

## **TIME MANAGEMENT FROM AN ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Studies on Time Management from the conventional perspective have been a vibrant research area since 1990s. However, not much work has been done on Time Management from an Islamic perspective despite the fact that managing time in Islam is taught to be of paramount importance in life. Many Qur'anic verses as well as hadiths deal with time and emphasize on the importance of time management. The purpose of this study, which is an exploratory one, is to develop some guidelines on how to utilize time as epitomized from the Islamic teachings. The study is quantitative in nature wherein analysis is done on data collected from 150 respondents through self-administered questionnaires survey. The SPSS version 25 was used to analyze the collected data. Consequently, results reveal two main findings namely identification of two sets of activities whereby the first set pertains to those which Muslims should be spending more time on them. The second set is time-waster activities that Muslims should avoid. Limitations and possible future works are also suggested at the end of the paper. Hence, this study highlights that Time Management in an Islamic perspective is all about managing time fruitfully and meaningfully in order to reap Allah's blessings.

**Keywords:** *Time management; Islamic perspective; Muslims; Prioritization of activities*

## INTRODUCTION

According to The New Encyclopedia Britannica (2007), time is defined as a continuum that lacks spatial dimension. Time is of philosophical interest and has long been the subject of mathematical and scientific investigation. It is perhaps common sense that, even in the absence of consciousness, events would still occur in an order that could be described using the relations of ‘before’ and ‘after’. The measurement of time involves establishing a precise system of reference for specifying when an event occurs (i.e., specifying the epoch and establishing a standard interval of time).

Managing time properly has got many benefits to an individual and also to an organization where he/she works. The reason many feel stressed in their daily lives is that they claim to have too much to do in a short period of time. Being overwhelmed with activities, assignments and work can lead a person to be “stressed out.” Research has proven that time management is helpful and necessary in our busy lives. In order to balance our schedule, we need to be able to organize and utilize our time wisely. Without good time management skills, we can easily fall behind in responsibilities and feel like we do not have enough time (Abduljabbar et al., 2012).

Time represents an extremely important resource in life. It should be effectively utilized, if not, so much will be lost. Lost time cannot be recovered. Once it goes, it never comes back. Therefore, time management skills are essential for all human beings. Muslims are taught to manage their time fruitfully both for their worldly pursuits and for life hereafter. People who use time management skills routinely are the significant achievers in all walks of life i.e. from business to sport to public service. Hence, if Muslims use these skills well, then they will be able to function exceptionally well, even under intense pressure (Islam et al., 2020).

Everybody needs to manage his or her time whether it be at home or at work. The sequence in which we perform tasks everyday has a profound effect on our overall productivity. Most people have the capacity to manage their time better, and doing so makes the working day more productive and leisure time more fulfilling. Many of us feel that sometimes a large part of our working day is wasted. The only way for us to make use of our time is to analyze how we use it now, and then to consider ways in which we can improve upon it in future (Islam et al., 2021).

Allah (ﷻ) says:

*By the time, verily man is in loss, except such as have Faith, and does righteous deeds, and joins (together) in the mutual enjoining of Truth, and of patience and constancy (Al-Asr, 103:1-3).*

In the above verse, Allah (ﷻ) vows that time determines the success of the imperatives of this worldly life. Time is clearly an important *amanah* bestowed by Allah (ﷻ) to us. Every minute counts in life. If we waste our time, we waste our life. If we master time, we master life. Muslims who do not value their time in this world religiously will regret in the life hereafter. Allah (ﷻ) says:

*And the one whom Allah lets go astray, there is no one for him to protect thereafter. And you will see the wrongdoers, when they will see the punishment, that they will say, “Is there any way to be sent back (to the world)?” (As-Shura, 42: 44)*

Hence, the above verse advises a Muslim should value every moment of life in this world before facing the Day of Judgement. The following verse further advocates the wise use of time allocated by Allah before it is too late:

*Respond to your Lord before there comes a day which there wills no reversal from Allah's side... (As-Shura, 42:47).*

The messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said that in the Day of Judgement a man would not be able to step forward until he responds to five questions. The complete hadith is as follows:

*A man shall be asked concerning five things on the Day of Resurrection: concerning his life, how he spent it; concerning his youth, how he grew old; concerning his wealth, how he acquired it, and in what way he spent it; and what was it that he did with the knowledge that he had. (Sunan At-Tirmidhi, Vol. 4, Book 11, Hadith No. 2416)*

In order to give positive response to 'concerning his life, how he spent it', a person must spend his time in the worldly life by following the commandments of Allah (ﷻ) and *sunnah* of the Prophet (ﷺ). This is the only way for true achievements in this world as well as in the life hereafter. Allah (ﷻ) says:

*O those who believe, obey Allah and obey the Messenger, and do not nullify your deeds (Muhammad, 47:33).*

It was narrated from 'Abdullah bin Sa'eed bin Abu Hind that his father said: "I heard Ibn 'Abbas saying that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

*Two blessings which many people squander: Good health and free time. (Ibn Majah, Book: 37, Hadith No. 4170)*

The Arabic word "*maghbun*" mentioned in the hadith comes from the rootword *Ghayn-Ba-Nun* which means to forget, to be lacking in judgement, to deceive, to weaken and "*maghbun*" denotes the lexical meaning of - "deceived, defrauded, cheated".

