

# *The Impact of Psychological Adaptation Courses on Time Management Tendencies of College Freshmen*

Yang Xia<sup>1,a</sup>, Mohd Muslim Bin Md Zalli<sup>1,b,\*</sup>, Zhang Yu<sup>2,c</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Faculty of Human Development, Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI), Tanjong Malim, 35900, Perak, Malaysia

<sup>2</sup>Jiaying University, Meizhou, 514015, China

<sup>a</sup>YXOKBO@163.com, <sup>b</sup>muslim@fpm.upsi.edu.my, <sup>c</sup>nange\_green@yeah.net

\*Corresponding author

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**Abstract:** Psychological adaptation courses for freshmen are designed with a positive psychology approach, employing experiential learning to address developmental issues and foster the cultivation of positive psychological traits. This study particularly examines the influence of the time management module within the course on the time management tendencies of college students. The study utilized a comprehensive methodology that included pre- and post-course assessments to measure changes in time management behaviors and attitudes. Participants were surveyed on their perceptions of time, their ability to prioritize tasks, and their strategies for managing academic workloads. The results indicate a positive shift in participants' time management tendencies and a notable improvement in their time management skills. Students reported increased self-awareness, better organization, and enhanced productivity following the course. Consequently, psychological adaptation courses for freshmen are effective in addressing developmental challenges among college students, representing a viable approach to adaptive education in higher institutions. These findings suggest that incorporating time management training into freshman programs can significantly contribute to students' academic success and overall well-being.

## 1. Introduction

The adaptation challenges faced by college freshmen have long been a focal point of university entrance education and a primary direction of mental health education in higher institutions. Extensive research has been conducted on the psychological adaptation of freshmen, primarily exploring the analysis and countermeasures of adaptation issues, the relationship between adaptation status and mental health, and interventions for psychological adaptation. Studies reveal that the process of psychological adaptation among freshmen follows certain patterns and is closely related to their mental health levels [1-3]. Interventions for freshmen's psychological adaptation predominantly take two forms: thematic lectures and group counseling. While the former provides general solutions to common adaptation issues, its content tends to be superficial, exerting limited

and non-sustained influence on students. Although the latter significantly improves freshmen's adaptation status [4, 5], its reach is constrained by the limited number of participants, making it unsuitable for widespread educational purposes. Furthermore, psychological training conducted in larger groups, such as entire classes, addresses the issue of participant limitations but often relies heavily on team-building activities or group games. This approach lacks depth in exploring educational themes and imparting relevant knowledge and skills [6]. Consequently, delivering psychological adaptation education to college freshmen through structured curriculum-based teaching remains a more viable and effective approach in higher education institutions.

The psychological adaptation course for freshmen is aimed at a group of students who share similar confusions or problems. This course employs a combination of group counseling and classroom teaching, conducted in a class group setting to provide psychological guidance and training [7-9]. Through interpersonal interactions within the group, and through observing, experiencing, and learning, this course aims to help students establish new behavioral patterns. The content of the course revolves around the common adaptation issues encountered by freshmen upon entering university and is divided into three sections: environmental adaptation, interpersonal relationship adaptation, and self-management (including time management and goal management).

Research conducted through various channels shows that the vast majority of college students, particularly freshmen and sophomores, suffer from poor time management, leading to feelings of emptiness or excessive stress. An important factor affecting individual time management is the individual's time management orientation, which refers to the psychological and behavioral characteristics displayed in the ways individuals manage and utilize their time. It is a dynamic personality tendency comprised of three elements: the sense of time value, time monitoring view, and time efficacy [10].

Improvements in an individual's time management can start by addressing their time management orientation, enhancing students' understanding of the value of time, increasing monitoring efforts on time management, and boosting individual self-efficacy in managing time. The time management course is designed based on altering individual time management orientations to help university freshmen develop time management skills, thereby enabling better management and implementation of their goals and fully adapting to university life. Therefore, this study aims to explore the effectiveness of the time management section in the freshman psychological adaptation course on improving university freshmen's time management orientation, to further demonstrate the role of the freshman psychological adaptation course in promoting students' adaptation process [11].

## **2. Objects and Methods**

### **2.1. Research Objects**

In a certain university in Henan Province, 135 students from a randomly selected class of 2024 freshmen who participated in the freshman psychological adaptation group counseling course were chosen as research subjects, including 65 male students and 7 female students, with an average age of  $18.52 \pm 0.63$  years old.

### **2.2. Assessment Tools**

Adolescent Time Management Tendency Scale [12]. This scale was developed by Huang Xiting, Zhang Zhijie, and others, with clear factor structure, good reliability and validity, and can be used as an effective tool for assessing adolescent time management tendencies. The scale consists of 44 items using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from "completely disagree" to "completely agree" scored

from 1 to 5. The scale is composed of three subscales: Time Value Scale, Time Monitoring Scale, and Time Efficacy Scale, with 10, 24, and 10 items respectively. Among them, Time Value is composed of two dimensions: social orientation and personal orientation. Time Monitoring is composed of five dimensions: setting goals, planning, prioritizing, time allocation, and feedback. Time Efficacy is composed of two dimensions: time management efficacy and time management behavior efficacy.

