

# “Time Is Gold”: Phenomenologizing the Essence of Time Management on the Lived Experiences Of Medical Technology Student Leaders

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**Abstract:** - Time is an indispensable and irreplaceable asset that cannot be altered, purchased, or stored. Its management acts as a vital component for the effective and efficient performance of students in the academic setting. Practicing good time management, implementing an ideal daily routine, and planning ahead of time could potentially improve the performance of students and promote positive academic outcomes. Time management should be considered as a feature that plays a crucial role in the improvement of students' productivity apart from a favorable learning environment. The aim of this study is to understand the essence of time management among Medical Technology student leaders. Using the non-probability purposive sampling, twenty Medical Technology student leaders, with an age range of 19 to 22 years old, were selected to participate in an in-depth interview. Colaizzi's method and Creswell method were used for data analysis. Findings uncovered four dimensions of time management as emerging themes: (1) view, (2) approach, (3) purpose, and (4) challenges. These dimensions of time management resulted in four respective outcomes: (1) a holistic lifestyle, (2) strong work ethic, (3) excellence, and (4) good health and well-being. The study highlights that time management is the cornerstone of the students' view of work-life satisfaction and excellence in their endeavors.

**Key Words:** — *Time Management, Medical Technology student leaders, Phenomenology.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Being able to manage one's time is a necessity especially for students who are aiming to improve their academic performances (Alsalem et al., 2017). However, it is seen that college students struggle to manage their time as they are overwhelmed with their academic workload, and it seems as if there is simply no time to accomplish every single task. Given that these students have numerous assessments and practical examinations, their sleep patterns may be compromised in their efforts to prepare and attain high grades. Furthermore, grade consciousness is also a major factor and may be described as the students' response to external or internal pressure, intended or not (Alvior, 2016).

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One effective way of benchmarking students' academic performance is through their Grade Point Average (GPA), also known as General Weighted Average (GWA). This, however, instills pressure and anxiety on goal-oriented students, thus, they may neglect to care for their own physical and mental health in order to maintain a high GPA.

There are barriers to student's effective time management such as social networking sites, lack of planning, and lack of motivation. It has been seen that more people are investing excessive amounts of time as the world of technology emerges. Furthermore, poor time management and lack of planning skills coupled with procrastination are perfect recipes for mediocre results. These, however, may be avoided, according to Alsalem et al. (2017), if students have a well-planned schedule, where they will have more time to finish all their tasks and have a higher overall GPA. In order to mitigate such risks posed by lack of time management skills, this study aimed to understand the essence of time management from the lived experiences of

Medical Technology student leaders who are trying to juggle hefty amounts of academic responsibilities. Through this study, researchers are able to promote better time management skills for students to have a much more productive, efficient, and holistic college experience.

## II. METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Research Design

The study was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic which was a big factor in the utilization of the qualitative phenomenological research design. Qualitative phenomenological studies involve non-numerical data collection and analysis of lived experiences within a particular group (Creswell, 2013). This research utilized a qualitative phenomenological approach by focusing on the lived experiences of Medical Technology student leaders, analyzing their perspectives and opinions on time management, and establishing the essence of time management through the analysis of their lived experiences.

### 2.2 Subjects and Study Site

The researchers used a non-probability purposive sampling method in attaining the samples by selecting 20 respondents to be interviewed virtually. According to Patton (2002), in doing qualitative studies, it is usually focused on a relatively small set of samples, even in single cases ( $n = 1$ ), that are selected purposefully. On one hand, inclusion and exclusion criteria were established in order for the data to be accurate and reliable. First and foremost, the participants gave their consent to share the needed information for the interview. Moreover, in selecting the appropriate respondents for this study, he/she met all of the following qualifications: the person was at the age range of 19 to 22, a currently enrolled third year Medical Technology student in the Academic Year 2020-2021, and a block president from the batch 2022. Thus, the responses collected in this study were treated with respect and utmost confidentiality.

