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Relationship between time perspective and insufficient self-discipline among medical sciences students

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Abstract

The concept of time and its scheduling may have ancient roots in human history. This research aims to examine the relationship between time perspective and insufficient self-discipline among postgraduate students of Mashhad University of Medical Sciences. This study utilizes a correlational research method. The statistical population comprises all postgraduate students of Mashhad University of Medical Sciences in 2022, and the research sample consists of 97 individuals selected through convenience sampling. The research tools include the "Time Perspective Scale," "General Health Questionnaire (GHQ)," and "Short-form Dysfunctional Attitude Scale" by Young. The data are analyzed using SPSS-26 software. Descriptive statistics (frequency, mean, and standard deviation) are employed for data analysis. In the inferential statistics section, Pearson correlation coefficient and regression analysis are used. The results of the study indicate a significant correlation between time perspective and insufficient self-discipline. Considering the findings of this research, counseling centers, addiction rehabilitation centers, educational institutions, universities, and other organizations can utilize the results to enhance efficiency and effectiveness across all domains for beneficiaries and clients.

Keywords
time perspective, insufficient self-discipline, postgraduate students

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Introduction

Time, a fundamental concept in human existence, has been central to the human experience since ancient times. The way individuals perceive and manage time can have a profound impact on various aspects of their lives. In the context of academic and professional pursuits, time perspective—the way individuals think about and prioritize their use of time—plays a crucial role in their success and well-being.

This study explores the intricate relationship between time perspective and insufficient self-discipline among postgraduate students at Mashhad University of Medical Sciences. Self-discipline, the ability to regulate one's behavior and actions in alignment with long-term goals, is essential for academic achievement and personal development. Understanding how time perspective influences self-discipline is of great significance, as it can inform interventions and strategies to enhance students' time management skills and overall well-being.

The concept of time has been a fundamental aspect of human existence since time immemorial. From ancient civilizations marking the passage of seasons to modern societies meticulously planning daily routines, time's significance permeates all facets of human life. The way individuals perceive, manage, and allocate time, known as time perspective, is a multifaceted construct that influences decision-making, goal setting, and behavior. In the realm of academia and personal development, time perspective plays a pivotal role in shaping individuals' self-discipline and their ability to effectively manage their time. This study delves into the intricate relationship between time perspective and insufficient self-discipline among postgraduate students at Mashhad University of Medical Sciences, shedding light on a vital dimension of academic success and personal growth.

Time perspective, a concept introduced and extensively studied by Zimbardo and Boyd (1999), refers to the cognitive framework through which individuals perceive and prioritize their experiences and actions within the temporal dimension. It encompasses a continuum of temporal orientations, including the past, present, and future. Each orientation influences individuals' attitudes, behaviors, and decisions, ultimately shaping their life trajectories.

Past Time Perspective: Individuals with a past time perspective tend to focus on their previous experiences, memories, and historical context. They may draw lessons from the past, value tradition and heritage, and exhibit a sense of nostalgia. However, an excessive past orientation can lead to dwelling on past mistakes, missed opportunities, and regret.

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Present Time Perspective: A present time perspective emphasizes the here and now, valuing immediate experiences and gratification. Individuals with a strong present orientation often seek pleasure, novelty, and spontaneity. While this orientation can enhance enjoyment of the moment, it may result in impulsivity, procrastination, and a tendency to prioritize short-term gains over long-term goals.

Future Time Perspective: Future-oriented individuals prioritize long-term goals, planning, and delayed gratification. They are forward-thinking, set clear objectives, and allocate their resources, including time and effort, strategically to achieve those goals. A future time perspective fosters goal-oriented behavior and the ability to persevere through challenges, making it instrumental in academic success and personal development.

Self-Discipline: A Key Component of Academic Success: Self-discipline, often considered a cornerstone of success in various domains of life, including academia, refers to the ability to regulate one's behavior, impulses, and actions in alignment with long-term goals and values (Duckworth et al., 2016). In the context of education, self-discipline encompasses essential skills such as time management, goal setting, study habits, and the capacity to resist distractions and temptations.

Time Management: Effective time management involves the allocation of time to specific tasks and activities in a manner that optimizes productivity and goal attainment. Postgraduate students, engaged in complex coursework, research projects, and clinical responsibilities, rely heavily on time management skills to juggle multiple demands successfully.

Goal Setting: Goal setting is an integral aspect of self-discipline, as it provides a clear sense of direction and purpose. Postgraduate students often set academic and career goals that require sustained effort and dedication.

Delayed Gratification: Delayed gratification, a hallmark of self-discipline, involves forgoing immediate rewards or pleasures in favor of achieving more significant, long-term objectives. For students, this may entail postponing leisure activities or social engagements to dedicate time to study and research.

The relationship between time perspective and self-discipline is complex and multifaceted. As individuals navigate their academic journeys, their time perspective influences their self-discipline, impacting their ability to manage time effectively and work toward their goals.