Open-ended questionnaires before and after the course. Both pre-course and post-course questionnaires involve surveys on time management status, including "views on time," "practices in goal setting and planning," and "problems in time management." The post-course questionnaire also includes "how time management has changed before and after the counseling."

### 2.3. Research Procedure

Pre-test. An open-ended questionnaire and the "Adolescent Time Management Tendency Scale" (TMD) were used to conduct a pre-test on the selected 135 subjects.

Implementation of the "Time Management" module course. This module is divided into two sessions, each lasting approximately 2 hours, with a time span of one week. The main process is shown in Table 1.

Post-test. The post-test is conducted one week after the course ends. The content includes: open-ended questionnaire survey and "Adolescent Time Management Tendency Scale" assessment.

Table 1. Outline of the Time Management Module Course

Times	Objective	Main content
The first time	Understanding the current state of time management and enhancing the sense of time value	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. "Growth Journey" Warm-up Activity</li> <li>2. Short Film "Enlightenment" and Group Discussion of Post-Viewing Feelings</li> <li>3. Explanation of the Nature of Time and Time Management</li> <li>4. Exercise: Drawing the "Time Pie" Chart and Group Discussion</li> <li>5. Video "How I Wrote My Thesis" and Explanation of Procrastination Symptoms and Nature</li> <li>6. Group Discussion on How to Solve Procrastination Issues and Group Exchange</li> </ol>
The second time	Set goals, and arrange time	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. "Career Vision" Relaxation Training Exercise: Fill in "My Mission Statement" and Share in Groups, Discuss in the Large Group</li> <li>2. DV Short Film "Monday Evening" and Explanation of Time Management, Quadrant Method Exercise: Classify Events from the Short Film According to the Quadrant Method and Discuss in the Large Group</li> <li>3. Group Discussion on Time Management Methods and Techniques for the University Stage Exercise: Create a Weekly Plan and Share in Groups</li> <li>4. Course Summary</li> </ol>

## 3. Research Results and Analysis

### 3.1. Test for Significance of Differences

SPSS 29.0 was used to analyze the pre- and post-test results of the time management tendencies

of 135 participants, and the results are shown in Table 2. It can be observed that through peer group counseling, the three factors of the participants' time management tendencies - sense of time value, sense of time efficacy, and time monitoring perspective - all underwent positive changes, and the differences all reached a significant level ( $p < .001$ ). Among the various dimensions of the three subscales, the difference before and after setting goals was not significant ( $p = .298$ ), while the differences in all other sub-dimensions reached a significant level.

Table 2. Significance Test of Differences in Each Dimension Before and After the Course ( $\bar{x} \pm s$ )

Subscales and Dimensions	Pre-test	Post-test	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Sense of Time Value	3.989 $\pm$ 3.011	8.332 $\pm$ 5.913	7.172	0.000
Social Orientation	5.052 $\pm$ 2.288	8.795 $\pm$ 3.588	3.801	0.001
Individual Orientation	5.904 $\pm$ 1.790	9.399 $\pm$ 3.068	5.182	0.000
Sense of Time Efficacy	2.299 $\pm$ 3.074	8.765 $\pm$ 3.602	8.473	0.000
Management Efficacy	5.942 $\pm$ 1.782	9.947 $\pm$ 2.214	6.961	0.000
Behavioral Efficacy	6.327 $\pm$ 2.202	8.781 $\pm$ 2.401	4.127	0.000
Time Monitoring Perspective	2.798 $\pm$ 8.428	4.504 $\pm$ 10.357	5.542	0.000
Goal Setting	6.193 $\pm$ 1.977	7.020 $\pm$ 2.984	0.811	0.298
Planning	4.289 $\pm$ 3.006	6.776 $\pm$ 2.837	4.370	0.000
Prioritization	6.144 $\pm$ 1.895	7.986 $\pm$ 2.863	3.218	0.003
Time Allocation	2.697 $\pm$ 1.578	5.437 $\pm$ 2.017	5.243	0.000
Feedback	4.766 $\pm$ 2.186	6.601 $\pm$ 2.567	2.590	0.006

### 3.2. Comparison of Open-ended Questionnaires

The analysis of open-ended questionnaires before and after the course showed the following results: In terms of "how to view time," 86.9% of the participants became more appreciative of time after participating in this section of the course; in terms of "practices in goal setting and planning," 84.2% of the participants were able to make effective plans and execute them well after participating in this section of the course; in terms of "problems in time management," all participants mentioned varying degrees of issues with arranging and using time before the course, and only 7.9% still had very few problems after the course, with the proportion of participants who found it very difficult to persist dropping from 81.1% before the course to 11.6% after the course; in terms of "how time management has changed before and after the class," 9.7% of the participants self-assessed that their time management situation had greatly improved after participating in the course, and 8.2% felt that they had made significant progress. It is evident that the participants' time management situation has been significantly improved after attending the course.

