

Time Students Spend Studying: Quality Time or Poor Time Management

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Abstract

Time management is a crucial aspect of academic success, and it is often said that the key to success is to spend enough time studying. While more students seem to spend more time studying compared a decade ago, this study aims to explore students time management and the factors influencing the study time. How well students manage time is an important skill that every student needs to master to avoid prolonging their studies. This study is realised as a survey. Our research included 290 responses from students in Slovenia who were asked to rate the time they spend studying. The results showed that 43 % of respondents study on average 3-6 hours per day and 40 % spend more than 7 hours per day on study activities, leaving them less time for other activities. Factors that influence study time are leisure time, (student) work time and family time. Students who wish to complete their studies need to master time management skills to better coordinate between leisure time and study obligations to avoid stress and pressure.

Keywords: time survey, student, time management, time use, student work

INTRODUCTION

The amount of time that students spend studying can vary widely, depending on various factors such as study obligations and course workload, learning style, student's motivation and engagement, prior knowledge, personal commitments, study environment, time management skills etc. For most students, student life is not limited exclusively to studying, but it is a period of balancing between work, family obligations, leisure and educational responsibilities. Many researchers researched how much time students spend studying and how this correlates with academic achievement (Spitzer, 2022, Thibodeaux et al., 2017). In general, the more time students spend learning, the better their academic performance. (OECD, n. d.).

In this paper, we will explore how much time students spend studying and the factors that influence study time. We do not focus on academic achievements and their correlations to time spend studying. Therefore, our main research question is: *How much time students in Slovenia spend studying and what factors influence their time of study?*

This is an original research paper and is structured first to address research problem with the literature review, next we describe the research methods and data, followed by results of the research. Finally, we present discussion and findings in the last section.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Time students spend on study activities is critical for academic performance and it is an important component of self-regulating skills and discipline (Thibodeaux et al., 2017). Study time includes academic activities such as attending lectures, doing homework, independent studying, and writing papers, doing exams (Brint & Cantwell, 2010; Nonis et al., 2006; Zuriff, 2003) and non-academic activities including paid (student) work, extracurricular activities, leisure, and social events, sports (Brint & Cantwell, 2010; Nonis et al., 2006).

Spitzer (2022) showed that more study time led to higher performance scores in mathematics. In particular low-performing students, can boost their academic abilities to upper levels when increasing their study time (Spitzer, 2022). While study time spends is important, it is also important how students spend their study time. Spending time on memorizing data and facts can only lead to higher grades and it will not likely result in future knowledge application (McCormick, 2011). Similarly, spending time on study activities does not necessarily mean investing mental and quality time studying (Ulriksen & Nejrup, 2021).

Good time management is a crucial aspect of academic success. People who effectively manage their time experience reduced tension and stress, and have fewer difficulties balancing work and family as well as issues related to well-being. With time management skills job satisfaction increases, because of more efficient control over time, and procrastination occurs less frequently. There is also an association between time management, academic achievements and stress reduction (Nasrullah & Khan, 2015). The results demonstrated that anxiety lessening, practices of time management and higher academic success are correlated.

In 2015, a study involving 120 students determined the relationship between time management and student achievement (Alyami et al., 2021; Nasrullah & Khan, 2015). It was found that time management

is highly related to student success. The results showed that successful students are also good time managers (Nasrullah and Khan, 2015). This study also found that the time spent studying outside of educational institutions has a positive impact, while working alongside studying can have negative educational outcomes (Di Paolo & Matano, 2022; Gril et al., 2018)

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), which involved more than 300,000 participants, showed that on average, students spend 2 more hours per week studying than they did a decade ago (NSSE, n. d.). The survey emphasised that percentage of first-year students who spend more than 15 hours per week on academic activities (studying, reading, writing, doing homework or lab work) increased from 34% in 2004 to 45% in 2017. The researchers found that seniors also increased their time spent studying over this time frame. The survey does not indicate whether this is related to higher expectations, new programs or study methods, but emphasizes the importance of the quality of lecturers, with whom students can discuss life plans and future careers plans, and their support can provide motivation for studying (Nietzel, n. d.). Similarly, in Slovenia, 42 % students spend more than 20 hours per week on study activities in 2010 compared to 79 % students, who spend more than 20 hours per week on study activities in 2022 (MHEST, 2010; Gril et al., 2022)