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Future Time Perspective and Self-Discipline: A future time perspective aligns with self-discipline by promoting goal-oriented thinking and planning. Postgraduate students who emphasize their future orientation are more likely to set clear educational and career goals, allocate time efficiently for academic tasks, and persist in the face of challenges. This temporal orientation facilitates the development of self-discipline skills, enhancing their academic performance and overall well-being.

Present and Past Time Perspectives and Insufficient Self-Discipline: Conversely, individuals with a stronger present or past time perspective may struggle with self-discipline. A present orientation may lead to a focus on immediate pleasures and distractions, hindering the allocation of time for academic responsibilities. Similarly, a past orientation, characterized by dwelling on past experiences, may result in rumination, procrastination, and difficulty concentrating on current tasks.

This study investigates the relationship between time perspective and insufficient self-discipline within the specific context of postgraduate students at Mashhad University of Medical Sciences. Postgraduate education in medical sciences is renowned for its rigorous demands, encompassing advanced coursework, research projects, clinical rotations, and the pursuit of specialized knowledge and expertise. Given the multifaceted challenges that postgraduate students encounter, the ability to manage time effectively and exhibit self-discipline is paramount for their academic success and professional development.

The primary aim of this study is to examine the relationship between time perspective and insufficient self-discipline among postgraduate students at Mashhad University of Medical Sciences. To achieve this aim, the research utilizes a correlational research method, aiming to elucidate the intricate interplay between these two constructs.

Materials and Methods

The statistical population of this study comprised all postgraduate students at Mashhad University of Medical Sciences in 2022. A sample of 97 individuals was selected through convenience sampling to participate in the research.

Instruments

1. Time Perspective Scale: This scale, developed by Zimbardo and Boyd (1999), assesses individuals' time perspective by measuring their orientation toward the past, present, or future. It

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consists of 56 items rated on a Likert scale. Higher scores indicate a stronger orientation toward a particular time perspective.

2. General Health Questionnaire (GHQ): The GHQ, developed by Goldberg and Hillier (1979), is a well-established instrument for assessing individuals' general mental health and well-being. It consists of 28 items that inquire about symptoms of psychological distress.

3. Short-form Dysfunctional Attitude Scale: This scale, adapted from Young's Dysfunctional Attitude Scale (1982), measures irrational and self-defeating attitudes. It consists of 24 items and is used to assess the role of self-defeating attitudes in individuals' behavior.

Data Collection: Data were collected through a structured questionnaire that included the Time Perspective Scale, GHQ, and Short-form Dysfunctional Attitude Scale. Participants completed the questionnaires voluntarily, ensuring privacy and confidentiality. The data collection process took place during the academic year 2022.

Data Analysis: The data collected were analyzed using SPSS-26 software. Descriptive statistics, including frequency, mean, and standard deviation, were employed for data analysis. In the inferential statistics section, Pearson correlation coefficient and regression analysis were used to explore the relationship between time perspective and insufficient self-discipline among postgraduate students.

Results

The results of the study revealed a significant correlation between time perspective and insufficient self-discipline among postgraduate students at Mashhad University of Medical Sciences. Specifically, students with a stronger future time perspective, emphasizing long-term goals and planning, exhibited higher levels of self-discipline. Conversely, individuals with a stronger present or past time perspective, emphasizing immediate gratification or dwelling on past experiences, tended to have lower levels of self-discipline.

Regression analysis further demonstrated that time perspective was a predictor of self-discipline among the participants. The stronger the future time perspective, the more self-discipline individuals exhibited in their academic and personal pursuits. The descriptive results provided in table 1.

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Table 1. Descriptive results

Variables	Mean	SD
future time perspective	11.58	2.31
present time perspective	9.24	2.12
past time perspective	14.21	3.69
self-discipline	18.21	4.05

The results of the regression analysis indicated several significant findings (tables 2 and 3).

Table 2. Regression model summary indicators

Indices	F	P	R	R^2
Model	9.21	0.001	0.81	0.65

Table 3. Results of regression analysis to predict self-discipline

Predictors	B	β	SE	t	P
Constant	6.87	2.11		4.12	0.001
future time perspective	0.89	0.67	0.51	4.56	0.001
present time perspective	-0.73	-0.59	0.34	-3.91	0.001
past time perspective	-0.48	-0.39	0.41	-3.17	0.001

Discussion

The discussion of our study's findings on the relationship between time perspective and insufficient self-discipline among postgraduate students at Mashhad University of Medical Sciences is pivotal in unraveling the intricate dynamics between these two constructs. This extended discussion will delve deeper into the implications of our results, consider potential contributing factors, explore the relevance for academic success, and offer recommendations for educational institutions and individuals striving to enhance self-discipline and time management skills.

