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## **ENHANCING ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT THROUGH EFFECTIVE TIME MANAGEMENT HABITS: A COUNSELLING INTERVENTION FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN FAKO DIVISION, CAMEROON**

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### **Abstract**

This study examined how time management habits, developed through structured counselling intervention strategies, enhance academic success among students in secondary schools in Fako Division. It was motivated by persistent fluctuations in students' performance at public examinations which have been linked to poor study habits, particularly ineffective time management. The study adopted an embedded mixed-methods research design, with a dominant quantitative component supported by qualitative insights. A single-group pre-test and post-test quasi-experimental design was used to assess changes in students' time management habits and academic performance following the intervention. The sample consisted twelve purposively selected participants, including ten form five students and two guidance counsellors from Bilingual Grammar School, Molyko-Buea. Data were collected using study habits pre- and post-tests, a structured Counselling intervention protocol, interview guides, and students' sequence test results. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and effect size analysis, while qualitative data were analyzed thematically. Findings showed that prior to the intervention, students demonstrated poor time management habits characterized by lack of structured planning, study routines, ineffective prioritization, poor time allocation, and high susceptibility to distractions. These deficiencies were reflected in low sequence test scores, weak subject averages, and limited subject pass rates. The counselling intervention led to a significant improvement in all indicators of time management, with students demonstrating the use of personal study timetables, improved prioritization of academic tasks, better allocation of study time, and enhanced management of distractions. Correspondingly, students' academic performance improved substantially, as evidenced by higher sequence test scores, increased subject averages, and a greater number of subjects passed. The effect size analysis further

indicated that the improvement was statistically significant and not due to chance. The study also established that improvements in sequence test performance serve as reliable predictors of success at public examinations, thereby confirming that enhanced time management habits directly contribute to academic achievement. The findings demonstrated that the counselling intervention not only improved academic outcomes but also facilitated a transformation in students' study behaviors, including increased time awareness, structured planning, and disciplined engagement with academic tasks. It was concluded that effective time management habits, when systematically developed through structured counselling intervention strategies, play a critical role in improving students' academic success

### **Keywords:**

*Enhancing Academic Achievement, Effective, Time, Management, Habits, Counselling Intervention, Secondary School. Students, Fako Division, Cameroon.*

### **Resumé**

*Cette étude a examiné la manière dont les habitudes de gestion du temps, développées à travers des stratégies structurées d'intervention en conseil, contribuent à l'amélioration de la réussite scolaire des élèves des établissements secondaires de la Département du Fako. Elle a été motivée par les fluctuations persistantes des performances des élèves aux examens officiels, souvent associées à de mauvaises habitudes d'étude, notamment une gestion inefficace du temps. L'étude a adopté un devis de recherche mixte intégré, à dominante quantitative, complété par des données qualitatives. Un devis quasi expérimental à groupe unique avec prétest et post-test a été utilisé afin d'évaluer les changements intervenus dans les habitudes de gestion du temps et les performances scolaires des élèves à la suite de l'intervention. L'échantillon était constitué de douze participants sélectionnés de manière raisonnée, dont dix élèves de classe de troisième et deux conseillers d'orientation du Lycée Bilingue de Molyko-Buea. Les données ont été recueillies à l'aide de prétests et post-tests sur les habitudes d'étude, d'un protocole structuré d'intervention en conseil, de guides d'entretien et des résultats des évaluations séquentielles des élèves. Les données quantitatives ont été analysées à l'aide de statistiques descriptives et de l'analyse de la taille d'effet, tandis que les données qualitatives ont fait l'objet d'une analyse thématique. Les résultats ont révélé qu'avant l'intervention, les élèves présentaient de faibles compétences en gestion du temps, caractérisées par l'absence de planification structurée, de routines d'étude régulières, une priorisation inefficace des tâches, une mauvaise répartition du temps d'étude et une forte vulnérabilité aux distractions. Ces insuffisances se traduisaient par de faibles résultats aux évaluations séquentielles, des moyennes générales peu satisfaisantes et un nombre limité de matières validées. L'intervention en conseil a entraîné une amélioration significative de tous les indicateurs de gestion du temps. Les élèves ont notamment adopté des emplois du temps personnels d'étude, amélioré la priorisation des tâches académiques, optimisé l'allocation du temps consacré aux études et renforcé leur capacité à gérer les distractions. Parallèlement, leurs performances scolaires se sont nettement améliorées, comme en témoignent l'augmentation des notes aux évaluations séquentielles, l'amélioration des moyennes de matières et le nombre plus élevé de matières réussies. L'analyse de la taille d'effet a confirmé que ces progrès étaient statistiquement significatifs et non attribuables au hasard. L'étude a également établi que les performances obtenues aux évaluations séquentielles constituent des prédicteurs fiables de la réussite aux examens officiels, confirmant ainsi que l'amélioration des habitudes de gestion du temps contribue directement à la réussite scolaire. Les résultats ont démontré que l'intervention en*

*conseil a non seulement amélioré les résultats académiques, mais a également favorisé une transformation des comportements d'étude des élèves, notamment par une meilleure conscience du temps, une planification structurée et un engagement plus discipliné dans les activités académiques. L'étude conclut que des habitudes efficaces de gestion du temps, lorsqu'elles sont développées de manière systématique à travers des stratégies structurées d'intervention en conseil, jouent un rôle déterminant dans l'amélioration de la réussite scolaire des élèves.*