Based on the hadith mentioned above it is clearly understood that health and leisure time are the biggest capital for human being upon which a lot of people abused. Prophet (ﷺ) was highlighting this careless nature of human beings in this hadith that they find free time, but then hardly use it for beneficial purpose; they find themselves healthy but do not even realize that these are an extraordinary grace from Allah (ﷻ), and that they need to show gratitude by using it for productive purposes. When we enjoy these resources we do not realize their true values. It is only when we lack them that we realize that these two were the special blessings from Allah (ﷻ). And when we lose both i.e. health and free time, then only do we realize and regret not using them for their rightful benefits.

Since time always passes at a fixed and constant speed, one has to be careful for the time allocated to him. The amount of time daily, monthly or yearly is the same for all. It is said that those who care for their time are the ones who make great achievements in their personal and professional lives, and they do realize that time is not enough for doing all what they want to do. In contrast,

those who do not care for achievements are the ones who consider time to be of little value (Al-Jeraisy, 2008).

Al-Jeraisy (2008) maintains that time is the scarcest resource in life. If it is not managed properly, nothing else will be effectively managed. Good management of time is important both for economizing on costs and for proper utilization of other resources. Ironically, in spite of its great importance, time is the most wasted and the least concerned element at both the organizational and individual levels. To further show the importance of time management, the following proverb is worth pondering:

*Yesterday is beyond repair. Tomorrow may never come. Today is alone ours. Make the best use of it as it is your sole, sure possession (Zarathustra).*

Despite great emphasis laid on proper management of time, guidelines hardly exist on time management from an Islamic perspective. Special guidelines based upon empirical research are sorely missing. To fill this gap, therefore, the objectives of the present research are:

- 1) To identify the activities that Muslims should engage more and to prioritize those activities.
- 2) To identify the time wasters and prioritize them.
- 3) To investigate the respondents' demographical impact on the findings in the course of pursuing the above two objectives.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### ***Time Management from the Conventional Perspective***

Konig and Kleinmann (2005) discover that people do not work on projects immediately but when the deadline approaches, they become most active to carry out those projects. This phenomenon is known as 'time discounting' which is the main cause for deadline rush. Does 'time discounting' time management training have any positive impact on the performance of people? Green and Skinner (2005) confirm this as a matter of fact. In their experiment on 233 participants, they found that majority of the respondents recorded significant improvement of performance when practicing on the following areas i.e. planning, prioritizing, assertiveness. They also found that the median improvement of personal effectiveness is 20%.

Sarp et al. (2005) underscore the importance of time management for healthcare professionals. By means of a survey on 143 medical managers and medical specialists, the authors recommend that the medical professionals should emphasize on planning and educate themselves on sound time management. In particular, they should prepare a list of activities to be carried out and prioritize the tasks in the list ahead of time.

Many researchers investigated the relationship between time management and job performance. In particular, Abduljabbar et al. (2012) investigated the above relationship for the administrative staff of the Tenaga National University of Malaysia. The researchers conducted a survey on 220 respondents and found positive relationships on time planning, time attitude, and job performance.

However, as expected, there was a negative relationship between time wasters and job performance. Nevertheless, the whole findings proved contrary to the findings by Macan (1994) who observed no relationship between time management and job performance.

Meanwhile, one of the most relevant areas of research on time management is investigating the relationship between time management and students' academic performance. Using the model originally developed by Britton and Glynn (1989), Britton and Tesser (1991) tested the effects of certain time management practices on students' academic achievement. A principal component analysis on a 35 itemized list provided three components, namely short range planning, time attitudes, and long range planning. The researchers found significant positive correlation between academic achievement (such as CGPA) and time attitude. But surprisingly, they did not find positive correlation between students' SAT scores (obtained before starting the program) and their CGPA.

Sun and Yang (2009) also investigated the relationship between time management practices of higher secondary students in the Shenyang region of China and their learning outcomes. The authors found that students felt pressures coming from different sources. The strongest pressure was to do well in the school examination especially the national college entrance examinations, then pressure came from parents and lastly pressure from the greater society. However, it is reported that the least pressure the students felt was from the school and teachers. Oran (2009) also reveals how students' study time in a semester can be effectively reduced by re-structuring the class-schedules. If the re-structured class-schedules are implemented, the author is of the opinion that about a month time can be saved in a typical semester.

A study revealed that graduate students' academic achievements depend upon on a number of factors (Amida et al., 2022). From a survey of 324 graduate students, Amida et al. (2022) found that academic achievements were strongly related to two main factors, namely students' intrinsic motivation and their time management skills. The authors also found that female students achieved significantly higher scores on time management compared to their male counterparts. In another related study, Adams and Blair (2019) found that undergraduate students' grades have strong correlation to the extent by which they control their study time.

