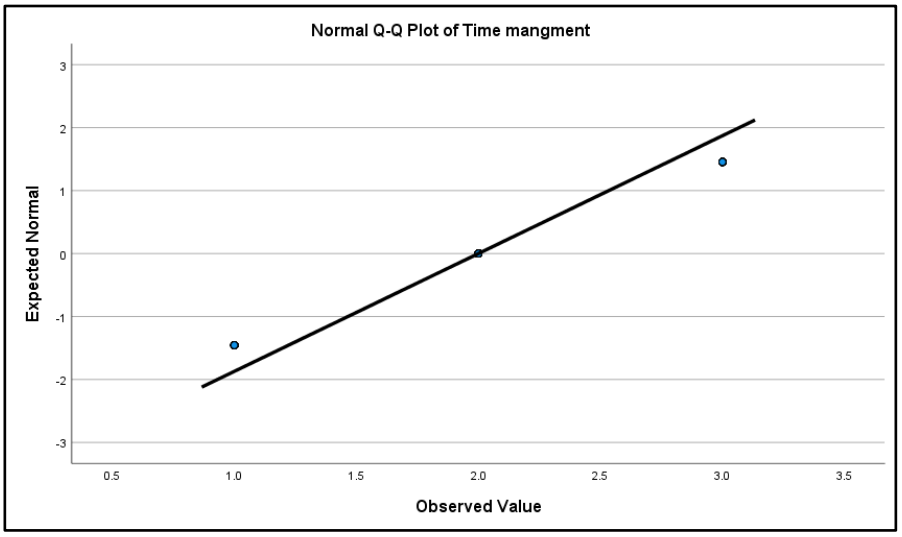

Figure (2): Normal Q-Q Plot for Time Management

Figure (2): Normal Q-Q Plot for Time Management. The plot illustrates the alignment of observed values of time management skills with the expected normal distribution. Points close to the diagonal line indicate that the data approximates a normal distribution, while deviations from the line suggest departures from normality

Table (4) Correlation Between Academic performance and Time Management Skills

Correlations	N. Sample	Correlation Coefficient (ρ)	Sig. (2-tailed)
Academic performance	260	.019	.756

ρ: Spearman's rho Correlation, p < 0.05 considered statistically significant

Table (4): Correlation Between Academic Performance and Time Management Skills. The Spearman's correlation coefficient (ρ = 0.019) indicates a very weak positive relationship between academic performance and time management skills among the 260 participants. The p-value (Sig. = 0.756) suggests that this correlation is not statistically significant (p > 0.05), implying no meaningful association between the two variables in this sample.

Table (5) Correlation between Academic Performance and Time Management Skills Based on Socio-demographic Characteristics

Socio-demographic Characteristic		Time management skills				Correlation
		Weak	Moderate	Strong	Total	
Age (year) **M±SD= 21.3 ± 4.8**	17 – 26	90	147	1	238	**r= 0.087 P-value= 0.208 Weak, not significant**
	27 – 36	7	8	0	15	
	37 – 46	3	4	0	7	
Sex	Male	33	52	0	85	**r=0.072 P-value= 0.25 Very weak, not significant**
	Female	67	107	1	175	

Grade	First	44	57	1	102	**r=0.083 P-value= 0.091 Weak, borderline significant**
	Second	28	49	0	73	
	Third	15	29	0	44	
	Fourth	13	28	0	41	
Study	Morning	43	67	0	110	**r=0.07 P-value= 0.131 Very weak, not significant**
	Evening	57	92	1	150	
Perceived family income	Adequate	45	69	1	115	**r=0.067 P-value= 0.143 Very weak, not significant**
	Partially adequate	43	72	0	115	
	Inadequate	12	18	0	30	
Marital status	Unmarried	88	135	1	224	**r=0.071 P-value= 0.128 Very weak, not significant**
	Married	7	21	0	28	
	Divorced	4	1	0	5	
	Widowed	1	2	0	3	
Living with	With family	85	148	1	234	**r=0.068 P-value= 0.138 Very weak, not significant**
	Student dorm	9	3	0	12	
	With relatives	4	8	0	12	
	Private housing	2	0	0	2	
Responsibility	Yes	31	49	1	81	**r=0.074 P-value= 0.117 Weak, not significant**
	No	69	110	0	179	
Work	Yes	21	36	0	57	**r=0.069 P-value= 0.134 Very weak, not significant**
	No	79	123	1	203	
Activity	Yes	44	47	0	91	**r=0.071 P-value= 0.126 Very weak, not significant**
	No	56	112	1	169	
Tools	Phone	21	68	1	90	**r=0.069 P-value= 0.136 Very weak, not significant**
	Papers	48	50	0	98	
	Nothing	31	41	0	72	
	Total	100	159	1	260	

r represents the Spearman's Correlation coefficient, measuring the strength and direction of the relationship between two variables. A p-value of < 0.05 suggests a statistically significant relationship.

The table presents the correlation between academic performance and time management skills based on socio-demographic characteristics. The analysis, conducted using Spearman's Correlation, revealed very weak correlation values ($r \leq 0.1$) and non-significant p-values ($p > 0.05$) for all variables. These findings suggest no substantial or statistically significant relationship between academic performance, time management skills, and the socio-demographic factors studied, such as age, gender, academic year, monthly income, and additional responsibilities.

DISCUSSION

1. Demographic and Social Information of Students

The majority of students (91.5%) were aged between 17 and 26 years, representing a predominantly young population in nursing education. This transitional age group often faces challenges in adapting to academic pressures and higher education demands, which might explain their moderate time management skills. Kulkarni (2020) observed that older students tend to exhibit better time management skills due to their maturity and life experiences, a finding that contrasts

with this study, where age did not significantly correlate with time management. Females constituted the majority (67.3%) of the sample, which aligns with global trends in nursing education. Female students are often reported to possess better organizational and time management skills than males, as highlighted in Kaya et al. (2012). Nevertheless, Al Khatib (2014) found no significant gender differences in time management, suggesting that personal habits and motivation may play a more critical role.