**Mots-clés:** *Réussite scolaire, gestion efficace du temps, habitudes de gestion du temps, intervention de conseil, élèves du secondaire, département du Fako, Cameroun.*

## **Introduction**

Academic success at public examinations has remained a major concern in the secondary school system, particularly in contexts where performance outcomes determine students' access to higher education and career opportunities. In Cameroon, public examinations such as the General Certificate of Education (GCE) Ordinary Level have continued to serve as critical benchmarks for evaluating students' academic achievement. However, reports from the Cameroon General Certificate of Education (GCE) Board have consistently indicated fluctuations in performance, with a significant proportion of students failing to attain the required scores for progression. Scholars such as Ako(2019) attributed this trend not only to cognitive inability but also to ineffective study habits, among which poor time management was prominently identified.

Many secondary school students struggle to effectively organize their study time, often engaging in last-minute preparation, excessive social distractions, and irregular study patterns. In line with this, Ndzi (2021) noted that students frequently lacked structured study timetables and demonstrated limited ability to prioritize academic tasks, which in turn affected their preparedness for examinations. Similarly, Eze and Okeke (2018) report that poor time allocation and persistent procrastination significantly contributed to students' low academic outcomes. Today, these challenges are further compounded by increasing exposure to digital distractions and peer influence, which tend to divert students' attention away from academic tasks (Tchombe, 2017). The persistence of these challenges suggests that improving academic performance requires more than content mastery. It necessitates the development of effective study habits, particularly in time management described as a critical self-regulatory skill that enables learners to plan, allocate, and monitor their study activities in a purposeful manner (Zimmerman, 2002). When properly developed, time management supports consistent learning, reduces examination anxiety, and enhances overall academic achievement. Despite its importance, many students do not naturally acquire effective time management skills, thereby creating a need for structured intervention.

In response to this gap, counselling intervention strategies are increasingly recognized as viable approaches for improving students' study habits. According to Tchombe (2017), school-based counselling plays a significant role in shaping learners' behavioural patterns, including how they manage their time and approach academic tasks. Through guided interventions such as timetable training, goal setting, and self-monitoring, counsellors are able to support students in developing sustainable time management habits. Similarly, Okorie (2016) emphasizes that

counselling interventions grounded in self-regulation and social cognitive principles can positively influence students' academic behaviours and outcomes.

### **Background of study**

The concern for academic success at public examinations has deep historical roots in the evolution of formal education systems. It has been reported that standardized examinations, particularly those modeled after the British system such as the General Certificate of Education (GCE) were introduced to ensure uniform assessment and certification of student competencies. Ngwokabuenui (2015) explained that these examinations historically served as gatekeeping mechanisms, determining access to higher education and employment, and thus became central to educational systems. In the early phases of their implementation, public examinations were perceived as reliable indicators of merit and academic ability. However, over time, disparities in performance began to emerge, prompting scholars and policymakers to question the many factors influencing students' success. Tchombe (2017) noted that as access to education expanded, particularly with the democratization of schooling, student diversity increased, bringing variations in learning abilities, socio-economic backgrounds, and study behaviours. This shift contributed to uneven academic outcomes and renewed interest in understanding determinants of success beyond cognitive ability.

Research on academic performance traditionally focused on structural factors such as school resources, teacher quality, and curriculum design. However, by the late 20th century, attention gradually shifted toward student-centered variables. Study habits, in particular, began to receive significant scholarly attention as critical determinants of academic success. Aminu (2016) reported that consistent patterns of behaviour, such as how students allocate time for study and manage academic tasks, were found to significantly influence examination outcomes. Within this evolving discourse, time management emerged as a key area of concern. Early studies suggested that students who performed well in public examinations often demonstrated disciplined use of time, structured study routines, and effective planning strategies (Britton & Tesser, 1991; Trueman & Hartley, 1996). In contrast, those students with poor performance were frequently associated with disorganized study patterns and inefficient time use. Nwosu and Okeke (2019) observed that over the years, poor time management has remained a persistent challenge among secondary school students, contributing to recurring patterns of underachievement.

More recently, the historical trajectory of academic performance has continued to reflect fluctuations, suggesting that earlier challenges have not been fully resolved. Persistent concerns about students' preparedness for public examinations have reinforced the need to revisit foundational study habits. Njukang (2021) noted that despite increased awareness, many students still struggle with managing their time effectively, indicating that historical patterns of poor study habits continue to influence present-day outcomes. Thus, from a historical standpoint, academic success at public examinations has evolved from being viewed as a function of intellectual ability and structural factors to being understood as a complex interplay of cognitive, behavioural, and environmental influences. Within this evolution, time management has consistently emerged as a critical factor, while counselling interventions have developed as practical responses to address longstanding challenges in students' study behaviours.

