Time management for work-life and study-life balance[*]

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Abstract

This article aimed to review about Time Management, which included concepts, theories, and related researches. The article directly focused on the effects of time management on work-life and study-life balance. In addition, the author had conducted a minor research on myself by employing behavioral modification technique such as implementing positive reinforcers and frequency collecting table. The main objective was to try the time management techniques based on "Pickle Jar Theory". The result revealed that taking time management program set along with the behavioral modification technique seemed effective. The case (the author myself) could finish assignment on time, have more spare time for leisure activities, have less stress, and feel happier. This article could be a tool to help people especially students and workers manage their study and work behaviors effectively in to ultimately have a work-life or study-life balance.

Keywords: Time management, Work-life balance, Study-life balance

Introduction

"*Time is running*", this sentence makes us recognize more about how to utilize time wisely. Although, we are in Thailand, it is inevitable that we are used to the sentence "*Time is walking*". From this difference, running and walking, Thai workers seem to be tougher in order to manage their time schedule which is very crucial key to make success in their lives. Consequently, the lack of work life balance would appear in some cultural societies. This certain crisis can cause numerous social problems.

God has given all of us the same amount of time so we are not able to ask for more time but we can manage it. However, there is one well-known question "How can we improve our time management skill?"

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Work-life balance (WLB)

Many people think of work-life balance only in the framework of what the company does for individuals. However, work-life balance is a two prong approach. The other prong of work-life balance, which many individuals overlook, relates to what individuals do for themselves (Parsons, 2002).

According to Byrne (2005), "Work-life balance is something individuals feel their lives are fulfilled both inside and outside of work." From his definition, it can be said that WLB is the key for attaining the happiness.

The other issue of WLB in public health aspect is the extent of conflicting responsibilities and requirements at work and in one's personal life. Attention to the lack of a balance between work and home or personal-life became particularly relevant to woman during the latter half of the twentieth century who attempted to strike a balance between gender norms about women's role in the household and changing opportunities for women in the workplace (Kirch, 2008). This explanation focuses on the women's role which should be taken on household in general but nowadays gender equality has caused more numbers of women in work society.

WLB is the balance between different parts of life (Tucholka and Weese, 2007). Moreover, it is about developing working practices that benefit both businesses and their employees (Emmott, 2000). It would be concluded that work-life balance is not about how much time they spend working or non-working but it refers to how people manipulate their time on work, rest, and empowering others. It cannot be refused that being work life balance is related to time management, if people can handle with countless responsibilities by time management skill, it will lead to work life balance.

Study-life balance

It can be said that students have experienced anxiety due to the increase in independence and responsibilities. Getting separated from home family, trying to maintain academic achievement, and accommodating to new social environment are prone to be significant causes of anxiety and tension (Ross et al, 1999). This emotional distress has been resulted from imbalance of study life or school life. Therefore, to have a study-life balance, students should be sophisticated time managers. Kaushar (2013) revealed that time management skill played a crucial role of achieving high academic performance. Similarly to Thai students, students nowadays normally spend more time on social network, chatting, playing games, and hanging out with friends that steal their time to complete academic

assignment or gathering any other valuable experience. In addition, living without appropriate guidance and vivid life targets are also the hindrance to improve time management skill.

Time Management

Time management is prioritizing to rank in order of importance (Kahle, 2003). To be powerful time manager, people must apprehend what should be done beforehand. In addition, time for taking a rest should also be well allocated. Therefore, it refers to a series of skills, tools, and techniques used to manage time in order to achieve whatever goals people have set. Smith and Smith (1990) said that the word "Time Management" is often used to describe what administrators should do in order to accomplish whatever tasks effectively.

There are some effective ways helping people manage their use of time properly that would diminish the stress from study and work. Apparently, it is also related to planning and giving time for making the things done appropriately and it can be called "Time management".