Grissom et al. (2015) investigated 300 school principals in Miami-Dade County Public Schools, USA especially on how they managed their time while administering their respective schools. The authors found that superior time management helped principals met their job demands, reduced job stress, and improved their performance. The authors conclude that building time management capacity for principals is a worthwhile strategy in reserving time on high priority tasks.

In a rare study on government ministers' time management, Dutil and Migone (2022) found that deputy ministers in Canada work long hours and allocate their time fairly consistently across functions. However, on the issue of time allocation significant difference exists on the size of their departments.

Not much work has been done linking time management with Adult Attention Deficit (AAD) and Role System (RS). In a pioneering work in this area, Coetzer (2016) found that time management partially mediates the relationship between AAD and RS. The author concludes that in order to increase the rate of timely completion of tasks and reduce role stress, organizations need to pay

attention on the influence exerted by AAD. In order to do so, the author suggests providing time management training to employees, in addition to training on productivity and management tools and providing organized work space.

A study that involved 147 salespersons, Kalra et al. (2022) investigated the relationships between internal competitive work environment and sales performance. The findings suggest that salespersons' time management skills strongly influence their sales performance. The authors urge that sales managers of companies provide adequate time management training to their sales personnel.

A number of researchers found that physical presence of employees in organization does not necessarily increase organization's productivity (Willingham, 2008; Johns, 2010; Tawiah et al., 2018). In a survey conducted on 520 employees working in different business sectors in Ghana, Tawiah et al. (2018) found that the employees have poor skills in time management. In fact, the employees waste significant amount of time due to failure to manage time properly. Therefore, the authors strongly recommend imparting time management training to employees.

### ***Time Management from an Islamic Perspective***

Going through the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet (ﷺ), it is observed that time keeping is one of the most important issues that has been prescribed in Islam. Muslims are always reminded that life in this world is nothing but temporary. Nobody knows when death will befall upon him/her. Therefore, everyone must value time by obeying Allah (ﷻ) and following the footsteps of the Prophet (ﷺ). Al-Jeraisy (2008) considers time as one of the blessings that Allah (ﷻ) has given to mankind. Indeed, Allah's blessings to human beings are countless and time is the most valuable blessings of all. Allah (ﷻ) says in the Qur'an:

*And if ye would count the favor of Allah ye cannot reckon it. Lo! Allah is indeed Forgiving, Merciful (An-Nahl, 16:18).*

Time is reflected in different forms in the Qur'an, one of which is the Islamic calendar. Allah (ﷻ) says: *Surely, the number of months according to Allah is twelve (as written) in the Book of Allah on the day He Created the heavens and the earth, of which there are four sacred months...* (At-Touba, 9:36).

In this regard, a related hadith is narrated by Abu Bakr (ra): The Prophet (ﷺ) said that *Time has come back to its original state which it had when Allah created the Heavens and the Earth; the year is of twelve months, four of which are sacred. Three of them are in succession; Dhul-Qa'da, Dhul-Hijja and Al-Muharram, and (the fourth being) Rajab Mudar (named after the tribe of Mudar as they used to respect this month) which stands between Jumad (ath-thani) and Sha'ban* (Bukhari, Volume 6, Book 60, Number 184).

Other component of time is that it relates to acts of worships like prayer, fasting and pilgrimage. These are revealed in the following Al-Qur'an verses:

*Verily, As-Salah (the prayer) is enjoyed on the believers at a fixed time (An-Nisa, 4:103).*



*Establish worship (prayers) at the going down of the sun until the dark of night, and (the recital of) the Qur'an at dawn. Lo! (the recital of) the Qur'an at dawn is ever witnessed (Al-Isra, 17:78).*

*The month of Ramadan in which was revealed the Qur'an, a guidance for mankind, and clear proofs of the guidance, and the Criterion (of right and wrong). And whosoever of you is present and witness the month (moon), let him fast in the month... (Al-Baqarah, 2:185).*

*'Commitment to' pilgrimage is made in appointed months. Whoever commits to 'performing' pilgrimage, let them stay away from intimate relations, foul language, and arguments during pilgrimage. Whatever good you do, Allah 'fully' knows of it. Take 'necessary' provisions 'for the journey'—surely the best provision is righteousness. And be mindful of Me, O people of reason! (Al-Baqarah, 2:197).*

Although pilgrimage is performed over the course of a few days in the 12th month of the Islamic lunar calendar, the intention to perform pilgrimage can be made during the 10th, 11th, and the first half of the 12th months i.e. *Shawwal*, *Dhul Qu'dah* and *Dhul Hijjah*.

*And pay its due on the day of harvest, and do not be extravagant. Surely, Allah does not like the extravagant. (Al- An'am, 6:141)*

Therefore, it is clearly comprehended that the four pillars of Islam i.e. Daily Prayers, Fasting, Pilgrimage and Zakat are legislated with a specific timeframe. For prayers, there are fixed hours of the day; Fasting is to be offered during the month of Ramadan; Zakat is to be paid after a full year on the Nisab date and Hajj is to be done on a specific time frame as well.