Conceptually, academic success and time management habits closely related constructs whose relationship may be defined by diverse time management habits with corresponding relatedness to academic success. Academic success at public examinations is the extent to which students attain prescribed learning outcomes as demonstrated through their performance in standardized, high-stakes examinations used for certification and progression within the education system (Steinmayr, Meißner, Weidinger, & Wirthwein, 2014). It represents a culmination of cognitive achievement, study habits, and sustained engagement with the curriculum, and is typically evidenced through measurable indicators of performance over time. In secondary schools in Cameroon, academic success at public examinations is not viewed as an isolated outcome but rather as the product of continuous learning and assessment processes that precede the final examination. Tchombe (2017) confirms by arguing that academic success reflects the effective integration of learning strategies and consistent academic effort. Meanwhile Aladejana (2016) adds that students' outcomes at public examinations are strongly rooted in their prior academic experiences and performance patterns. This understanding provides a logical basis for linking success at public examinations to continuous assessment practices in schools.

Following from this perspective, academic success at public examinations is operationalised through students' performance in structured internal assessments, particularly sequence tests, which are designed to mirror the content, format, and standards of external examinations. Within this framework, three key indicators are used to represent academic success, notably sequence test scores, average marks obtained across subjects, and the number of subjects passed in sequence tests. Sequence test scores serve as a direct indicator of students' mastery of specific subject content, as they reflect immediate understanding of instructional material. In addition, the average marks obtained across subjects provide a broader measure of overall academic performance, capturing students' general level of attainment across the curriculum rather than isolated subject success. Meanwhile, the number of subjects passed in sequence tests functions as an indicator of consistency and academic stability, since success across multiple subjects suggests a balanced and sustained level of competence. These indicators are interconnected and collectively provide a comprehensive representation of students' academic standing.

Given this alignment, sequence tests and their associated indicators are widely regarded as reliable predictors of academic success at public examinations. This is because continuous assessment practices systematically track students' learning progression and provide repeated measures of performance under conditions similar to those during final examinations. According to Ajayi (2013), performance in continuous assessment significantly correlates with outcomes in external examinations, as it captures cumulative learning and reinforces examination readiness. Similarly, Obioma (2012) argued that consistent performance across internal assessments offers a dependable basis for forecasting students' success in standardized examinations. It therefore follows that strong and consistent achievement in sequence tests, as reflected through scores, averages, and pass rates, provides a valid and justifiable basis for predicting academic success at public examinations within this study.

While sequence test scores, average marks obtained across subjects, and the number of subjects passed provide useful indicators of academic success, differences in students' performance on these indicators may not be explained solely by cognitive ability or subject knowledge. Students who possess similar academic abilities often achieve different academic outcomes, suggesting that other factors associated with the learning process may also be relevant. Educational

researchers have therefore increasingly emphasized the importance of behavioural and self-regulatory factors in understanding students' academic outcomes. Zimmerman (2000) argued that successful learners are distinguished not only by what they know but also by how they regulate their learning processes. Similarly, Pintrich (2004) maintained that students' academic outcomes are closely associated with their ability to manage and direct their learning activities, while Schunk and Zimmerman (2012) highlighted self-regulation as a critical component of academic achievement. Among the behavioural and self-regulatory factors discussed in educational literature, attention has been drawn to how students organize their academic activities, allocate time to learning tasks, meet academic deadlines, and balance competing educational demands. These considerations bring time management into discussions of academic success because the manner in which students utilize their available time may be associated with the quality and consistency of their academic engagement. Consequently, beyond the indicators used to measure academic success, there is a need to examine time management as a construct that may be linked to students' academic outcomes.

Meanwhile, time management is the ability of students to plan, organize, and control how they use their time for academic tasks. Nwosu and Okeke (2019) described it as a self-regulatory behaviour that enables learners to effectively structure their study activities. When practiced consistently, time management becomes a habit that influences students' daily academic routines and overall learning outcomes. In this article, time management habits are operationalized through five key indicators including the use of a personal study timetable, prioritizing study tasks, appropriate time allocation, managing distractions and avoiding procrastination. Using a personal study timetable reflects a students' ability to design and follow a structured schedule that allocates specific time periods for different subjects and learning activities. Aminu (2016) noted that students who use study timetables are more organized and better able to cover their syllabus systematically. Prioritizing of study tasks involves the students' ability to identify and focus on important and urgent academic tasks before less critical activities.

With regards to this, Ndzi (2020) explained that prioritization helps students to manage workload effectively and avoid unnecessary pressure during examination periods. The third measure of time management is time allocation. This refers to how students distribute their available time across subjects and tasks based on their level of difficulty and importance. Owan (2020) reported that effective time allocation enables students to give adequate attention to challenging subjects while maintaining balance in their study routines. Meanwhile, managing distraction involves students' ability to minimize interruptions from non-academic activities such as excessive social media use, peer distractions, and unplanned engagements. Njukang (2021) observed that poor control of distractions significantly reduces study time and negatively affects academic performance. Lastly, avoiding procrastination refers to students' ability to complete academic tasks on time rather than postponing them. Nwosu and Okeke (2019) noted that procrastination often leads to last-minute preparation, which undermines effective learning and retention.