### 2.3 Instrumentation and Data Collection

The data collection tool used in the research was an interview involving a one-time occurrence, individual, modified face-to-face verbal interview, where each researcher was assigned to engage four (4) interviewees, and the interviews were conducted and recorded with the use of online platform Zoom. With this, the type of interview used was a

semi-structured interview that gave the researchers the freedom to ask follow-up or additional questions when necessary.

### 2.4 Data Gathering Procedure

The research study was first approved by the University of Santo Tomas Faculty of Pharmacy Research Ethics Committee (USTFOPREC). The researchers made sure to provide the respondents with adequate information about the study and obtained their full consent to be part of the study. Additionally, the consent form also informs the respondents that the whole interview was recorded and that their statements are to be transcribed verbatim. Each respondent was assigned with a code- S1, S2, S3, and so forth. This was done to ensure that their privacy was safeguarded. After which, the 20 respondents were interviewed by the five (5) researchers in this study in the ratio of 4:1. Before briefing the respondents about the study, the group obtained express consent from the respondents that they would be included in the study, while indicating that the interview session was recorded. With regard to the procedure of the interview, respondents were provided with a link of Zoom meetings where they were asked a series of questions by the researchers about the study. Lastly, upon conclusion of the interview, the interviewee was informed that all information and responses are treated strictly confidential and their anonymity is assured.

### 2.5 Data Analysis

In order to understand the experiences, perspectives, and opinions of the respondents on time management, questions were formulated based on the central question and sub-questions for the purpose of exploring the phenomenon and lived experience of the respondents. A repertory grid was formulated in order to aid in the analysis of the respondents' statements which may support the phenomenological reduction with the use of Colaizzi's method. In essence, according to Morrow et al. (2015), Colaizzi's method of data analysis is a rigorous qualitative method that researchers use in finding, understanding, depicting, and describing the detailed experiences of their chosen pool of respondents. And with thorough analysis, these statements were categorized based on themes and all ideas were connected.

To highlight, the accuracy validation of the qualitative inquiry was done through the initial employment of the Creswell data analysis method which covers six (6) steps necessary to aid in the interpretation of the findings namely a.) Organization of field notes, b.) Reading the field notes, c.) Coding, d.)

Categorizing the codes into themes, e.) Interrelation of themes, and f.) Interpretation (Creswell, 2013). The field notes were coded and categorized to their respective themes using MAXQDA, a qualitative software package for assessing qualitative data in the field of text analysis (Marjaei, 2019). Interpretation followed after the classification of significant statements into their respective themes and sub-themes (Creswell, 2013).

Furthermore, the validity of the statements was ensured using the four fundamental steps of the descriptive phenomenology method of inquiry: bracketing, analyzing, intuiting, and describing. Bracketing of statements was done in order to prevent personal bias from affecting the data analysis. The labels are then reviewed and grouped according to the similarity of ideas and concepts. After being grouped, the categories are ranked based on the number of similar statements included in each group. Groups are named by using two to three words that represent the content's essence. Aside from bracketing, intuition is also an essential aspect of the analytical process as it assists the investigator in understanding the participant's perspective by listening to different opinions shared by the participants.

Finally, after analyzing the data through this method, a total of nine (9) statements were translated from Filipino to English by an English editor. The translated transcripts were then double-checked using the correspondence approach, verified with respondents and the critical friend approach, verified with a person outside the study as an intellectual watchdog (Rossman, 2017).

### III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1 Dimensions, Elements, and Outcomes of Time Management

To capture the essence of time management among Medical Technology student leaders with an age range of 19 to 22 years old, in-depth interviews were conducted and all responses were analyzed using the cool and warm analysis, which emerged interesting themes consisting of the dimensions, elements, and outcomes of time management as seen in Table 1. Their responses were thematized into four dimensions of time management namely view, approach, purpose, and challenges. Table 1 presents the different elements of time management from the participants' responses which served as catalysts in formulating the corresponding outcomes

brought about by the different dimensions and elements of time management.