Qur'an has also emphasized on managing time by relating it to the movement of day and night. Allah (ﷻ) says in the Qur'an:

*Behold! in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of Night and Day, there are indeed Signs for men of understanding (Al-Imran, 3:190).*

*Verily, in the alternation of the Night and the Day, and in all that Allah has created, in the heavens and the earth, are Signs for those who fear Him (Yunus, 10:6).*

*And We made the night as a covering, and made the day as a means of subsistence (An-Naba, 10-11).*

Allah (ﷻ) has made several oaths mentioning time to stress on the importance of time. The related verses are as follows:

*And by the Night as it retreats and by the Dawn when it becomes bright, this is but one of the mighty (portents), a warning to mankind (Al-Mudather, 74:33-36).*

*And by the Night as it dissipates, and the Dawn as it breathes away the darkness, verily this is the word of a most honorable Messenger (Al-Takweer, 81:17-18).*

*By the Glorious morning Light, and by the Night when it is still, your Lord (O prophet) has neither forsaken you, nor has become displeased (Ad-Duha, 93:1-3).*

*By the Night as it conceals (the sun), by the Day as it appears in glory and by the One who created the male and female, your efforts are diverse (Al-Lail, 92:1-3).*

We must understand the wisdom and the purpose of time and to learn how we can use it effectively for our progress, growth and development and not to fall prey to its negative characteristics of either wasting or spending it in vain.

Linking the concept of traditional time management with the Islamic views might help motivate Muslims to be more effective and efficient in their activities. It is to be remembered that life has only one chance. For example, if a student fails in the exams, there is always a next year. If one loses his/her spouse, there can be a second marriage, but when one dies, his time is up and there is no second chance. This life is only about one opportunity. With this short life, we have the opportunity of making the best (Islam et al., 2021).

An empirical study on 223 Malaysian employees by Islam et al. (2021) investigated the relationship between their job performance and various time management components. The authors found statistical significance between job performance and some time management components such as 'usage of schedule' and 'prioritization of tasks'. The authors also related the concept of *Al-Wasatiyyah* with job performance. In another related work, Islam et al. (2020) explored further the relationship between job performance and time management through interviews with 10 Muslim academics, all having PhDs and at least five years of teaching experience. The authors found that a Muslim's time management starts by performing *salat* on time. Once this is managed prudently, this reflects that good time management is being practiced.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Data collection for this study was carried out by means of a self-administered questionnaire survey. The questionnaire is divided into three sections, namely A, B, and C. Section A is about the respondents' demographic information such as gender, age group, nationality, educational background, marital status, and types of employment. Section B list 10 items on time management practices and activities. The 1 to 5-point Likert scale was used to obtain respondents' perceptions on 10 selected items. Lastly, section C is meant to rank seven time wasters and equal number of positive activities. In this study, 250 questionnaires were distributed and out of these 186 responses were received. However, 36 responses were incomplete and had to be discarded. Finally, only 150 complete questionnaires were used for analysis. This gave a response rate of 60 percent. A small gift was offered as an incentive with each questionnaire in order to increase the response rate and participation was entirely voluntary. The data are analyzed using several descriptive statistics namely ANOVA, MANOVA, and Spearman's correlation tests through SPSS software version 25.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION



The data analysis results are presented in three parts. The first part deals with descriptive statistics which is based on demographical information of the respondents. The second part measures respondents' level of agreement/disagreement on the 10 Likert scales type of items. It also performs a comparative analysis on time management practices and activities on the basis of some selective demographical variables. The final part pertains to ranking of a number of useful activities and time wasters.

### ***Demography of the Respondents***

In the survey (see Table 1), male respondents comprises 49.3% while female respondents are 50.7%. This shows that the respondents' gender is quite balanced. Age-group wise, 0.7% of the respondents are 20 years old or below, 66% are 21-30 years old, 22% are 31-40 years old, 8% are 41-50 years old and 3.3% are above 50 years old. On nationality, 48% respondents are Malaysians, whereas 52% are non-Malaysians. In terms of education level, bachelor and master degree holders form the bulk of the respondents' educational background. Together they form about 90% of the entire sample. Ph.D. degree holders constitute only 6%.

Table 1. Demographic profile of the respondents

Description	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	74	49.3
Female	76	50.7
<b>Age Group</b>		
20 years or below	1	0.7
21-30 years	99	66.0
31-40 years	33	22.0
41 – 50 years	12	8.0
Above 50 years	5	3.3
<b>Nationality</b>		
Malaysian	72	48.0
Non-Malaysian	78	52.0
<b>Educational Background</b>		
'O' level or equivalent	2	1.3
Diploma	2	1.3
Bachelor	72	48.0
Master	62	41.3
Ph.D.	9	6.0
Others	3	2.0
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Single	84	56.0
Married	64	42.7
Divorced	2	1.3
<b>Types of employment</b>		

Public sector	58	38.7
Private sector	43	28.7
Self-employed	12	8.0
Others	37	24.7

On Marital status, majority (56%) of the respondents are single whereas 42.7% are married. The respondents' employment status was categorized based on four types which are Public sector (38.7%), Private sector (28.7%), Self-employed (8%), and others (24.7%).