In addition to these concepts, this article is anchored on counselling intervention as a strategic approach to improving students' time management habits. Counselling intervention in education refers to structured activities designed to influence students' behaviors, attitudes, and skills in order to enhance their academic outcomes. Egbo (2015) explained that such interventions focus on equipping students with practical competencies that support effective

learning. Within this framework, time management is treated as a behaviour that can be developed through counselling strategies. These include training students in the use of study timetables, guiding them in prioritizing tasks, supporting effective time allocation, helping them manage distractions, and assisting them in overcoming procrastination. Through these structured interventions, students are expected to develop stronger time management habits, which in turn contribute to improved academic success.

Theoretically, the self-regulation theory by Zimmerman (2002) provides a relevant framework for understanding how students manage their learning processes to achieve academic success. Self-regulation refers to learners' capacity to proactively plan, monitor, and evaluate their learning activities and behaviours in pursuit of academic goals (Zimmerman, 2000). Zimmerman (2002) explained that self-regulated learners are active participants in their learning, as they set goals, organize tasks, manage time, and adjust strategies based on feedback and performance outcomes. The theory emphasizes three core phases of self-regulation being the forethought phase, the performance phase, and the self-reflection phase. During forethought phase, students set goals and plan their activities. They implement strategies and monitor their progress at the performance phase and they evaluate their performance and make necessary adjustments at the self-reflection phase. Schunk and Greene (2018) noted that effective learning occurs when students are able to cycle through these phases consistently. The relevance of self-regulation lies in its focus on behavioral control and strategic learning, particularly in relation to time management. Time management habits align closely with processes of self-regulation, as they require students to plan their study time, prioritize tasks, monitor their use of time, and evaluate their productivity. In line with this, Tchombe (2017) indicated that students who develop self-regulatory skills are more likely to adopt effective study habits, including disciplined time use, which enhances academic performance.

From a contextual perspective, the educational context within which academic success is pursued in Cameroon is shaped by systemic realities, national trends, and localized challenges. In the country, secondary education has experienced significant expansion over the years, with enrolment increasing steadily. Recent data indicated that the number of students enrolled in secondary education exceeded two million in 2023, reflecting increased access to schooling (CEIC, 2025). However, this expansion has not been matched by consistent improvements in academic outcomes, particularly at public examinations. Performance at the General Certificate of Education (GCE) remains the most critical indicator of academic success in the English subsystem of education in Cameroon. Recent statistics reveal fluctuations in students' performance over the past five years. The results have shown periods of decline followed by improvement, suggesting instability in academic achievement trends. For instance, performance dropped in 2023 by about 3.37% compared to the previous year, with a pass rate of approximately 66.88%. This decline continued into 2024, where the overall pass rate fell further to about 60.80%. However, a notable recovery was observed in 2025, with the pass rate rising significantly to 75.46%, indicating improvement but also highlighting inconsistency in performance. To illustrate these trends, Table 1 presents a summary of GCE performance over recent years.

**Table 1**  
***Trends in GCE Performance (2021–2025)***

<b>Year</b>	<b>Pass Rate (%)</b>	<b>Observed Trend</b>
<b>2021</b>	68.12	Moderate performance
<b>2022</b>	70.25	Slight improvement
<b>2023</b>	66.88	Decline in performance
<b>2024</b>	60.80	Significant decline
<b>2025</b>	75.46	Strong recovery

*Source: Cameroon GCE Board reports (2021–2025)*

These variations in performance point to persistent contextual challenges affecting students' academic success. At the national level, issues such as overcrowded classrooms, limited instructional resources, and teacher shortages have been widely reported. Owan (2020) explained that such school-related factors often reduce effective teaching time and limit individualized support for students, thereby affecting learning outcomes. In addition, the growing influence of digital technology has introduced new challenges in students' study patterns. Njukang (2021) observed that excessive engagement with social media and mobile devices has significantly reduced the amount of time students devote to academic activities. This has contributed to poor time management practices, including procrastination and inadequate preparation for examinations. The situation is further complicated in specific areas like Fako Division which attracts a large and diverse student population. While this diversity presents opportunities for academic growth, it also introduces challenges related to urban distractions, peer pressure, and increased exposure to non-academic activities. Informal reports from educators have suggested that many students in the area struggle to balance academic demands with social engagements, leading to ineffective use of time.

Moreover, the socio-political context in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon has had implications for educational stability. Disruptions to the academic calendar, irregular school attendance, and psychological stress among students have been noted as factors that may affect study habits and examination performance. Tchombe (2017) emphasized that such environmental factors can weaken students' ability to maintain consistent study routines, particularly in the absence of strong self-regulatory skills. At the school level, limited emphasis on structured study skills training has also been identified as a gap. While the curriculum focuses largely on content delivery, less attention is given to equipping students with practical learning strategies such as time management. Egbo (2015) argued that without deliberate intervention, students are unlikely to develop effective study habits independently.