Table 1. Dimensions, Elements, and Outcomes of Time Management

Dimensions	Elements	Outcomes
View	Productivity Work-Life Balance	Holistic Lifestyle
Approach	Strategic Planning Task Prioritization	Strong Work Ethic
Purpose	Motivation to Excel Pressure and Expectations	Excellence
Challenge	Health and Wellness External Distractions Coping Mechanisms	Good Health and Wellbeing

#### 3.2 Dimensions of Time Management: View

For this study, time management is defined as allotting time for all the tasks and activities to be done in each day and properly maximizing the time given to produce utmost productivity of Medical Technology student leaders. In this theme, the researchers recognized how time management greatly affects the productivity and work-life balance of a Medical Technology student leader and in consideration of having a holistic lifestyle despite having a busy schedule for academics. The respondents have shared:

“I can define time management as the ability of someone to be able to create a daily time schedule that prioritizes what is important; and the ability to know what's important and not important in a sense wherein one can maximize their productivity.” (S1)

“Time management is the proper allocation of time to be able to complete the necessary task that you wish you complete.” (S9)

Furthermore, it was noted by Chukwuji, C. et al. (2018) that time management is a summation of knowing how to arrange, organize, schedule and budget time to be able to work effectively and achieve productivity. Apart from this, one respondent also commented that:

“Time management helps us plan ahead to avoid procrastination.” (S18)

Ocak, G. et al. (2016) added that procrastination is one's way of not pushing forward to complete tasks or assignments or postponing planned study sessions which can result in additional stress and sleep deprivation. Additionally, a respondent mentioned that:

"I can really see an improvement with my academic performance every time I'm able to strictly follow my schedules." (S7)

This can be supported by the study conducted by Alsalem, W. S. et al. (2017) which concluded that students who properly manage their time had a higher total GPA. Along with, by being able to manage time properly a respondent said:

"Time management is making the most of your time in order to get your task done. And, at the same time, having time for yourself." (S13)

Also, this is to give us a perspective that the students manage to still have time outside the bounds of school requirements and have a holistic lifestyle. To support this, Akgul, B. et al. (2016) said that making time for leisure contributes in maintaining physical, mental, emotional, and social well-being and connectivity.

"I'm deprived of a holistic life because I'm dedicating too much time to studying. Even though school is important, my social life is important as well so I have to make a compromise." (S13)

"There's a lot of family activities that I did not join because I had to focus on school." (S13)

"We have lesser time for ourselves and family. I don't even get to help with chores anymore." (S19)

Moreover, this can be supported by the study of Lewis (2016), wherein it was mentioned that extra working hours compromise time set aside for family, friends, and leisure. Furthermore, the lack of work-life balance poses a threat not only in the relationships students have but can also affect their health by experiencing more stress, sleep deprivation, burn-out, and physical illnesses.

### 3.3 Dimensions of Time Management: Approach

In order to have an efficient way of scheduling or organizing tasks, one must have a disciplined approach in time

management, and in this theme, and the group was able to identify the respondents' techniques in organizing their workload and day-to-day activities. As a Medical Technology student leader, one must have a strong work ethics to ensure that all academic tasks are of excellent quality and completed on time. After thorough analysis, two concrete approaches were identified by the group, namely strategic planning and task prioritization.

In addition, based on a study by Huang (2021), students perceived that their control of time was improved by scheduling on calendar applications, which reduced the need to recall various assignments and improvise them, too. The respondents noted that they make use of different tools and techniques to help them track their daily academic tasks. Under the sub-theme of strategic planning, the following statements were noted:

"The way I would schedule it would be based on my calendar, my shared calendar with my block that I also organized." (S9)

"I use a personal calendar, wherein I also plot other responsibilities with personal appointments or org meetings." (S15)

Lastly, a respondent answered that the night prior to a weekday, he would strategize his time blocking for the next day for his respective tasks. Given that the respondents are taking up a pre-medical degree in Bachelor of Science major in Medical Technology, on some days, the workload may be so heavy that students must decide which duties to prioritize. According to a study, an individual could effectively and timely accommodate different tasks by planning ahead (Huang, 2021). The response is as follows:

"The night before, I strategized all the tasks to be accomplished by tomorrow. For instance, how many hours to study for one subject and how many hours to allot in order to accomplish the tasks."