It is not only idea, but also how to demeanor for attaining to the goals (Hochheiser, 1998). Not only ones who are working in any organization but also students of most ages need this skill to propel them to reach the set goal. It is very essential for students because time management skill can alleviate them from big stress of piles of assignments. As nursing field, it was revealed that nursing students allotted most of their time to academic tasks in order to relieve their stress (Mirzaei, Oskouie, and Rafii, 2012). Consequently, students' learning performance must be better when they improve their time management skill that coincides with the study of Aduke (2015), which discovered that procrastination, prioritization, and planning were strong indicators affecting students' academic performance in relation to time management. There are various time management techniques to help enhance people's learning and working performance and lead to work-life balance according to Jackson (2009).

Set realistic goals: most people try to set their short-term and long- term goals, but in many cases, their short-term tasks supersede long-term ones so that some of them might never achieve their lifetime goals. The recommendation is that they should set three to five lifetime goals. Moreover, listing ten things to do for next week is a helpful tip. Importantly, compare that those lists relate to the lifetime goals or not. To clarify, it is essential to elevate lifetime goals to higher priorities and do something to accomplish them.

Get organized: two basic components of organization are organizing stuff and organizing time. There are a mountain of files or documents at people workstation so to reduce those amounts and worker's stress, they should throw out items that are not needed such as e-mails, papers, or files. The organization or filing is ongoing process so it is necessary

to delete complicating tasks (unnecessary) in order to finish this process easily in the future. In addition, calendar management is such an important thing to do. Most people allow their time schedule to manage them. Turn this crisis to be a chance by learning to manage schedule to some degree because it can help them accomplish their goals without tense stress. By creating to-do list, people can prioritize their tasks to be simple enough to be completed.

Delegate: although one obvious drawback of delegation is people have to check the work done by others or sometimes it takes a longer time to explain how to finish those tasks effectively, remember some tasks are better or more easily to be handled by others. Hence, do not waste time working on whatever stuff that someone else can do it more easily.

Relax and recharge: In this rapidly changing era, it is a high competition world so sparing time for vacation, mental downtime, and relaxation with friends and family is the great way to empower people's health and mind.

Stop feeling guilty: nothing good comes from unreasonable sense of guilt. It always happens when someone cannot achieve the goal in time. People normally spend time worrying about their delay, however this feeling would lead to stress and anxiety which are the key hindrance for success.

Time management is essentially about spending the hours and minutes in the day as effectively as possible (Roberts, 1998), so to get start to be an excellent time manager, people can apply the techniques which are fit them and their life style. However, there are two vivid time management stumbling blocks; procrastination and perfectionism.

Concepts of Time Management

Personal time management skills are very significant for accomplishing all tasks on time; people who are keen on these skills can be the effective persons. Flippo and Caverly (2009) said that the concept of "Time Management" is off target. In academic, workplace, and social settings the question of how to manage time becomes one of "how do we manage knowledge?" Knowledge management then is the primary goal, and it includes managing print and electronic sources students' access and organizing key concepts supported by details.

Setting goals, delegating, decision-making and prioritizing are key elements to effective time management. It employs time organization, future planning, activity schedule, to-do lists and avoiding procrastination and time-wasting tasks. Every employer wants to have employees that manage their time wisely to produce maximum output. The concept of time management cannot be effectively dealt with unless strategies for setting goals are included in its framework. Time management consists of goal setting; taking actions every day to reach those goals; making sure each action is focused, relevant and results orientated; prioritizing

which actions need to be done first or are the most important; and rethinking your goals when productivity suffers. Students must be an exact group that need to be trained or advised about this issue.

The aims of time management which can been synthesized from key elements are to ensure people that they can meet ones' certain goal, effectively assign task responsibility and authority to others, help people solve the problems by choosing one from other probable alternatives, let person finish all tasks on time, and make people happy with their lives and construct work life balance for ones.

Workers always let themselves into document-mountained desk, they never forget to produce money and reputation but they forget to balance their time and life, indeed, they do not recognize the importance of time management. As a result, they have been dominated by time-limited everyday study and jobs. Hence, time management concepts are the answers for some who want to make their life balanced.