## 4. Discussion

### 4.1. The effectiveness of the course and the reasons for its success

The course increased students' sense of the value of time. Before participating in the course, the vast majority of students felt that they had a lot of time and lived an empty life. During the tutoring, students watched short films to feel the preciousness of time; they drew "time pies" to understand their own use of time; they shared their experiences to appreciate that time is the essence of life. These various activities enhanced students' understanding of time and time management. From the data results, the differences in the social orientation and personal orientation of the sense of time value before and after the experiment both reached a significant level ( $p < .1$ ). From the feedback

from the subjects, there was a huge change before and after the experiment. For example, one student said: "After participating in the course, I realized how short and precious time is, and I deeply regret the behavior of wasting time in the past."

The course increased students' self-monitoring in time management. The course spent a certain amount of time on clarifying values, goals, the formulation of goals and plans, time management methods, and dealing with procrastination, which greatly improved the subjects' ability to manage time. From the data results, the four dimensions of planning, prioritization, time allocation, and feedback all showed significant differences before and after the course ( $p < .1$ ). In the feedback, students also mentioned, "The happiest thing after participating in the course is to be able to do well in the 'happiness' quadrant, to propose it in advance, and to reduce the 'firefighting' quadrant. For example, during the final review stage, I review some subjects according to the plan and in a regular manner every day, and when I'm tired, I go swimming, feeling a sense of calm and happiness that I have never had before." Regarding the non-significant difference before and after setting goals ( $p = .298$ ), we analyzed the time management tendency questionnaire, open-ended questionnaires before and after the course, and students' sharing during the course and found that the "goal setting" examined in the questionnaire mainly focuses on whether there are goals, without involving the quality of the goals. Although there was no significant difference in whether there were goals before and after the experiment, the goals they set after the class were combined with overall and phased goals, with time limits, measurable, clearer, and more reasonable compared to before the class.

The course enhanced students' confidence in time management. The discussions and sharing within the course, mutual recognition among classmates, support from the group for individuals, and a series of activities designed to enhance students' time management skills all contributed to an increase in students' sense of time efficacy. Before and after the course, the differences in the two dimensions of time efficacy reached a highly significant level ( $p < .001$ ). Feedback from students also indicates an improvement in their sense of time efficacy after attending the class. For example, one student said: "After participating in the course, I am more determined about my ideals and more confident. Because time management has taught me what to do and what not to do, and how to arrange my own affairs." Another student said: "Now, although I cannot face every matter with ease, I have started to move towards an orderly life. I firmly believe that managing time is managing one's own life. I can do it well."

#### **4.2. Shortcomings of the course and ideas for improvement**

The design of the time management section in this course has some shortcomings in the application of individual time management strategies, making it difficult for students to maintain the good time management habits they have learned over the long term. At the same time, due to the profound inner experiences brought to the subjects by the exercises in the course, the subjects' desire for group discussions and large class sharing is higher than what was considered during the course design. Although adjustments were made in time during the process, the discussion time arranged in the course still seemed cramped. In future courses related to the time management section, the part on time management strategies and methods should be increased, and the proportion of time for student discussions and sharing should be increased.

In summary, the time management section of the freshman psychological adaptation course has brought positive changes to college students' time management tendencies and significantly improved their time management situation. The freshman psychological adaptation course is a feasible way to address the developmental issues of college students. It mobilizes students' enthusiasm for active learning and growth through innovative and interactive, experiential teaching designs, effectively improving students' developmental skills, promoting their psychological



adaptation process, and is a viable approach to adaptive education for freshmen in colleges and universities.

## 5. Conclusions

In summary, the main conclusions of this study are as follows:

1) Positive change in time management tendency: Through peer group counseling, the time management tendency of the subjects showed significant positive changes in three dimensions, which include the sense of time value, the sense of time efficacy, and the view of time monitoring. This result indicates that peer group counseling has a positive effect on enhancing individuals' time management tendencies.

2) Statistical significance: Among the three dimensions, except for the sub-dimension of setting goals where the difference before and after was not significant ( $p=.318$ ), the differences in other sub-dimensions reached a significant level ( $p<.001$ ), which further confirms the effectiveness of peer group counseling.

3) Results from open-ended questionnaires: Through the comparative analysis of open-ended questionnaires, it was found that the subjects showed significant improvements in time management after participating in the course. The specific manifestations are as follows: Valuing time: 86.9% of the subjects valued time more after the course; Making and executing plans: 84.2% of the subjects were able to make effective plans and execute them well; Reducing time management problems: Only 7.9% of the subjects still had very few problems after the course, while all subjects mentioned problems with arranging and using time before the course; Improvement in time management situation: 9.7% of the subjects self-assessed that their time management situation had greatly improved after participating in the course, and 8.2% of the subjects felt that they had made significant progress.

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