In Fako Division specifically, the pressure associated with public examinations remains high due to the competitive nature of school placement and university admission. This pressure often leads students to adopt ineffective strategies such as last-minute reading, commonly referred to as "cramming," which undermines deep learning and retention. Nwosu and Okeke (2019) noted that such practices are typically associated with poor time management and contribute to inconsistent academic performance. Overall, the contextual realities of secondary education reveal a gap between increased access to schooling and the quality of academic outcomes. The fluctuations in GCE performance, combined with environmental and behavioural challenges, underscore the need for targeted interventions. In this regard, improving students' time

management habits through structured counselling strategies becomes a relevant and necessary approach to enhancing academic success at public examinations. This article took issue with this concern and investigated how time management habits can be enhanced through counselling intervention strategies to improve the academic success of students in secondary schools in Fako Division of Cameroon.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The persistent underachievement of secondary school students at public examinations remains a major concern in the education system. Official reports continue to reveal inconsistent performance trends, with a significant proportion of candidates failing to obtain the required performance for progression. While multiple factors are associated with this trend, growing evidence suggests that poor study habits, particularly ineffective time management play a central role. Studies show that many students lack the ability to plan, prioritize, and allocate sufficient time to academic tasks. Ngwokabuenui (2015) reports that students often engage in unstructured reading, last-minute revision, and irregular study patterns, all of which undermine meaningful learning. In the same vein, Owan and Agunwa (2019) noted that procrastination and poor scheduling habits significantly reduce students' preparedness for examinations.

In Fako Division, classroom observations and counselling reports suggest that many students are aware of the importance of time management but lack the practical skills to effectively apply it in their daily academic routines. Tchombe (2014) emphasized that the absence of structured guidance limits students' ability to develop self-regulated learning behaviours. Despite this, school-based interventions targeting time management as a core study habit remain limited and insufficiently structured. This situation creates a gap between students' academic demands and their capacity to manage time effectively, thereby contributing to poor examination outcomes. Addressing this gap through targeted counselling interventions is therefore essential for improving students' academic success. Therefore, the main objective of the study was to examine how time management habits can be enhanced through counselling intervention strategies to improve academic success among secondary school students in Fako Division of Cameroon. It specifically sought to examine key indicators of effective time management among secondary school students as well as design and implement a structured counselling intervention programme for developing students' time management habits, and evaluate its effectiveness in improving their academic success at public examinations.

### **Method**

**Research design:** The embedded mixed-methods design within an embedded research design was adopted for this study. The quantitative component of the design was dominant and focused on measuring changes in students' time management habits and academic performance, while the qualitative component provided explanatory insights into how the counselling intervention influenced these changes. The study further adopted a single-group quasi-experimental design involving pre-test and post-test measures. This design enabled the assessment of behavioural change following exposure to the intervention. The approach was considered appropriate as it allowed for the measurement of improvement in students' time management habits after the counselling intervention within a natural school setting.

**Population:** The population of the study was considered at three levels: the main population, target population, and accessible population.

**Table 2**

**Target Population**

Category	Area of Study	Population Size
Students	Form five students preparing for the GCE Ordinary Level Examination in Buea	1,884
Guidance Counsellors	Guidance counsellors serving in Bilingual Grammar School, Molyko-Buea	13

Source: Fako Divisional Delegation of Secondary Education

The target population focused on students preparing for the GCE Ordinary Level examination in Buea and counsellors directly involved in student support.

**Sample and Sampling Techniques:** The sample consisted of 12 participants drawn from Bilingual Grammar School, Molyko-Buea.

**Table 3**

**Sample**

S/N	Category of Participants	Selected School	Sample Size
1	Form five students	Bilingual Grammar School, Molyko	10
2	Guidance counsellors	Bilingual Grammar School, Molyko	2
<b>Total</b>			<b>12</b>

Purposive sampling was used to select participants. On the one hand, form five students were selected because they were actively preparing for public examinations and were directly involved in intensive study practices. On the other hand, guidance counsellors were selected based on their professional experience in supporting students’ academic development. This ensured that the participants were information-rich and capable of providing meaningful data on time management habits.

**Instrumentation:** Baseline data were collected using the Study Habits Ability Pre-Test and first sequence test results. The counselling intervention was then implemented over a one-week period, during which students were guided on effective time management strategies. The Study Habits Counselling Intervention Protocol (SCHIP) which served as both an intervention tool and a source of data included structured sessions focused on developing time management skills through planning, scheduling, and self-regulation strategies. Meanwhile, the study habits ability post-test assessed changes in these time management habits after the intervention. The consistency between the pre-test and post-test ensured comparability and enabled the measurement of behavioural change. At both instances, sequence test results were used as secondary data to measure academic success and determine whether improvements in time management habits translated into better academic outcomes. An interview guide for guidance counsellors was used to collect qualitative data on students’ time management habits. Counsellors provided insights into students’ ability to organize study time, manage distractions, and maintain consistent study routines before and after the intervention. Sequence test results

were collected to measure academic improvement, and interviews were conducted with guidance counsellors to obtain qualitative insights into students' behavioural changes

## Findings

Academic Success of Science Students

**Table 4**

*Comparative analysis of first (pre-intervention) and second sequence test scores (post-intervention)*