### ***Level of Agreement/Disagreement on Time Management Practices and Activities***

In this study, the researchers analyzed the respondents' level of agreement/disagreement on the time management practices and activities according to the mean values. If any statement's mean value is above 3, then it is assumed that the respondents agreed on that particular issue. On the other hand, if the mean value is less than 3, then it is considered as the respondents' disagreement on the item. Furthermore, if the mean value is around 3, then it may be concluded that the respondents are neutral on the item (see Table 2).

Table 2. Level of agreement/disagreement on time management practices and activities

No	Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	Time management is essential in all kinds of work and activities	4.5800	.84560
2	Make use of previous mistakes to improve my time management	3.9732	1.15634
3	Make use of technology such as computer, internet, to help me in managing time	3.9333	1.12128
4	Maintain a "to-do" list to help me keep track of activities to be done	3.8000	1.26385
5	Accept work requests, which are really someone else's responsibility	3.4467	.93792
6	Complete work myself which should have delegated to subordinate or others	3.3933	1.04847
7	Undertake work as it comes, without looking into priority	3.3067	.86658
8	Regularly take work home with me on evening and weekends	3.3067	1.12892
9	Attend workshops, seminars, training, on time management	2.9800	1.07734
10	Maintain an adequate filing system (can never find things)	2.9067	1.03202

**Note:** 1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree

Table 2 shows that the highest mean is 4.58. This means that the respondents strongly agreed on the corresponding statement "Time management is essential in all kinds of work and activities". A Muslim knows very well that in the *Akhirah*, it will be a matter of regret if worldly time is wasted. Security in the life hereafter depends upon the proper utilization of worldly time by

engaging oneself into activities that are prescribed in Islam. It is also noted that the respondents strongly agreed on three more statements: ‘Make use of previous mistakes to improve my time management’, ‘Make use of technology such as computer, internet, to help me in managing my time’, and ‘Maintain a to-do-list to help me keep track of activities to be done’. Making mistakes is common in life. However, we must learn lessons from these mistakes and should not repeat these mistakes again in future. The Qur’an has already alerted us not to fall into the trap instigated by Satan. Allah (ﷻ) says:

*And then Iblis said, “Because you have put me in the wrong, I shall lie in wait for them on Your straight path; I will assault them from the front and the back, from the right and their left; nor will You find that most of them are grateful.” (Al-Araaf, 7:16-17)*

It can also be recalled that some companions of the Prophet (ﷺ) made mistakes by not heeding the advice of the Prophet (ﷺ) at the time of the battle of Uhud on the third year of Hijrah and they had to pay the price for this. But they did not make this mistake again in any of the future battles.

Using technology, especially smart phone and maintaining to-do-list are common and effective practices to manage time, as evidenced in the literature (Islam et al., 2021; Classens et al., 2007). Surprisingly, the respondents of this study are found to be neutral on attending workshops on time management and maintaining adequate filing systems.

#### ***ANOVA and MANOVA Tests on Time Management Practices and Activities***

The One-way ANOVA test was performed to find out significant differences, if any, on two different groups (gender and nationality) on time management practices and activities (see Tables 3 and 4). Significant differences were found on maintaining "to-do-list" to help keep track of activities ( $p = 0.002$ ) and regularly taking work home on evening and weekends ( $p = 0.015$ ). It is noted that the female respondents like to maintain “to-do-list” more to help their work activities and take their work home regularly during evening and weekends as compared to their male counterpart respondents.

Table 3. ANOVA tests on time management practices and activities based on gender

Variables	ANOVA		Male		Female	
	F	Sig.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
Time management is essential in all kinds of work and activities	2.027	0.157	1.4865	.89509	1.3026	0.67369
Make use of previous mistake to improve my time management	0.326	0.569	3.9178	1.19900	4.0263	1.11921
Make use of technology such as computer, internet, to help me in managing time	0.018	0.892	3.9459	1.09659	3.9211	1.15196
Writing a "to-do" list to helps me to keep track of activities to be done	9.500	0.002**	3.4865	1.26321	4.1053	1.19531
Accept work requests, which are really someone else's responsibility	0.471	0.494	3.5000	1.01022	3.3947	0.86532
Complete work myself which should have delegated to subordinate or others	0.000	0.987	3.3919	1.13255	3.3947	0.96718
Undertake work as it comes, without looking into priority	3.391	0.068	3.1757	0.92689	3.4342	0.78885
Regularly take work home with me on evening and weekends	6.029	0.015*	3.0811	1.19080	3.5263	1.02598
Attend workshops, seminars, training, on time management	1.302	0.256	2.8784	1.10977	3.0789	1.04260
Maintain an adequate filing system (can never find things)	3.019	0.084	3.0541	1.08403	2.7632	0.96427

**Note:** \* variable is significant at the 0.05 level and \*\* variable is 0.01 significant level (2-tailed).

The results of the one-way ANOVA test also shows that the different nationality of the respondents has significant differences on some of the items as shown in Table 4. The list of items on which significant differences exists includes "Time management is essential in all kinds of work and activities" ( $p < 0.001$ ), "Make use of previous mistakes to improve my time management" ( $p = 0.031$ ), "Make use of technology such as computer, internet, to help me in managing time" ( $p = 0.011$ ), and "Undertake work as it comes, without looking into priority" ( $p = 0.015$ ). The mean values indicate that Malaysian respondents are more likely to use their previous mistakes and technology to improve their time management skills than non-Malaysian respondents. Malaysian respondents also emphasize more for undertaking their works without looking into priority compared to non-Malaysian respondents. However, the non-Malaysian respondents believe more on the essentiality of time management in all kind of works and activities compared to Malaysian respondents (see Table 4).