Moreover, according to Nagornaya (2019), in order to prevent wasting time, one can utilize the Eisenhower matrix, which is a tool that allows workers to prioritize activities based on their relevance and urgency. Respondent S11 can be said to be following this principle, wherein if the task seems important and urgent, this task must be prioritized. This could be supported by the following responses:

“On my workload, during hectic weeks, I divide my hours and tend to focus on one task at a time.” (S4)

“Time management is the smart way of doing your task, smart in a sense that you know what to prioritize depending on the urgency.” (S11)

### 3.4 Dimensions of Time Management: Purpose

A person’s purpose aims to motivate and inspire an individual to continuously pursue his/her lifelong goals and aspirations. In this study, it serves as the driving force for medical technology student leaders to accomplish their tasks, enabling them to work in an efficient manner to maximize output. More often than not, a person’s purpose comes about through the presence of given elements or factors which give rise to feelings of fervor; thus, resulting in making the student more determined. It can be said that these elements or factors pave the way for students to strive for excellence in their day-to-day endeavors.

Oftentimes, attaining a higher GWA is essential for a student’s success in either maintaining their scholarship or acquiring a scholarship later in the future. Graziosi et al. (2016) stated that students who are capable of receiving grants/scholarships earned through merit benefit from the said financial aid by striving to improve their overall academic performance. Due to the aforementioned statement, it can be inferred that scholarships serve as an external driving force for some medical technology student leaders to excel in their given program. Some students even revealed that this indicator motivates them to maintain their GWA, saying:

“I have no choice wherein I have to maintain a certain grade just to keep my scholarship.” (S1)

“What drives me is my plan in pursuing Med school. Having a high GWA, and a Latin honor, would mean a scholarship in med.” (S19)

“It could be through my GWA that other people see me as someone who’s respectable.” (S17)

“I have a standard I need to keep in order to maintain my grades. I want to see my hard work pay off and my hard work paying off would reflect on my GWA.” (S13)

Based on the said texts, it can be deduced that these students’ driving force is to retain or even surpass the current grade on which they have obtained. As stated by Fischer et al. (2019), intrinsic motivation is characterized by a strong valuation of personal investment and engagement.

Delving into some of the external factors which may motivate or may cause to exert pressure on the students, familial pressure also takes a toll on some Medical Technologist students’ education due to their families’ high expectations. According to Moneva and Moncada (2020), parental pressure is effective in boosting the self-efficacy of students in terms of studying. As mentioned, having high self-efficacy boosts students’ morale, more likely leading them to achieve and accomplish certain goals. This claim can be proven from these statements:

“I think the pressure is mostly on my family’s part because of their high expectations.” (S16)

“The pressure is personal because I want to prove something since I’m the eldest.” (S11)

Lastly, it can also be deduced that peer pressure also takes a toll on the performance of a student. As mentioned by Bursztyn et al. (2019), an individual’s social image is highly influenced by a desire to shape how he is perceived by the people surrounding him. It can be inferred that this student aims to conform to the surroundings in which he was placed by aiming to attain similar achievements obtained by his peers. This can be observed with these statements:

“The pressure I feel is more on myself, but it also pressures me when almost all of my classmates are DL. As for my family, there is no pressure.” (S14)

“I feel pressured somewhat to have a high GWA mostly because my friends, they’re really super smart and most of my friends are consistent Dean’s listers and aim to graduate with Latin honors.” (S7)

### 3.5 Dimensions of Time Management: Challenge

Unexpected obstacles and other impediments may arise while in the process of trying to organize and execute all tasks in a single day, regardless of the degree of effort and meticulous planning exerted. This study aims to identify the challenges students face when accomplishing academic tasks in

each given day, how they manage them, and to determine their corresponding coping strategies. Through the analysis of the respondents' statements, the researchers were able to identify health-related challenges and external distractions.