The answer to how much time students spends on studying often does not match the expectations of professors. The data from the NSSE shows that most students spend on average from 10 to 13 hours per week studying, which is less than 2 hours per day. 11% of students spend more than 25 hours per week studying (Nelson, 2022).

One study found that students who sacrifice sleep over additional time for study end up with more academic problems in their later years of study. (Gillen-O'Neel et al., 2013) Results suggest that the trade-off between daily study time and sleep becomes associated with academic problems when days of extra studying tend to be followed by days of more academic problems, especially in the latter higher years of study. (Gillen-O'Neel et al., 2013)

Students are expected to supplement their attendance at lectures and exercises with independent study outside educational institutions, which requires a lot of discipline and organization. There are recommendations for students to spend no more than 20 hours per week on (student) work for successful studying, and to be aware of things that distract their attention and make it difficult to balance academic and private lives (social networks, entertainment, etc.) (Nelson, 2022).

Working while studying – what benefit does it have?

Students often work during their studies. This is especially true for Slovenian context, as temporary and occasional work is regarded as “student work”. The minimal gross hourly rate for an hour of temporary and occasional work must not be lower than 6.92 euros (from 2023, January) (GOV.SI, n. d.). Students who work in this regard also receive the benefit to contribute to a pension plan and can be treated as an important contributor in labour market. Often companies look for students rather than to employ a worker for part time.

Students work while studying for various reasons. In many cases working while studying represents a challenge in coordinating time between academic obligations and non-academic obligations. However, for many students, performing student work is almost a necessity to cover living expenses and to afford some luxuries. The data from the Eurostudent VI survey in Slovenia in 2016, which involved 4968

college and university students (excluding doctoral students), show that student work is the main source of income for more than two-fifths of students. Half of the students also work during the academic year, a third are regularly employed, and a quarter work occasionally. The majority (23%) work between 20 and 40 hours per week. Part-time students are more often regularly employed, while full-time students more often do student work. Half of them work to cover the costs associated with living and even more work to afford some luxuries. Two-fifths of students work to gain work experience (Gril et al., 2018).

Student work has many advantages in addition to studying because students can learn in a real work environment, and gain work experience, which helps them become more employable after graduation. A study on students' work while studying (Di Paolo & Matano, 2022) suggests that students who worked in jobs related to their field of study can generate positive signals to employers after graduation. In addition, results indicated that the probability of being employed four years after graduation is higher for graduates who have been working in occupations related to their field of study, regardless of work intensity, than for full-time students. (Di Paolo & Matano, 2022; Van Belle et al., 2020) This means that some form of job experience related to the study degree before graduation is beneficial in the long run. Therefore, student work is considered an important transition between studying and later employment.

Working alongside studying has many benefits for future success, especially work experience and time management skills. Many employers look for candidates who have not only academic qualifications but also work experience. Students who work and study at the same time, learn to plan and organize well, which means they can effectively manage their own time (Blakeley, n. d.). Work during studying can also affect students' social life, as work and studying take up a lot of time. Working too much while studying can lead to lower grades and neglecting study obligations, so it is necessary to find the right balance between work obligations and time to study.

METHODOLOGY AND DATA DESCRIPTION

We used a quantitative methodology and prepared an online questionnaire. The questionnaire was delivered to students using a snowball sampling method. Thus, respondents were invited also through the contacts of other students. We managed to retrieve 290 valid responses, out of which there were 55 partly valid. The analysis was done using descriptive statistics and Chi-Square test.

Descriptive statistics showed that 187 (72%) students participating in the survey were 20 to 25 years old, 42 (16%) were less than 20 years old and 30 (12%) were above 25 years old. 164 (63%) were men and 96 (37%) were female.