Table 4. ANOVA tests on time management practices and activities based on nationality

Variables	F	ANOVA Sig.	Malaysian		Non-Malaysian	
			Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
Time management is essential in all kinds of work and activities	12.707	0.000**	4.2958	1.1862	4.4359	1.3105
Make use of previous mistake to improve my time management	3.573	0.031*	4.2143	0.96147	3.7436	1.27346
Make use of technology such as computer, internet, to help me in managing time	4.632	0.011*	4.1972	1.07729	3.6795	1.11068
Writing a "to-do" list to helps me to keep track of activities to be done	7.329	0.001	4.1972	1.07729	3.4359	1.32498
Accept work requests, which are really someone else's responsibility	1.306	0.274	3.4930	0.79054	3.4231	1.05090
Complete work myself which should have delegated to subordinate or others	0.085	0.919	3.3803	0.81707	3.4103	1.23200
Undertake work as it comes, without looking into priority	4.301	0.015*	3.5070	0.84301	3.1154	0.85251
Regularly take work home with me on evening and weekends	2.241	0.110	3.3662	1.05883	3.2821	1.17216
Attend workshops, seminars, training, on time management	1.720	0.183	2.9859	0.97823	3.0000	1.15095
Maintain an adequate filing system (can never find things)	1.916	0.151	2.9718	0.97059	2.8718	1.07340

**Note:** \* variable is significant at the 0.05 level and \*\* variable is 0.01 significant level (2-tailed).

According to Hair *et al.* (2010), the Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) is a test that measures the differences of two or more metric dependent variables based on a set of categorical (nonmetric) variables acting as independent variables. In this study, the researchers used this one-way MANOVA test to examine the effects of demographical characteristics (gender, age, nationality, educational background, marital status, and types of employment) on time management practices and activities. Based on the test, results disclosed that the three demographical characteristics namely gender ( $F = 4.31, p < 0.001$ ), nationality ( $F = 3.33, p < 0.001$ ), and marital status ( $F = 1.67, p = 0.037$ ) have significant different effects on time management practices and activities (as shown in Table 5).

Table 5. MANOVA tests on time management practices and activities

Effect	Model	Value	F	Sig.
Gender	Pillai's Trace	0.219	4.319	0.000**
	Wilks' Lambda	0.781	4.319	0.000**
	Hotelling's Trace	0.280	4.319	0.000**
Age	Pillai's Trace	0.204	0.740	0.880
	Wilks' Lambda	0.811	0.731	0.889
	Hotelling's Trace	0.217	0.723	0.897
Nationality	Pillai's Trace	0.357	3.351	0.000**
	Wilks' Lambda	0.675	3.331 <sup>a</sup>	0.000**
	Hotelling's Trace	0.435	3.311	0.000**
Educational Background	Pillai's Trace	0.273	0.798	0.840
	Wilks' Lambda	0.753	0.789	0.851
	Hotelling's Trace	0.295	0.782	0.861
Marital Status	Pillai's Trace	0.217	1.681	0.036*
	Wilks' Lambda	0.794	1.678 <sup>a</sup>	0.037*
	Hotelling's Trace	0.246	1.674	0.037*
Types of Employment	Pillai's Trace	0.188	0.921	0.589
	Wilks' Lambda	0.822	0.920	0.590
	Hotelling's Trace	0.205	0.919	0.592

**Note:** \* variable is significant at the 0.05 level and \*\* variable is 0.01 significant level (2-tailed).

However, interestingly the MANOVA tests also show that three other demographical characteristics namely age ( $F = 0.73$ ,  $p = 0.88$ ), educational background ( $F = 0.79$ ,  $p = 0.85$ ), and types of employment ( $F = 0.92$ ,  $p = 0.59$ ) do not have significant difference on time management practices and activities.

### ***Ranking of Positive Activities on the Basis of Gender and Nationality***

From the literature and based upon the researchers' knowledge on Islam, seven positive activities were compiled and their ranks were determined on the basis of two demographical variables, namely gender and nationality. The respondents were asked to rank the most preferred activity as rank 1, for the second most preferred activity rank 2, and so on. Responses from the respondents based on gender were captured and analysed, resulting in Table 6.