Interestingly, it is quite useful for students to manage their study-life balance with time management skills

Time Management Theories

The theories can help general people comprehend what they are doing with the time in their everyday life and how to enhance things. Actually, there are a lot of Time Management theories and related theories that have been employed in any fields; however, I would like to introduce some. The first theory is Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs. This is a great theory since it is simple and easy to relate to everybody's everyday life. There are five levels each describing a state in life. The five levels are often thought of in a pyramid structure. Level 1 is built on level 2 and the level 2 is built on level 3 and so on. Level 5 then is the foundation level. Kreitner (2007) said Maslow's theory has strongly influenced those interested in work behavior. His message was simply this: people always have needs, and when one need is relatively fulfilled, others emerge in a predictable sequence to take its place. So his theory, it can be seen the relevance of Maslow to the use of time. If people do not have a job then they are going to be unable to focus on building friendships and self-esteem. It is quite hard to fix that security issue. So in terms of using time effectively, they need to look at this one of the time management theories and figure out where they are in the pyramid.

It can be understood that people get close to the word "Time Management" because it is necessary when people wants to reach their diverse needs. Furthermore, to achieve the last level (level 5), Self-Actualization, this level is hard for people to carry out in their lifetime so using time management techniques benefits easily to achieve this level.

The next theory is simple one of time management theories, Pickle Jar Theory; it is always mentioned when talking about time management. The main idea of the theory is that naturally, people usually confront with some most important tasks and also others that they have to do even taking not too much time. For example, working in the office, running their own business and taking care of children are the major roles in one's daily life, whereas, walking a dog or washing a car is a minor responsibility. Additionally, people might have to do other things such as paying for bills, seeing a movie, and visiting relatives. From this example, the Pickle Jar Theory illustrates and uses the analogy. To illustrate, imagine you have 1 pickle jar, then you fill it with 3 big rocks, these rocks mean to your main jobs. Next, you can put small marbles which can fit in the left spaces between the rocks, small marbles mean to your other less important tasks. After that, you put sand and water in to the pickle jar until it is full, sand and water can be compared as other responsibilities that you have to handle them. If you are good time manager, you can finish all things in the pickle jar on time and be happy with your life. This one of the time management theories is really about setting priorities. Prioritizing is one of the time management's key elements.

80/20 principle (Pareto Principle) is also one famous concept of time management. The 80/20 Rule means that in anything a few (20 percent) are vital and many (80 percent) are trivial. In Pareto's case it meant 20 percent of the people owned 80 percent of the wealth. In Juran's initial work he identified 20 percent of the defects causing 80 percent of the problems. Project Managers know that 20 percent of the work (the first 10 percent and the last 10 percent) consume 80 percent of people's time and resources. They can apply the 80/20 rule to almost everything, from the science of management to the physical world (Reh, 2010).

80/20 rule promises smarter work than harder work, that means 80% of your product comes from 20% of your effort, people will not get tired if they can manage their time and plan their work wisely, ones must get a lot produces by spending less endeavor. This rule reminds me as an author of this article to think about managing time effectively.

Researches on Time Management

In order to be successful person, ones should improve their self-discipline maybe by managing personal schedule well. Roberts (1998) stated that most people think there are more things they need to do, or would like to do, than they have time for in their life. This happens a lot at work, and often results in working overtime, frustration and stress and feelings of guilt or panic if deadlines are not met. Good time management will not remove the inevitable pressures and conflicts that arise in most jobs. But it should help make the working day more satisfying and calm.

Never mind being tied with several works, time management is a key to work life balance (WLB). The more people understand Time Management the more they know how to touch WLB. The study of Sittisart (1999), Effects of Time Management Skill Training on Nursing Students' stress and Time Management Ability, shows that Nursing students who had practiced managing their time had less stress than the control group who had worked only with documents. Besides, the experimental group had more ability in time management.

Everyone can develop an ability in time management by adding its techniques into your daily plan. As a result, the stress would be dwindled that can help people balance their life especially study life and work life.

Another study about time management is Webber (1977), he collected the data of Americans who had comprehended in using time by had them answer questions about 2-3 minutes. Consequently, the study found that most people in western America combined time management principle with their routine and they also added that time is very crucial to make the success. People who are aware of managing time would have more spare time to enjoy their life which is the concept of study life and work life balance.