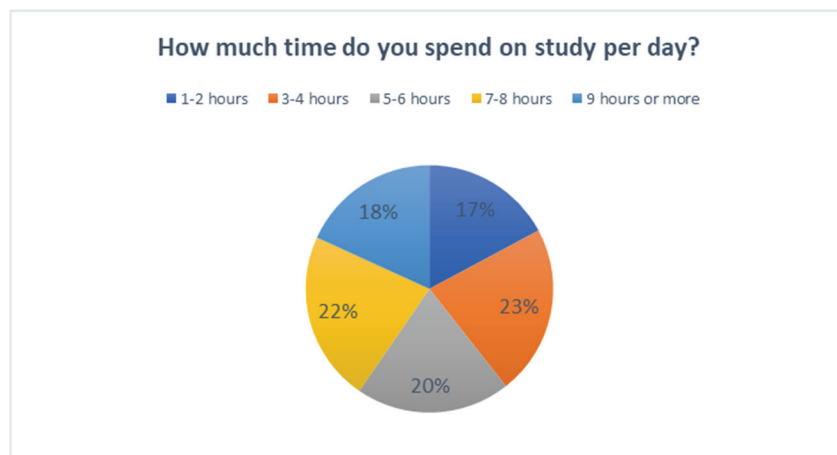
145 (68%) students study at the University of Ljubljana, 35 (17%) study at the University of Maribor and 24 (11%) study at Independent higher education institutions (eg. International School for Social and Business Studies). Most students were undergraduate students 153 (60%), 87 (34%) were postgraduate students, and the rest were college students (17). Most students study full-time (237, 92%) and only 21 (8%) study part-time. Most students (97, 38%) were enrolled in the first year of study, 69 (27%) in the second year, 53 (21%) in the third year, 13 (5%) in the fourth year, 9 (3%) in the fifth year, 10 (4%) in the sixth year and 6 (2%) were not enrolled in any study year. 209 (81%) of students were enrolled for the first time in the year of study.

RESULTS

Students were asked to rate, how many hours per day they study on average. The question included time for attending lectures and exercises at the faculty or online, independent work, weekly assignments, exam preparation, an independent study of literature, visiting the library, searching databases, working in a group, etc.

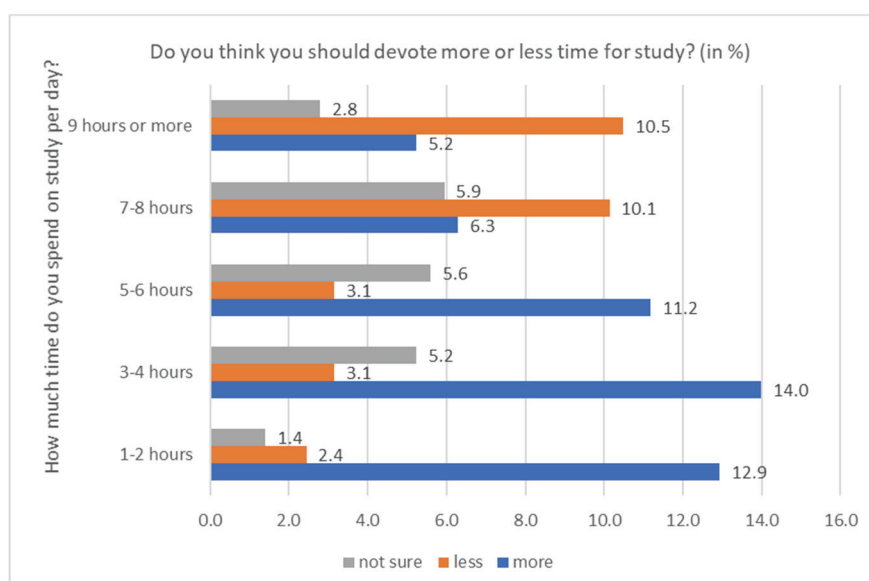
The answers reflect that 23% of students spend on average 3 to 4 hours and 22% 7 to 8 hours a day studying (see Picture 1). 20% of students spend an average of 5 to 6 hours studying, and 18% spend 9 hours or more. The smallest percentage (17%) is those who spend on average 1 to 2 hours a day studying.