Table 6. Ranking positive activities based on gender



Positive activities	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank		RCC
			Male	Female	
Visit sick relative/friend in hospital	3.0333	1.61958	2	3	0.964
Help your spouse in her/his work	3.066	1.6974	3	2	
Visit your relatives whom you have not met for a long time	4.460	1.5178	4	4	
Spend enough time with your family	2.333	1.5658	1	1	
Watching TV programs related to your interest	5.240	1.9096	7	7	
Spend time with friends	4.626	1.7009	5	5	
Engage into community development work	4.873	2.0243	6	6	

Apparently, it is observed that both male and female respondents assigned the highest priority to “Spend enough time with your family”. Unequivocally, a Muslim has great responsibility towards his/her family members. Allah (ﷻ) stresses that:

*O you who believe, save yourself and your family from hell fire, the fuel of which is human beings and stones... (At-Tahrim, 66:6)*

A responsible Muslim must spend enough time with his/her family members, educate them about Islam and make them cognizant about their religious obligations. The Prophet (ﷺ) said, “*Travel is a portion of torment. It prevents one of you from eating, drinking, and sleeping, so when you have finished your purpose then quickly return to your families.*” (Sahih al-Bukhari, No. 1710; Sahih Muslim, No. 1927). We know from the biography of the Prophet (ﷺ) that he perfected all kinds of family relationships: a perfect father, a perfect friend, a perfect husband and a perfect family member. Aisha (ra), the wife of the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ), was asked, “What did the Prophet (ﷺ) used to do in his house?” She replied, “*He used to keep himself busy serving his family and when it was the time for prayer, he would go for it*” (Al-Bukhari, Book 10, Hadith No. 676).

Visiting sick relatives (No. 2 in overall rank) is also a commendable activity and widely practiced by the companions of the Prophet (ﷺ). Abu Huraira reported that Allah’s Messenger (ﷺ) said: “Who amongst you is fasting today? Abu Bakr said: I am. He (again) asked: Who amongst you followed a funeral procession today? Abu Bakr said: I did. He (the Prophet) again asked: Who amongst you served food to the needy? Abu Bakr said: I did. He (again) asked: *Who amongst you has today visited the sick?* Abu Bakr said: *I did.* Thereupon Allah’s Messenger (ﷺ) said: Anyone in whom (these good deeds) are combined will certainly enter paradise.” (Sahih Muslim, Book 31, Hadith No. 5880).

Family bondage gets strengthened and a family becomes a happy family when there is a mutual love and respect between the husband and the wife. This bondage gets solidified further when spouses help each other in all routine family activities. Prophet of Allah (ﷺ) himself used to do some household works such as cleaning his clothes or preparing vegetables and cooking for himself. Allah (ﷻ) advises:

*Help one another in acts of piety and righteousness. And do not assist each other in acts of sinfulness and transgression. And be aware of Allah. Verily, Allah is severe in punishment.*” (Al-Maaida, 5:2).

Amra (ra) said:

*A'isha (ra) was asked: 'What was Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) accustomed to doing in his home?' She said: 'He was a normal human being. He used to examine his clothes for lice, milk his sheep and serve himself.* (Musnad Ahmad, Hadith No. 26194)

Therefore, it is not surprising that the item “Help your spouse in her/his work” has been assigned a reasonably higher rank. Similarly, visiting relatives occasionally, spending time with friends and engaging oneself in community development works are also commendable activities which can be amply rewarded in the life hereafter.

Ranks of the seven activities were also computed for both gender as shown in Table 6. The Spearman's rank correlation coefficient is 0.964 which is significant at 1% level. Obviously, the ranks generated by the male and female respondents are similar, i.e. they agree on the ranks for the items. In other words, there is no significant difference of ranks generated by male and female respondents.

Table 7. Ranking positive activities based on nationality

Positive activities	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank		RCC
			Malaysian	Non Malaysian	
Visit sick relative/friend in hospital	3.0333	1.61958	3	2	0.750
Help your spouse in her/his work	3.066	1.6974	2	3	
Visit your relatives whom you have not met for a long time	4.460	1.5178	4	5	
Spend enough time with your family	2.333	1.5658	1	1	
Watching TV programs related to your interest	5.240	1.9096	6	7	
Spend time with friends	4.626	1.7009	5	6	
Engage into community development work	4.873	2.0243	7	4	

Ranks of seven activities were also computed separately for Malaysian and non-Malaysian respondents (see Table 7). In fact, ranks of those activities can also be calculated for other demographic variables such as age or educational qualification. But in this study, ranks of the activities are shown for two notably important dichotomous variables, namely gender and nationality. Once again, it is found that the ranks generated by different nationalities are close to the overall ranks and Spearman's rank correlation coefficient is 0.750 which is statistically significant at 5% level (see Table 7). This shows the universality of the Islamic faith whereby Muslims across the globe are uniform in ranking the positive activities.