Withal and other negative emotions such as restlessness, anxiety, and stress were mentioned by the respondents. These negative emotions were seen to be brought about by the students' heavy academic workload. According to Bharathi (2017), increased stress reduces productivity and this is not ideal especially for students who have heavy workloads. Furthermore, it was noted in a study that a highly demanding work environment and working in tight deadlines are contributors to anxiety (Nappo, 2018). The medical technology student leaders' experiences are stated hereunder.

“I feel restless. I'm the type of person who finds it hard to sleep or rest whenever I have pending work to do.” (S1)

“I feel anxious when deadlines are near and I have not started anything yet.” (S4)

Moreover, other than emotional challenges, some respondents noted that they have been experiencing hair loss due to the stress caused by the upcoming deadlines and according to Nabahin (2017), stress is a possible cause of hair loss (alopecia) in some people. Stress-induced physical changes, such as hair loss and weight deterioration, manifest themselves to and were reported by some of the respondents. A study by Yan (2019) noted that in comparison to perceived stress, what may predict body weight change over time is the individual's stress management ability and coping mechanism. Along with this, the student leaders cited their experiences below.

“In terms of physical health, I can really notice that my weight started to deteriorate and my mental health is really bad when I don't get to manage my time well.” (S7)

“I am stressed. One thing that I observe when the deadlines are approaching is my hair is abnormally falling out.” (S19)

However, whether an individual has a strong work ethic and a peaceful mental space, external distractions may still unexpectedly cause an individual to lose focus or motivation in

finishing his tasks. Apparently, the use of the Internet for entertainment purposes has been said to have a negative influence on a student's academic achievement (Feng, 2019). Some respondents elaborated on their external distractions from studying through the statements below.

“Right now, we're always on our computers so it's easy to get distracted with like playing games or watching YouTube clips while studying or even while in class.” (S2)

“Social media but I have my reason as a president. I don't want to get blamed if I forward announcements late. Household chores also when I get asked to.” (S11)

At times where the workload may seem overwhelming, some respondents listed coping strategies such as stress-eating and sleeping to alleviate some stress. According to Dhivyadharshini (2019), stress-eating is caused by the elevation of a stress hormone (cortisol) which also elevates insulin levels so that the individual craves for sugary or fatty foods. Oversleeping is another coping mechanism mentioned and as stated by Afham (2018), oversleeping is an issue that individuals face wherein their daily routines are affected by the number of hours taken up. Some respondents were noted to have detrimental coping mechanisms and their experiences were cited below.

“If you really don't feel like doing it, just sleep it off.” (S9)

“I stress-eat to try and cope up or sleep.” (S13)

Other ways to cope with stress were noted by some respondents. Others cope by diverting their attention to other activities, specifically through meditating, writing, watching Netflix, and playing with their pets. And according to Stallman (2020), the aforementioned coping mechanisms are categorized as healthy coping categories as these are self-soothing activities that provide emotional support. Furthermore, according to a study by Jones (2018), mindfulness meditation helps promote good health and wellbeing which are necessary especially for students who need to juggle countless tasks in a single day. This is evident in the experiences below that the medical technology student leaders have shared.

“Sometimes, if I feel pressure or fatigue with all the academic work loads, I go to the terrace and I will pause or meditate for a while.” (S4)

“One of my hobbies is writing so when I feel like I'm burnt out from both academics and non-academics responsibilities I take time for myself.” (S15)

“It's much better to watch Netflix or play with your pets for a while to make you feel better.” (S17)

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Productivity and work-life balance are elements brought about by students' implementation of time management in their lives. Both of these aforementioned elements have a major impact in promoting a holistic lifestyle and avoiding the art of procrastination. In this study, various approaches of Medical Technology student leaders in managing their time, such as: strategic planning and task prioritization, were tackled as these greatly affect the academic performance of these students. Likewise, these elements also serve as the backbone of practicing and implementing good time management skills.