Singhasiri (1999) conducted a research on "Time Management of nursing directors in community Hospitals of the Misnistry of Public Health", the purpose was to study and compare time spending and time management of nursing directors of various levels of experience in administration, services and research activities in various sizes community hospitals. The study found that nursing directors in hospitals of different sizes spent their time on administration and service differently. But with regard to academic activities such as research and profession, nursing directors of small hospitals spent more time on duty than the ones of large hospitals. From this comparison, it can be said that personal time management ability depends on one's foremost fieldwork and responsibilities.

There are diverse factors which concern with time management as in the study of "Factors related to Time Management of Public University Students in Bangkok Metropolis" (Karawak, 2005). The result of this research was as following:

1. Class was associated with analyzing time use and implementing plan.

2. Grade point average was associated with setting goal of time management, implementing plan and evaluating implementation.

There is also another research on time management. "Time Management Skill Development of Nursing Students Rangsit University" (Vitoonmetha, 2004), the main purposes of this research were to study the effect of time management skill development program on time management skill, stress and grade point average of nursing students Rangsit university. The research revealed that after taking the program, their stress declined whereas their G.P.A increased swiftly.

The stress is one that can interrupt work life balance in people, individual who implements time management techniques into their everyday life can get rid of the anxiety and work well on one's task. The same as Sittisart's mentioned before. The findings revealed that the program of this experimental research could diminish persons' stress and strengthen their time management skill.

Time management and Behavioral modification

From concepts of time management mentioned above, setting goals, delegating, decision-making and prioritizing are key elements to perfecting time management. All of these can be divided into several steps. I would like to recommend you the daily life-applied techniques for being wise time manager. The following steps are related to "Pickle Jar Theory" which can be used to prioritize your daily responsibilities.

I had modified my prioritizing behavior for four weeks. I used positive reinforcement technique to change my prioritizing pattern because I was a hard worker, in addition to studying course work at the university; I had to teach students every day, on work days from 3pm. to 11pm. and on weekends from 7am to 11pm. I taught them continually for whole day. As a result, I could not manage my 24hours a day well. From the situation above, the target of behavioral modification was to improve my life management ability which seemed to be my problem.

The objectives of this program were

1. To manage my time wisely.

2. To examine the effective of used techniques.

3. To increase my ability of finishing all works on time.

4. To decrease my stress which is from unhandled works.

Frequency collecting table had been used to check how many minutes a day that I could do my assignment (including assignments, reports and lesson plan for students). I had been collecting the data for 2 weeks and the result was as below:
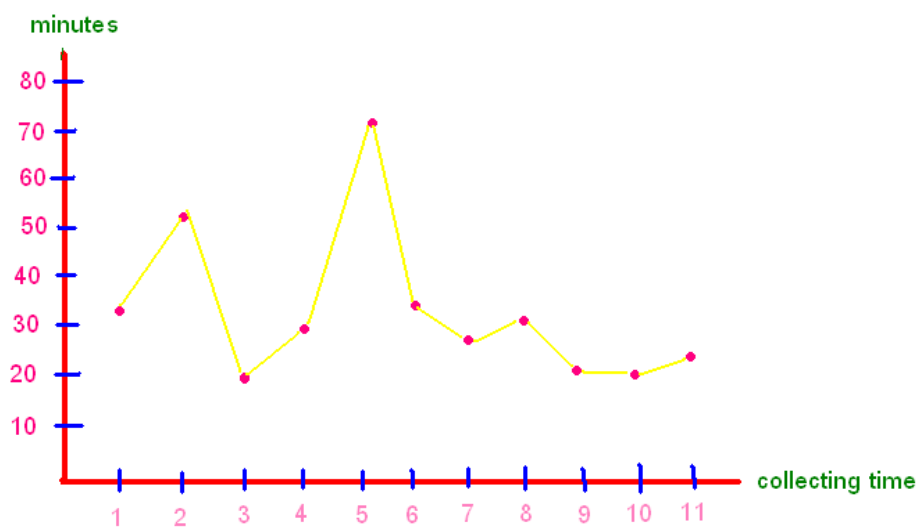
From this graph, it can be seen that I had just little time for working and the tendency of working periods had declined so I started the following process:

1. Make 1 week to-do-list.

2. List what I had to do daily.

3. Underline in red what I had not done yet.

4. Circle in blue what I had done for 30% up.

5. Mark each of my tasks with "1", "2", or "3", depending on its importance.

6. Try to finish the most important task as soon as possible but also do other tasks.

7. Scrutinize the list every 3 days for apposite adjustment.

8. Do not forget to write down the favorite activities on to-do-list.

9. Do meditation for 10 minutes daily at night.

On Sunday morning, I made the list for whole week then, I listed what I had to do daily. After that I did following as a showed process. After that, I had known the rank of important task. I would start doing the most important task and so on. Moreover, I set the goal for each day responsibility, for example, I would finish reading 2 research papers after finishing teaching (after 11pm.). Therefore, if I could achieve this target, I would reward myself, which could be defined as positive reinforcers. There were various positive reinforcers which were in the forms of external rewards such as time for playing game, chocolate, time for meeting with friends, time for watching movie, time for surfing internet, and snacks. All of these rewards were my favorites. Moreover, I always practiced meditation for 10 minutes before going to bed.

Results

After taking time management program, I could manage my time well. The indicators were as below

1. I could finish my assignment, which I had set on time.

2. I had enough spare time for getting exercise.

3. I had more time for some activities with my family and friends.

4. My anxiety and stress had been lessened.

5. I had enough time for revising my assignment.

6. I felt happier with my job (teaching) and my lessons at the university.

From these, it can be seen that I could manage my time that means this program is totally effective. This program consists of more than one technique; however, there is one important technique that is making to-do-list, which is for prioritizing time. This technique can be applied for other's work life.

Discussion

How can it help develop student's learning performance?

Being a sophisticated time manager means being a sophisticated student. The students, who find assignments and tests at school are too impossible to be accomplished, can develop their living by practicing prioritization. However, the skill might not be achieved if students leave all their work and assignment to be a long backlog. It will become a time trouble; hence they should initiate a time management approach at the beginning of the school year to create a plan beforehand. Regarding to Poser (2003), the time management cycle can be a guideline for those who want to achieve the set goal effectively. The cycle includes goal setting, time awareness and time tracking, planning, taking action, and time

shifting and adjusting. Each step contains useful technique to help students manage their study-life more easily.

For goal setting, dividing individuals' goals into time frames would help, however; whatever goals they set do not need to be accomplished, just think about any goals as many as possible for getting start early. The lists might seem exaggerated, but this number can help motivate students to embark their tasks without procrastination. This technique is the absolute starting point for further steps of goal achievement. Students will realize what the important aims to be focused while they have been reading the lists time to time before sub-dividing them into manageable pieces. According to Mercanlioglu (2010), setting priorities is one technique used along with listing goals. A, B, C system includes A= Highest priority, B= Important to be completed, but not absolutely essential for today, C= Nice if I can get to it.

In the matter of time awareness and time tracking, this is a reverse technique of to-do-list. Instead of noting down what to do, students have to note down their time usage patterns. With the vivid information of their own, they can track their time wisely. To illustrate, the students would find that the time they set to finish the report, they always end up chatting or hanging out with friends. Hence, time tracking has a potential to help them stay in shape. Some strategies are provided, for example, create two columns on a page of paper, the left side is written down about the plans of the week, whereas, the right side is written down the actual things they have done at that certain time. This can help figure out the time students waste on other things which lead them out of line.

For planning, according to Poser (2003), four planning tools are introduced. The tools include a monthly planner, which looks like a memory aid. Final exam date or report deadline is noted that means it helps students to think about how long each step of the task should take. Also, this can remind them to manage their time effectively. Another tool mentioned is weekly objectives list. This comprises to-do-list as well as decomposed tasks. Students have to list the objectives along with the practical activities with time estimate for each objective and examine themselves they whether or not complete each listed activities. Next is a weekly planner and a time log, students have to list their schedule such as lecture times, library times, times for extracurricular activities, and any appointment. The weekly constructed plans will help students make a decision when there is an unexpected situation with their own time

commitment. Additionally, do not forget to set time for each activity, nevertheless; it may be flexible and adjustable depending on experiences.