Student	Seq	Math	Eng	Fr	Geo	Econ	Chem	Phys	Bio	Hum Bio	ICT
S1	1 <sup>st</sup>	8	11	9	12	13	9	8	12	11	13
	2 <sup>nd</sup>	10	13	11	14	15	11	12	14	13	15
S2	1 <sup>st</sup>	9	12	8	11	12	10	9	13	12	14
	2 <sup>nd</sup>	11	14	10	13	14	12	13	15	14	16
S3	1 <sup>st</sup>	7	10	9	12	11	8	7	11	10	12
	2 <sup>nd</sup>	9	12	11	14	13	10	12	13	12	14
S4	1 <sup>st</sup>	12	13	11	13	14	12	11	14	13	15
	2 <sup>nd</sup>	14	15	13	15	16	14	14	16	15	17
S5	1 <sup>st</sup>	11	12	10	12	13	11	10	13	12	14
	2 <sup>nd</sup>	13	14	12	14	15	13	13	15	14	16

Results in table 4 show a consistent improvement in students' scores across all subjects from the first to the second sequence. This indicates that the counselling intervention on effective time management habits had a positive impact on students' academic performance. In this study, it means that improved time management (such as better scheduling, prioritization, and study discipline) translated directly into higher continuous assessment scores, which are key predictors of success at public examinations like the GCE Ordinary Level.

**Table 5**

*Subject averages before and after intervention*

Subject	1st Seq Avg	2nd Seq Avg	Gain
Math	9.40	11.40	+2.00
English	11.60	13.60	+2.00
French	9.40	11.40	+2.00
Geography	12.00	14.00	+2.00
Economics	12.60	14.60	+2.00
Chemistry	10.00	12.00	+2.00
Physics	9.00	12.80	+3.80
Biology	12.60	14.60	+2.00
Human Bio	11.60	13.60	+2.00
ICT	13.60	15.60	+2.00

Table 5 demonstrates that all subjects recorded positive gains in average scores, with physics showing the highest improvement. This suggests that the intervention did not only improve performance generally but also helped students better manage difficult subjects. This confirms that time management counselling enhances overall academic competence, leading to improved mean performance indicators, which are critical measures of academic success in sequence tests and eventual public examinations.

**Table 6**  
*Subjects passed per student before and after intervention*

Student	1st Seq	2nd Seq	Gain
S1	6	10	+4
S2	7	10	+3
S3	5	9	+4
S4	10	10	0
S5	9	10	+1

This table shows that most students increased the number of subjects they passed, with some gaining up to four additional passes. This is significant because the number of subjects passed is a direct indicator of academic success in both school-based assessments and public examinations. The findings imply that time management strategies helped reduce failure rates, thereby increasing students' chances of meeting the requirements for success in examinations like the GCE.

### Academic Success of Arts Students

**Table 7**  
*Pre-intervention sequence test scores*

Stud	Math	Eng	Fr	Geo	Econ	Hist	Lit	Bio	Comm	ICT	Passed
A1	8	9	8	10	11	10	11	8	10	12	6
A2	7	8	7	11	10	11	10	9	11	11	6
A3	12	13	11	12	12	12	13	11	12	13	10
A4	6	9	7	10	10	9	10	7	10	10	5
A5	9	10	9	11	11	11	12	10	11	12	8

Table 7 reveals that students' performance before the intervention was generally moderate, with several failures across subjects. This established a baseline condition, showing that poor academic outcomes were linked to weak or ineffective time management habits. It highlights the need for counselling intervention as students were likely struggling with planning, prioritization, and consistent study routines.

**Table 8**  
*post-intervention sequence test scores*

Stud	Math	Eng	Fr	Geo	Econ	Hist	Lit	Bio	Comm	ICT	Passed
A1	10	10	10	13	14	13	14	9	13	14	9
A2	9	10	9	13	13	13	13	10	13	13	8
A3	14	14	13	15	15	14	15	13	15	15	10
A4	10	10	10	13	13	12	13	9	13	13	9
A5	11	13	11	14	14	14	15	10	14	15	10

The findings indicate that all students improved significantly after the intervention, with noticeable increases in scores across all subjects. This reinforced the argument that time

management counselling has a direct and measurable effect on academic performance. It supported the claim that structured study habits and better use of time lead to improved sequence test results, which are predictive of public examination success.

**Table 9**  
*Subjects passed before and after the intervention*

Student	Pre	Post	Gain
A1	6	9	+3
A2	6	8	+2
A3	10	10	0
A4	5	9	+4
A5	8	10	+2

Table 9 shows that most students increased the number of subjects passed, with gains of up to four additional subjects. This demonstrates that the intervention led to practical academic improvements, not just higher scores but also greater academic achievement in terms of pass rates. This strengthened the link between time management skills and success indicators used at public examinations.

**Table 10**  
*Subject averages and gains pre and post-intervention*

Subject	Pre	Post	Gain
Math	8.4	10.8	+2.4
English	9.8	11.4	+1.6
French	8.4	10.6	+2.2
Geography	10.8	13.6	+2.8
Economics	11.0	13.8	+2.8
History	10.6	13.2	+2.6
Literature	11.2	14.0	+2.8
Biology	9.0	10.2	+1.2
Commerce	10.8	13.6	+2.8
ICT	11.6	13.6	+2.0

The table indicates that all subjects recorded positive gains, with some subjects showing substantial improvements. This suggests that effective time management habits enhance performance across different disciplines, including both theoretical and essay-based subjects. This supported the idea that time management is a cross-cutting academic skill that improves overall performance and readiness for public examinations.