*The Butterfly Effect: Time Management's Metamorphic Effect*  
Edward Lorenz coined the term “butterfly effect” which revolved around the concept of small things such as a butterfly flapping its wings to cause a much bigger outcome. Practicing time management may seem not that big of a deal; however, it may serve as a catalyst to bigger outcomes that may benefit students in the future. The butterfly is a common symbol for change which is evident in its metamorphosis. This metamorphic process may be linked to a student's path of practicing time management towards greater outcomes: a holistic lifestyle, strong work ethic, excellence, good health, and well-being. The researchers provided a simulacrum framework wherein the body of a butterfly was utilized. The body of the butterfly, which represents time management, serves as the connecting point of the four wings that represent the connected themes, namely view, purpose, approach, and challenge. The wings are further subdivided into three sections wherein the innermost section represents the dimensions of time management, the middle section represents the elements of time management, and the outermost section represents the outcomes attained from good time management.

It was deduced in this qualitative study that excellence in a person's chosen field can be attained through the existence of a sense of purpose. Moreover, it was also stated that the presence of external distractions further contributes to the accumulation of unfinished tasks and requirements, resulting in procrastination. In preventing the prevalence of burn-out and various stress-induced complications due to the accumulating workload, activities which aim to soothe and provide emotional support were undertaken. It can be said through this that the implementation of time management has resulted in the alleviation of the aforementioned challenges, thereby, promoting good health and wellbeing among the participants.

Through consistent practice of time management, students are able to accomplish their plans efficiently in order to attain their academic goals. As students learn about the benefits brought by time management, they are able to strategize and prioritize the things they need to do first, which results in the development of a strong mindset and exceptional work ethics. Henceforth, it is through time management that students learn how to value time and the manner in which it is spent. In a nutshell, time management is essential as this skill teaches one to be able to work efficiently in a given time frame. Likewise, this skill also trains a person to consistently stick with a routine that would help in maintaining a patterned behavior towards work and simultaneously allot time for rest and leisure. Overall, time management is the cornerstone of the students' view of work-life satisfaction and excellence in their endeavors.

#### Recommendations:

Based on these derived conclusions, the future researchers are planning to conduct a similar study and they should consider that the interview was conducted during the

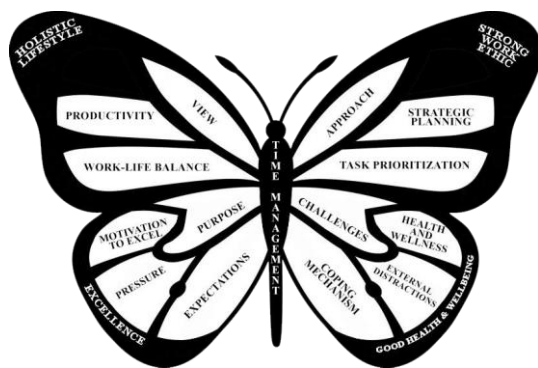


Fig.1. The Butterfly Effect

COVID-19 pandemic wherein enriched virtual mode was primarily implemented. It is recommended that the study be conducted face-to-face as some students opted to switch off their camera during the interview. Non-verbal communication such as facial expressions, gestures, and other cues were disregarded in some of these cases because of the platform used. Additionally, the conduct of the interview face-to-face is also preferred as experiences of some Medical Technology student leaders may differ from one another based on the mode of learning experiences from the enriched virtual mode may come into conflict with experiences from face-to-face sessions as some students potentially adhere to better time schedules and time management practices in online learning. Furthermore, this qualitative phenomenological study utilized a non-probability purposive sampling method in selecting their respondents.

To better understand the implications of the results obtained, it is of essence to take note that each respondent selected per section does not represent or reflect the totality of the views of their said class. Thus, it is recommended that further studies be carried out on additional students. Specifically, non-student leaders to gain a better understanding of how their time management affects their academic performance. By increasing the sample size and including students who don't have class responsibilities and extra added workload, it is possible that the initial findings obtained may differ. Lastly, since the study was conducted in a specific faculty of a given college, findings obtained from this research may be used by academic administrators and institutions as they may benefit in formulating the appropriate workload and curriculum for students.

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