### ***Ranking of Time Wasters based on Gender and Nationality***

From the existing literature, seven time wasters were identified and respondents were asked to rank them. Like the positive activities, respondents were also instructed to rank number 1 to that item which was perceived as the number one time waster, the second most time waster was to be ranked 2, and so on. The overall mean ranks of these seven time wasters are shown in Table 8. From the mean ranks, the three most significant time wasters are found to be:

- Sleeping more than average
- Gossiping with friends on useless topics
- Chatting on the Internet (WhatsApp) on useless stuff

It is found that from the Qur'an, Sunnah as well Islamic literature, there are ample supports on the above findings. As a characteristic of *muttaqi* people, Allah (ﷻ) says:

*Their sides remain apart from their beds. They call their Lord with fear and hope, and spend from what We have given to them. (As-Sajda, 32:16)*

Majority of scholars on the science of Qur'an are of the opinion that the above verse relates to the *Tahajjud* prayer, which is performed after midnight. According to a number of *sahih* hadiths, *Tahajjud* prayers have great virtues. Though it is not an obligatory prayer, however sincere believers get up at night from their sleep of comfort and seek forgiveness from their Lord and express gratitude towards Him. To get Allah's mercy in the life hereafter, a Muslim should try not to sleep too much at night and waste the opportunity to present himself/herself before his/her Lord.

On the other hand, gossiping is such an activity which is not just discouraged in Islam, but is staunchly prohibited. Often, people spend considerable amount of time in useless talks which ultimately ends up with backbiting – a censurable act according to Islam (Humazah, 104:1). Prophet of Allah (ﷺ) said, “*One who believes in Allah and the Hereafter utter good words or let him be silent.*” (Bukhari, Book 78, Hadith No. 6136). Often gossiping between two persons occur based upon false information. Any discussion or decision made based upon non-verified information is prohibited in Islam. Allah (ﷻ) says:

*O you who believe! If a Faasiq (liar – evil person) comes to you with any news, verify it, lest you should harm people in ignorance, and afterwards you become regretful for what you have done. (Hujurat, 49:6)*

Notably, “Engaging in some sports activities” has received last rank, i.e. it is not a big time waster. In fact, engaging in some sports activities is good for physical health.

Table 8. Ranking of time wasters based on gender

Time Wasters	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank		RCC
			Male	Female	
Using computer programs not related to one's area	3.866	1.7210	4	5	0.809
Sleeping more than average	3.346	2.0266	2	1	
Engaging in some sport activities	5.086	2.2313	7	7	
Watching not-so-important TV programs	3.866	1.7596	5	4	
Gossiping with friends on useless topics	3.380	1.9616	1	3	
Chatting on the internet on worthless things	3.473	1.8670	3	2	
Listening radio or reading books which are not so useful	4.720	1.8249	6	6	

From the ranks assigned by different gender, it is noted (see Table 8) that male respondents ranked “Gossiping with friends on useless topics” as number one time waster, whereas female respondents view that “Sleeping more than average” is the number one time waster. Overall, only minor difference exists between the two sets of ranks assigned by them (rank correlation coefficient = 0.809).

Table 9 provides ranks of the above mentioned seven time wasters based on nationality. Significant differences occur on two items namely “Watching not-so-important TV programs” and “Chatting on the internet on worthless things”. These differences pushed down the rank correlation coefficient (0.214). Malaysian respondents agreed that “Chatting on the internet on worthless things” is the number one time waster, whereas non-Malaysian respondents agreed “Watching not-so-important TV programs” is the number one time waster. Notably, both Malaysian and non-Malaysian respondents assigned “Sleeping more than average” as the second rank time waster.

Table 9. Ranking of time wasters based on nationality

Time Wasters	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank		RCC
			Malaysia	Non Malaysian	
Using computer programs not related to one's area	3.866	1.7210	5	3	
Sleeping more than average	3.346	2.0266	2	2	
Engaging in some sport activities	5.086	2.2313	7	5	0.214
Watching not-so-important TV programs	3.866	1.7596	4	1	
Gossiping with friends on useless topics	3.380	1.9616	3	4	
Chatting on the internet on worthless things	3.473	1.8670	1	6	
Listening radio or reading books which are not so useful	4.720	1.8249	6	7	

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, managing time is essential for securing success in both worlds. Indeed, it is impossible to get back the time which has been lost or wasted or spent in vain activities. Since we have limited time in our life, we must make sure that we utilize it to gain maximum benefits. One of the issues in time management is to identify activities where we should spend more of our time while we should not indulge our precious time into wasteful activities. In this exploratory study, all the respondents contend that Muslims should take utmost care to manage their time. This study identifies the activities where Muslims should spend more time. The activities include spending time with family members, visiting sick relatives, and helping spouse in household works. This study also identifies the activities that should be avoided as much as possible as they are considered as time wasters. The negative activities include gossiping with friends on useless topics, sleeping more than average time, chatting in the internet especially in the WhatsApp forum and other social media.

Admittedly, this study faces certain limitations especially in terms of its rather small sample size and its limited coverage in terms of items for survey. However, since the topic of the study is generic in nature, samples can actually be drawn from any nationality of the world. Hence, it could

be applied in other world studies too. The list of items for survey using the Likert scale can also be enhanced. Since only seven positive activities and seven time wasters were considered in the survey, this list can also be expanded extracted from extensive literature reviews and conducting more interviews.

As for future works, this study can be extended to include the quantitative methodology where the exploratory factor analysis can be applied on somewhat exhaustive list of items. Also, additional hypotheses can be formulated and tested linking the various constructs related to time management in Islam.

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