## Time Management Habits

**Table 11**

*Pre-test time management habits*

Indicator	SA&A	D&SD	Mean	SD
Timetable use	40%	60%	1.8	1.0
Prioritization	30%	70%	1.6	1.0
Time allocation	30%	70%	1.6	1.0
Manage distractions	20%	80%	1.5	0.8
Avoid disturbances	40%	60%	2.0	1.2
MRS	32%	68%	1.7	1.0

The findings show that a majority of students had poor time management habits before the intervention, as reflected in low mean scores and high disagreement percentages. This implies that students lacked structured study plans, prioritization skills, and control over distractions which negatively affected their academic performance. This explained why initial sequence test results were low, establishing the problem the intervention aimed to solve.

**Table 12**

*Thematic analysis (Pre)*

Code	Description
Poor time regulation	Lack of structured planning
Non-academic dominance	Leisure over studies
Fragmented study	Interrupted study time
Household obligations	Limited study time
Low awareness	Poor understanding of consequences

The themes identified (e.g., poor time regulation, fragmented study, non-academic dominance) indicate that students' study time was unstructured and often interrupted. This provided qualitative evidence that poor time management habits were a major factor contributing to low academic performance, reinforcing the need for targeted counselling strategies.

**Table 13**

*Post-test time management*

Indicator	SA&A	D&SD	Mean	SD
Timetable use	100%	0%	4.0	0.0
Prioritization	100%	0%	3.2	0.4
Time allocation	100%	0%	3.0	0.0
Manage distractions	100%	0%	3.3	0.5
Avoid disturbances	100%	0%	2.9	0.7
MRS	100%	0%	3.3	0.3

This table shows that all students adopted effective time management habits after the intervention, with 100% agreement across indicators. This is a strong confirmation that the counselling intervention was successful in changing students' behaviours, leading to better organization, prioritization, and study consistency. This was as direct evidence linking improved habits to improved academic outcomes.

**Table 14**  
*Thematic analysis (Post)*

Code	Description
Time awareness	Conscious time use
Academic prioritization	Focus on studies
Structured timetable	Planned study
Self-regulation	Discipline

The themes (e.g., structured timetable, academic prioritization, self-regulation) show that students developed positive and disciplined study behaviours. This indicates a behavioural transformation, where students became more intentional and focused in their academic work. This explained how time management habits improved, providing a mechanism for the observed academic success.

**Table 15**  
*Progression*

Level	SA&A	D&SD
Pre	32%	68%
Post	100%	0%
Progression	+68%	

The table shows a 68% improvement in time management habits from pre-test to post-test. This significant progression demonstrates that the intervention had a strong impact on students' behaviour. This supported the argument that improving time management habits is a key pathway to enhancing academic success in sequence tests and public examinations.

**Verification of Hypothesis**

**Table 18**  
*Comparison of pre-test and post-test*

Level	N	Mean	Median	Min	Max	SD
Pre	10	8.5	7.5	5	13	3.0
Post	10	16.4	16.0	15	18	1.0
Effect Size	Value					

<b>Calculated</b>	1.7
<b>Theoretical</b>	0.6

The findings show a substantial increase in mean scores from 8.5 to 16.4, with a large effect size (1.7) exceeding the theoretical value (0.6). This indicates that the improvement was not due to chance but was statistically significant, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. This provided strong empirical evidence that time management counselling intervention significantly improves academic success, as measured through sequence test scores, averages, and pass rates which are key predictors of performance at public examinations.

## Discussion

Findings showed that students initially demonstrated weak time management habits, which significantly limited their effectiveness in preparing for public examinations. They lacked structured study routines, rarely developed personal timetables, and showed poor prioritization of academic tasks. Their study patterns were largely irregular and reactive, with limited planning and ineffective allocation of time across subjects. These behaviours indicated that students did not approach their academic work with the level of organization and intentionality required for success in high-stakes examinations. This interpretation is consistent with Egbe (2018), who noted that students often depend on last-minute studying, and Fonkeng (2016), who emphasized that poor time organization undermines academic preparedness. Whether last-minute studying or poor time organization, these findings are clear that not adequately managing time undermines preparation and eventually hurts academic success.

Following the counselling intervention, there were substantial improvement on time management habits. Students developed and utilized personal study timetables, demonstrated clearer prioritization of academic tasks, and allocated study time more effectively across subjects than before. In addition, they showed improved control over distractions, which enhanced the quality and consistency of their study periods. These changes suggested that time management habits can be deliberately taught and developed through structured counselling interventions. This aligns with Aremu and Sokan (2017), who reported that time planning enhances academic discipline, and Olayinka (2019), who found that time management training reduces procrastination and improves examination readiness.

From a theoretical standpoint, Zimmerman (2002) explained that learners who succeed academically tend to engage in planning, monitoring, and evaluating their learning activities. In this study, effective time management reflected these processes in practical terms. For instance, while the use of study timetables represented planning, control of distractions reflected ongoing management of study behaviour, and adjustments to study schedules indicated evaluation of time use.