Picture 1: Average time spend on study per day (%)



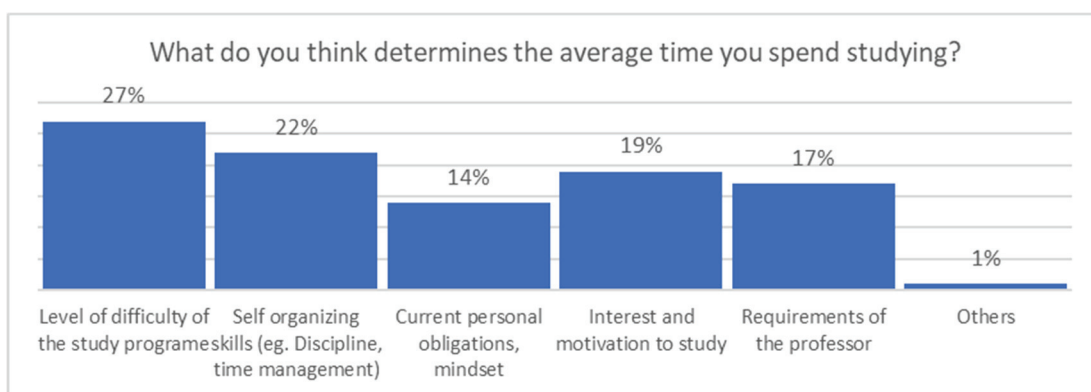
While further assessing their opinion on the time spent on study (Picture 2), 13% of students study on average 1-2 hours per day, 14 % of students study on average 3-4 hours per day and 11 % of students study 5-6 hours per day think they should spend MORE time studying, while 21 % of students who spend more than 7 hours per day studying think they should spend LESS time studying. In sum, 50 % of all students think they should study more than they do, and 29 % less than they do.

Picture 2: Comparison of average time spend on study per day and how much they think they should study (%)



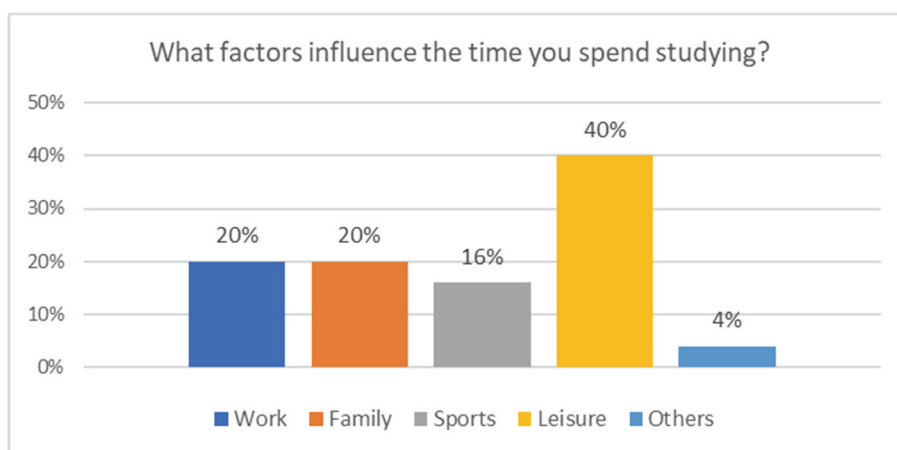
The majority (27%) of students believe that the amount of time they spend studying depends on the level of difficulty of the study program and courses (Picture 3). This is followed by the percentage 22% of those who believe that it depends on self-organizing and personality skills. 19% of students believe that the amount of time devoted to studying depends on their interest in the subjects of the study program, and 17% on the requirements of the professors. Time spend studying also depends on the current personal problems and obligations students face in their private lives (14% of respondents). Under the others, the students wrote that the amount of time also depends on the student's life period, will, ambition, encouragement from loved ones and schedule during the academic year.