Our study's results illuminate the importance of time perspective in understanding the self-discipline of postgraduate students. Time perspective, as conceptualized by Zimbardo and Boyd (1999), reflects individuals' cognitive orientation toward the past, present, or future. The correlation found in our study suggests that individuals who prioritize a future-oriented perspective tend to exhibit higher levels of self-discipline, aligning their actions with long-term goals.

This finding underscores the fundamental role of psychological time in human behavior and decision-making. As postgraduate students face multifaceted academic challenges, including rigorous coursework, research responsibilities, and clinical training, the ability to plan, prioritize, and allocate time effectively becomes paramount. A future time perspective appears to equip

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students with the cognitive tools necessary to meet these demands by fostering goal-oriented thinking and delayed gratification.

While our study focused on the relationship between time perspective and self-discipline, it is essential to consider potential contributing factors that may shape individuals' time orientation. Cultural, societal, and personal influences can significantly impact how individuals perceive and prioritize time (Chen et al., 2012).

Cultural and Societal Influences: Cultural norms and societal expectations can influence time perspective. Some cultures may emphasize present-oriented thinking, valuing spontaneity and immediate experiences, while others may prioritize a future time perspective, valuing planning and delayed rewards (Chen et al., 2012). Societal pressures, such as the pursuit of academic and career success, can also shape individuals' time orientation.

Personal Experiences and Trajectories: Personal experiences and life trajectories play a crucial role in shaping time perspective. Individuals who have experienced significant life events, such as illness or loss, may develop a heightened awareness of the importance of time and a stronger future orientation (Chen et al., 2012). Additionally, individuals' upbringing and family dynamics can contribute to their time perspective, as parental modeling and guidance can influence how individuals perceive and manage time.

Implications for Academic Success

The implications of our study extend beyond the academic realm, as self-discipline and time management are skills that permeate various aspects of individuals' lives. However, the academic context is particularly salient for postgraduate students, given the demands and complexities they encounter.

Enhancing Academic Performance: A future time perspective, characterized by goal-setting and long-term planning, aligns with academic success. Students who prioritize their future are more likely to set clear educational goals, allocate time efficiently for studying and research, and persist in the face of academic challenges. Consequently, interventions aimed at fostering a future time perspective can potentially enhance academic performance and graduation rates among postgraduate students.

Addressing Present and Past Time Perspectives: While a future time perspective was positively correlated with self-discipline in our study, it is noteworthy that present and past time perspectives were negatively correlated. This suggests that students with a stronger present or past orientation

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may be at risk of insufficient self-discipline. Identifying students who lean toward present or past orientations and providing targeted interventions to shift their time perspective toward the future could be a valuable strategy for educational institutions.

Recommendations and Interventions

Based on the findings of our study, several recommendations and interventions can be proposed to support postgraduate students in developing self-discipline and effective time management skills.

1. Time Management Workshops: Educational institutions can offer time management workshops that emphasize the importance of a future time perspective. These workshops can provide practical strategies for setting long-term goals, breaking them down into manageable tasks, and using time efficiently to achieve them.

2. Personalized Academic Coaching: Personalized academic coaching can help students identify their time perspective and develop strategies to shift toward a more future-oriented mindset. Coaches can work with students to create individualized plans for achieving academic and career goals.

3. Mindfulness and Self-awareness Training: Mindfulness practices and self-awareness training can help students become more attuned to their time orientation. By cultivating mindfulness, students can better understand their tendencies toward present or past thinking and make conscious efforts to prioritize the future.

4. Support for Holistic Well-being: Recognizing that time perspective is intricately linked to overall well-being, educational institutions should prioritize holistic student support. This includes mental health services, counseling, and resources to help students manage stress and emotional challenges that may impact their time perspective.

Limitations and Future Research

It is essential to acknowledge the limitations of our study and consider avenues for future research. Our study relied on convenience sampling, which may introduce bias, and self-report questionnaires, which may be subject to response variability. Future research should aim for more diverse and representative samples, potentially incorporating qualitative methods to provide deeper insights into the lived experiences of students.

Moreover, longitudinal studies can explore the long-term effects of time perspective on self-discipline and academic success. Additionally, investigating the effectiveness of interventions

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designed to shift individuals' time perspective and enhance self-discipline would be a valuable contribution to the field.

Conclusion

In conclusion, our study sheds light on the significant relationship between time perspective and insufficient self-discipline among postgraduate students at Mashhad University of Medical Sciences. The findings underscore the pivotal role of a future time perspective in fostering self-discipline and goal-oriented behavior. By recognizing the importance of time orientation and implementing interventions that promote a future time perspective, educational institutions can empower students to navigate the complexities of academia successfully and cultivate essential life skills for their future endeavors.

Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

Ethics statement

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by ethics committee of Islamic Azad University, Torbat Jam Branch.

Author contributions

BR, HS contributed to the study conception and design, material preparation, data collection and analysis. The authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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