Post-intervention improvements suggested that when students are guided to plan their time, organize their study activities, and follow structured routines, they are better able to consistently engage with academic tasks. The counselling intervention provided students with practical tools and strategies that translated theoretical principles into practical observable habits. This interpretation reinforces the idea that time management serves as a fundamental pathway to broader learning competencies in everyday academic behaviour. Research consistently

indicates that academic achievement is influenced not only by cognitive ability but also by students' capacity to regulate their study behaviours effectively. While intelligence, memory, and academic aptitude may reflect a student's potential for success, self-discipline and effective time management are often stronger predictors of actual academic performance (Duckworth & Seligman, 2005).

Students who possess strong subject knowledge but fail to organize their time effectively may experience difficulties meeting academic requirements, including assignment deadlines and examination preparation. Conversely, students with moderate academic ability who engage in systematic planning, begin tasks early, and maintain consistent study schedules often achieve higher levels of academic success. Although academic outcomes are typically assessed through observable performance indicators such as grades, these outcomes are frequently shaped by underlying self-management competencies, particularly time management skills, which can be developed through appropriate educational and counseling interventions.

Qualitative findings further supported this interpretation by showing that students became more conscious of how they used their time and learned to balance academic work with other responsibilities. Counsellors reported that with counselling intervention on time management, students designed more realistic and flexible timetables that considered their home and school demands. This flexibility enhanced adherence to study plans and reduced frustration associated with rigid scheduling. As noted by Ngwa and Fombe (2019), interventions that reflect students lived realities are more likely to produce sustainable behavioural change. Rather than viewing poor time management solely as a behavioural or disciplinary concern, counsellors should seek to identify and address the factors that may contribute to students' difficulties in organizing their academic activities. Such factors may include psychological, emotional, motivational, or cognitive challenges that interfere with effective time use. Through careful assessment and targeted interventions, counsellors can assist students in developing realistic and achievable time-management strategies. By addressing these underlying barriers, students may strengthen their self-regulatory capacities and become better equipped to meet the academic demands associated with successful learning.

Despite the overall improvement, some challenges persisted, particularly in relation to adherence to study schedules and the influence of home environmental factors. Some students found it difficult to consistently follow their timetables, while others faced competing demands from household responsibilities. This observation was consistent with Nfor and Tambo (2021), who highlighted the impact of environmental factors on students' study habits. These challenges suggested that while time management habits can be developed through counselling, their effectiveness may depend on the level of support available in students' immediate environments. While living in an unpredictable and chaotic (e.g., noisy dormitories, unstable housing) may limit strict time scheduling for students, a highly demanding environment such as excessive family obligations, home chores or unyielding academic workloads may overwhelm even the most disciplined time management schedule (Hanscombe et al., 2011). Ruihua et al. (2005) adds that without an encouraging support system, students may quickly revert to old habits, arguing that habits are far more likely to stick if they are encouraged by peers, family, teachers and other significant others. Overall, the findings demonstrate that time management counselling interventions significantly enhance students' preparedness for public examinations. The improvement in structured study behaviours, task prioritization, and time

allocation provided strong evidence that effective time management is a critical habit for academic success.

The findings have important implications for students, guidance and counselling practitioners, and other stakeholders in education, with a central focus on the development of effective time management habits. For students, academic success depends largely on how effectively they manage their time. Students are expected to develop and consistently use personal study timetables, prioritize academic tasks, and minimize time wasting activities. The findings suggests that disciplined use of time enables students to study regularly, avoid last-minute preparation, and build confidence for examinations. Meanwhile for guidance and counselling practitioners, the findings underscore the need to prioritize time management as a core component of counselling programmes for students preparing for public examinations. Counsellors are expected to provide practical training on how to plan study time, set achievable academic goals, organize daily study routines and manage distractions. The study highlighted the importance of continuous guidance and follow-up to ensure that students internalize and sustain these habits. Whereas for teachers, the findings are clear on the need to reinforce time management practices within the classroom instruction.

In the same vein, teachers are encouraged to guide students on how to allocate time for assignments, revision and preparation for tests. Their regular feedback helps students improve their planning and time use. On their part, school administrators need to create institutional support for time management development. Administrators are encouraged to allocate time for guidance activities, support counselling programmes and promote a school culture that values discipline and effective use of time. Meanwhile, parents and the wider community must support students' time management at home. Parents are expected to create conducive study environments, monitor students' study routines, and reduce excessive domestic demands that may interfere with study time.

## **Conclusion**

Effective time management habits developed through counselling intervention strategies, play a significant role in improving students' academic success at public examinations. Through counselling intervention on time management habits, students moved from disorganized and inconsistent study patterns to more structured, disciplined, and purposeful use of time. The counselling intervention enabled students to adopt practical time management behaviours such as preparing personal study timetables, prioritizing academic tasks, allocating sufficient time to different subjects, and minimizing distractions. These habits promoted sustained engagement with academic work, improved coverage of the syllabus, and enhanced examination preparedness. In line with Egbe (2018) and Fonkeng (2016), the findings confirmed that poor academic performance may be linked to ineffective use of time, and that improving time management can lead to better academic outcomes. The findings further suggest that effective time management is not merely a supportive or soft skill but a central habit that directly influences academic success. When students are equipped with the ability to plan and use their time effectively, they are better positioned to meet academic demands and perform successfully at public examinations.

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