Picture 3: What determinates the average time spend studying (%)



The majority of students (40%) believe that the time they spend studying is influenced by leisure time (Picture 4), followed by those (20%) who believe that the time spent studying is influenced by work and family. 16% of students are those who believe that sport is a factor that influences the time spent on studies the most. Under others (4%), the students listed the following: mental health, interest, motivation, friends, partners and psychological readiness. From the results, we could suggest that the most critical factor that influences study time is leisure time, which means that most students study because of their free time.

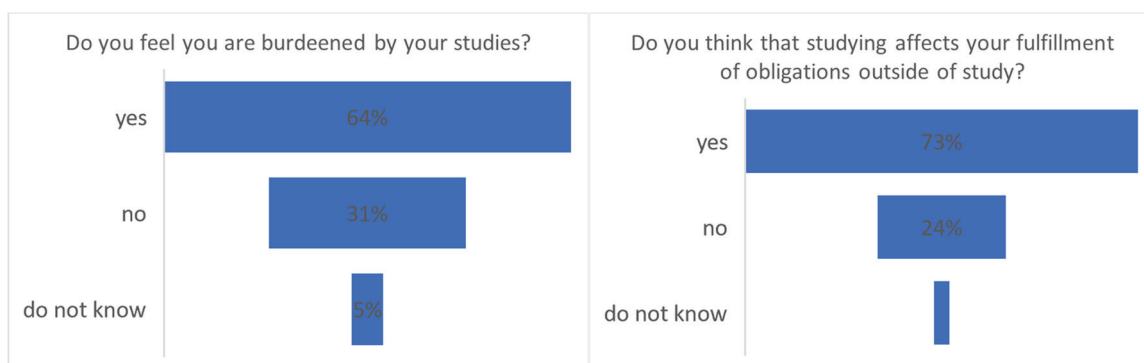
Picture 4: Factors influencing time spend studying (%)



Picture 5 shows that 64 % of students are burdened and stressed out because of their studies and 73 % of students think that they cannot fulfil other obligations outside of study while studying (see Picture 5, left and right). This means that the students feel a lot of pressure while they are enrolled

in the study program and they need to manage the time spend on educational activities more effectively.

Picture 5: Burdened by their studies (left) and effect on other obligations (right) (%)



We further tested the correlation between study time and who feels burdened by their studies with Chi-square statistics. In table 1 the crosstabs show that more students feel burdened when they spend more than 5 hours studying per day. In table 2 we confirm that students who spend more time studying per day, declared that are burdened by their studies, is statistically significant correlated.

Table 1: Crosstabs

		Do you feel burdened by your studies?			Total
		Yes	No	Do not know	
Time spend on studying	1 to 2 h	24	19	1	44
	3 to 4 h	26	24	7	57
	5 to 6 h	34	19	1	54
	7 to 8 h	42	12	3	57
	9 h or more	41	6	2	49
Total		167	80	14	261

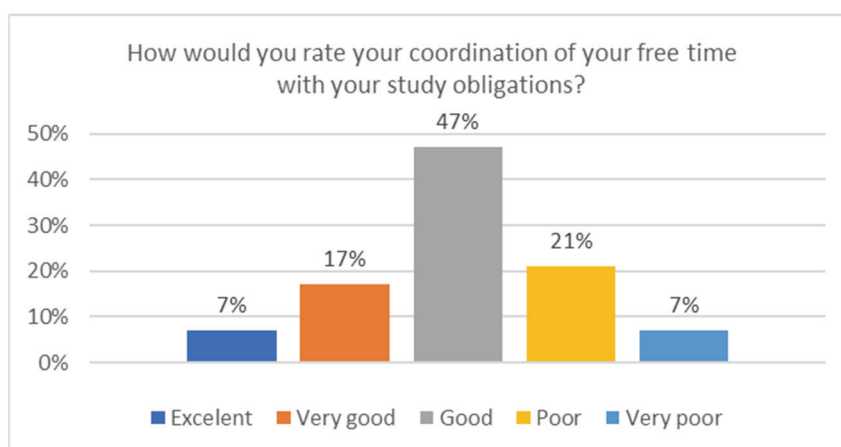
Table 2: Chi-square statistics

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	26.881 ^a	8	.001
Likelihood Ratio	27.526	8	.001
Linear-by-Linear Association	12.482	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	261		

a. 5 cells (33.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.36.