Regarding academic year distribution, 39.2% of students were in their first year, followed by 28.1% in the second year, 16.9% in the third year, and 15.8% in the fourth year. This suggests that most participants were still adjusting to university-level academic demands, which could explain the observed gaps in time management. Supporting this, Mirzaei et al. (2012) found that first-year nursing students frequently struggle with time management due to the sudden increase in workload, whereas senior students tend to develop stronger organizational skills over time.

Students in the evening program accounted for 57.7% of the sample, compared to 42.3% in the morning program. Evening students often face additional responsibilities, such as part-time jobs, which might limit their ability to manage time effectively. Adams and Blair (2019) similarly found that evening students frequently struggle to balance work and academics, reducing their time management efficiency.

Regarding perceived family income, 44.2% of students reported their income as adequate, 44.2% as partially adequate, and 11.5% as inadequate. Deng et al. (2022) highlighted that students from families with inadequate income often experience additional stress, which negatively impacts time management. However, in this study, income levels did not significantly influence time management or academic performance, possibly due to family support. Most students were unmarried (86.2%), which likely allows them more flexibility in managing their academic tasks without additional family responsibilities. Supporting this, Pacheco-Castillo et al. (2021) noted that married students often face competing demands between family and academics, leading to poorer time management.

The majority of students (90%) lived with their families, while smaller proportions resided in dormitories or private housing. Living with family likely provides emotional and financial support, mitigating stress and facilitating better time management. However, Costa et al. (2013) suggested that students living independently are more likely to develop organizational skills due to the need for self-reliance. Only 31.2% of students reported having additional responsibilities, such as caregiving or familial duties. Mirzaei et al. (2012) observed that students with fewer non-academic responsibilities tend to focus more effectively on their studies and manage their time better, which aligns with this study's findings.

Approximately 21.9% of students were employed, while 78.1% were not working. Adams and Blair (2019) reported that working students face significant challenges balancing work and academic responsibilities, leading to weaker time management practices, a trend reflected in this study. Participation in extracurricular activities was reported by 35% of students, while 65% did not engage in any activities. Kulkarni (2020) noted that involvement in extracurriculars can positively influence time management, as it encourages prioritization and better task allocation. The low participation rate in this study might reflect the rigorous demands of nursing programs or limited availability of activities.

Finally, students used various tools for time management: 37.7% used paper-based tools, 34.6% relied on phones, and 27.7% did not use any tools. Paper-based tools were associated with better academic performance, supporting Ghiasvand et al. (2017), who found that structured tools like planners enhance organizational abilities. In contrast, reliance on phones may lead to distractions, reducing efficiency.

2. Time Management Skills and Their Levels Among Students

The majority of students (71.5%) demonstrated moderate time management skills, while equal proportions (14.2%) showed poor or good skills. Weak areas were observed in critical aspects such as setting daily priorities, preparing for the next day, and maintaining control over daily routines. These findings indicate a gap in basic planning and organizational skills among students. A supporting study by Kaya et al. (2012) similarly found moderate levels of time management among nursing students, attributing this to the intense theoretical and practical demands of nursing programs, which leave little room for skill development outside of academic tasks. However, Adams and Blair (2019) found that students with stronger time management skills performed better academically, emphasizing that structured planning and effective prioritization are directly linked to academic success. The differences may stem from the limited exposure to formal time management training in Iraq, coupled with a lack of integration of these skills into the nursing curriculum. Addressing these deficiencies through workshops and support programs could help bridge the gap and improve students' ability

to manage their time effectively.

3. The Relationship Between Time Management Skills and Academic Performance

The study found no statistically significant relationship between time management skills and academic performance (Spearman's ρ = 0.019, p = 0.756). This suggests that specific strategies, rather than overall time management skills, might influence academic outcomes in this context. Supporting this finding, Alshutwi et al. (2019) similarly reported weak or non-significant correlations between time management and academic performance, suggesting that other factors like motivation, study environment, or stress management may play a larger role in determining academic success. On the other hand, Blegur et al. (2019) found a strong positive correlation between time management and academic performance, highlighting the importance of structured time allocation and planning in achieving better results.

4. Correlation Between Academic Performance and Time Management Skills Based on Socio-demographic Characteristics

The study revealed no substantial or statistically significant correlations between academic performance, time management skills, and socio-demographic factors such as age, gender, academic year, study program, marital status, or family income. A supporting study by Pacheco-Castillo et al. (2021) found that socio-demographic factors like age and gender had minimal influence on time management, aligning with the findings of the current study. In contrast, Kulkarni (2020) observed that older students often displayed better time management skills due to their life experiences and ability to handle responsibilities, which contrasts with this study's findings.

CONCLUSION

The study explored the relationship between time management and academic performance among nursing students at the University of Kerbala. The findings indicate that while the majority of students demonstrated moderate time management skills, significant gaps were evident in key areas such as setting priorities, preparing for daily tasks, and maintaining control over their routines. Despite these gaps, no statistically significant correlation was found between time management skills and academic performance, suggesting that other factors, such as motivation, stress management, and study environment, may have a more substantial impact on academic outcomes. Additionally, the analysis revealed no meaningful association between time management skills, academic performance, and socio-demographic characteristics, including age, gender, and income. These results highlight the need for targeted interventions to enhance time management practices, such as incorporating formal training programs and support mechanisms into the nursing curriculum. By addressing these deficiencies, nursing students can better navigate the rigorous demands of their education, potentially improving both their time management and academic success.

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