This is time for taking action. For the students, there might be any other distraction that entices them to be out of the schedule. Do not be worried, they can diminish the effect of distractions by focusing on the tasks listed on the plans. During the action, it is inevitable that adjusting the plans is needed to help accomplish the goals.

How can it help develop workers and organizations?

Can you suppose if you were a worker who had a bulk of documents on the desk? Prioritizing technique (Pickle Jar Theory) can help you delete stress. This technique can be applied into both study and work situation.

To-do-list is a very important technique. Using to-do-list is to prioritize one's tasks. According to Marshall (1999), one of the best ways to prioritize is to create a "to-do list." Creating the list can be very important because there are a few *do's* and *don'ts* to remember.

First, list all the tasks that need to be accomplished, and to be most efficient, rank them in order of importance. Remember to keep the list realistic. If the list is too long, it will be discouraging and overwhelming. Some tasks may need to be carried to the next day's list if they are not completed by the end of the day. If the high priority tasks are large, break them down into smaller jobs, which will be less overwhelming (Marshall, 1999).

The second step of prioritizing is asking *what is important* and *what is urgent*? When a task or job needs attention immediately, it is urgent. Something is important if it relates to people core values or motivations in life (Marshall, 1999). Every decision they make falls into one of four categories: 1.) Urgent and important 2.) Important, but not urgent 3.) Urgent, but not important and 4.) Neither important nor urgent.

Decisions that are *urgent and important* will need immediate attention and will impact life values. For example, people receive a telephone call that the conveyor belt at work has shut off, and they have to make a big presentation in two hours (Marshall, 1999). Both decisions need immediate attention, and both are important. Decisions that have no sense of immediacy are *important but not urgent.* For example, long-term strategic plans or associate evaluations are two cases of important decisions that need to be made but are not urgent. Decisions that do not relate to individuals' key values are *urgent, but not important*. For example, a colleague needs to talk to you about a client or the e-mail icon is flashing. All other decisions made in the workplace are *neither important nor urgent.* Examples of these decisions are reading the newspaper or surfing the Internet.

Once you are able to categorize your decisions you will be able to prioritize better, which should help you manage your time more efficiently.

From information above, to-do-list plays an important role for managing time so managers, supervisors and employees who cannot handle all responsibilities can use to-do-list to improve effectiveness of work and also decrease their stress.

I would like to illustrate the situation in one Garment Company. The economic crisis affected this company. As a result, a lot of employees had been fired out and the administrators bought a new machine, which could help reduce the capital for embarking business. So, supervisors had been assigned more tasks whereas employees had to finish various kinds of work on time. These increasing tasks would make them nervous thus prioritizing was very useful for them. The company tried to pursue employees to make to-do-list and let them present their own list in weekly conference. After this, the company informed the workers about the process of prioritizing their time. 3 months later, all tasks had been finished on time. Consequently, most workers felt happier and company's productivity also increased.

Meditation is also another technique that I would like to suggest. There are a lot of information resources, which have discussed about the benefits of meditation. Giovanni Dienstmann. (2016), one of the most important benefits of meditation is how it releases stress from people's bodies. Meditation practiced regularly will lead them to a deeper level of relaxation and contemplation. If they want to be free of constant worry, pressure and stress the benefits of meditation can give a life that is calm, peaceful, happy and relaxed. Even ten minutes of meditation a day will help alleviate stress.

The meditation is useful for increasing the people's work efficiency. Organizations can support them a prospect to practice employees' meditation. For example; before starting working, supervisors in each department should be the leader in order to let them practice meditation by listening to therapy songs (classical music) and close their eyes for 10 minutes. Other interesting activities might be combined to attract them to join this program.

Conclusion

To-do-list is popular technique in order to manage time. It has been widely used by people who have different occupations. Ones who apply to-do-list as a tool to manage their time will be good time managers. In addition, to practice meditation is also the best way to develop one's health and quality of work life.

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