Students were also asked to rate the coordination of free time with study obligations (Picture 6) and almost half of them feel that they are good at coordinating between time for study and leisure time. However, more than one quarter feel that they cannot coordinate well their study obligations and their free time.

Picture 6: Coordination of free time and study obligations (%)



LIMITATIONS

In our study we covered only elementary analysis on study time and deep understanding of the professional and family background is needed to assess workload of students correctly. This can be researched in future research.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this research was to investigate the average study time students devote to studying per day and to identify factors that affect their study time. The results of this research suggested that 43% of students spend time studying from 3 to 6 hours on average per day and 40% more than 7 hours on average per day. This means that on average most students spend studying 15 to 30 hours per week and 35 hours and above per week, respectively. These findings are in line with other research, eg. Eurostudent survey (2018). The amount of time students spent studying and working in Slovenia was among the highest in Europe, with an average of 51 hours per week. Similarly, students spend more than 50 hours per week studying and working on Island, Malta, Poland, Estonia and Latvia (Gril et al., 2018). The allocation of study time in Slovenia was similar to the average in other European countries. Slovenia is among the half of participating countries in this survey where students devote more time to compulsory study activities than to individual study (Gril et al., 2018).

The results also showed that 64% of students are stressed by their studies, and 73% of them believe that their studies affect the fulfilment of their obligations outside of their studies. This means that students face a lot of pressure while studying and can lead to many problems associated with feelings of pressure. It is worth asking why are so many students studying and not coping with the pressures? If many students are obliged to study (because the public funds cover the majority of the study expenses) no matter of their actual abilities than teaching them is problematic, wasting time and public funds that are not spend efficiently to students who only need qualifications and do not have any academic ambitions. It can also suggest that full-time study has reached the top and it needs to change urgently and higher education institutions need to rethink their approach to teaching, especially after Covid-19.

Other reasons for students not dealing properly with their time can be due to poor time management and other personal obligations, such as leisure time, work, family and sports. For comparison, a Slovenian youth survey (2013) showed, that only 3% of the respondents consider schooling extremely difficult and

stressful, 16% of them consider it difficult and stressful, while 47% of the respondents consider it only stressful and difficult to a certain degree (Flere et al., 2014). 24% of respondents say that it is easy and not too stressful, while 8% say it is very easy and completely stress-free (Flere et al., 2014). However, this trend might have changed in the last 10 years and students are experiencing more stress and pressure in the post digital transformation era (after year 2020).

Time for study varies with students' age, study program, educational background and student work (Gril et al., 2018). The results show that 27 % of students believe that the level of difficulty of the study programme is the most important determinant of time spent studying while 40% of students believe that the time they spend studying is influenced by leisure time. This means that everyone should think about their priorities in this period of life and emphasize self-discipline and organization to complete all obligations they have. However, each individual's personality traits are different, as are their priorities, so at this point, a proposal for better time management would be tied to each individual individually. Our data particularly did not show that the (student) work influences the time students spend studying, because only a fifth of all respondents feel that working may affect studying. However, 7% of students would rate the coordination of free time with study obligations as excellent and 17% as very good. So, there is a larger percentage of those who coordinate time poorly.

Based on the above-mentioned results, we can conclude that one of the reasons for spending a lot of time studying is at some point related to poor time management, thus students need to spend more quality time studying. This means that it is necessary to make students aware of the importance of coordinating and managing time effectively by improving their skills.

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