The effect of time-management training on test-anxiety and self-efficacy of Iranian intermediate EFL learners

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A B S T R A C T

The present study aimed to examine the effect of time-management training on Iranian EFL learners' test-anxiety and self-efficacy. A quasi-experimental design was used. The study was carried out in Tabriz Azad University and University of Applied Sciences and Technology. Thirty-eight BA students majoring in TEFL who enrolled in the above mentioned context in the academic year 1390-1391 participated in the study. The instruments used in the study were Time-Management Behavior Scale constructed by Macan, Shahani, Dipboye, et al. (1990), General Self-Efficacy Scale constructed by Jerusalem and Schwarzer (1992) and Westside Test-Anxiety Scale constructed by Driscoll (2007).The results indicated that there was a significant difference between the mean scores of experimental group's test-anxiety before and after time-management training and also there was a significant difference between the mean scores of experimental group and control group's test-anxiety after intervention. These findings also apply to the mean scores of self-efficacy. Therefore, it can be concluded that time-management training affects EFL learners' test-anxiety and self-efficacy. The findings of this study have some implications for researchers, teachers, universities and institutions.

Keywords: time-management; training; test-anxiety; self-efficacy; Iranian EFL learners

A R T I C L E   S U M M A R Y

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Introduction

Psychological factors are important issues that affect education. Two of these factors, which are of an interest in this study, are test-anxiety and self-efficacy.

The term 'test-anxiety' as a scientific construct refers to "the set of phenomenological, physiological and behavioral responses that accompany concern about possible negative consequences or failure on an exam or a similar evaluative situation"(Sieber, O'neil & Tobias, 1977, p.174). Negative effect of test-anxiety on students begins as early as they enter primary school and continues to exist at higher levels of education. Exam weeks are probably the most hectic days they ever have as a college student. They are very busy with their studies and need a lot of time to study their books.

Sarason (1984 as cited in Spielberger, 1995) found that high test-anxious students did more poorly on learning tasks and on intelligence and achievement tests than low test-anxious students. If this anxiety is not controlled, it can be problematic in all evaluative situations like job interviews and can influence students' lives. According to Spielberger (1995), some factors that cause test-anxiety are the nature of test questions, the students' general ability in subject matter area, how diligently they have prepared for the examination and individual differences as personality traits. The more a student prepares for the exam, the less anxious she/he can be during the exam. Therefore, it seems that students should make study plans and schedule their available time to study for exams.

Self-efficacy is another factor that affects students' academic performance. Self-efficacy and self-confidence seem to be the same but they are different. Self-efficacy is one's belief in his or her ability to achieve certain outcomes by organizing and performing the actions that need to be taken (Bandura,1977 as cited in Terry & Dolittle, 2008) and self-confidence is evaluation of perceived facts about oneself (Hajiani & Pooladi Ryshehry , 2013). The difference between self-efficacy and self-confidence is that self-efficacy refers to specific situations while self confidence refers to global situations (Carron, 1988). Bandura (1993) believes that students with low self-efficacy doubt their ability to learn or to perform well. Bandura (1994 as cited in Clough&Strycharczyk, 2012) argues that:

   People with a weak sense of self-efficacy:

- Avoid challenging tasks

- Believe that difficult tasks and situations are beyond their capabilities

- Focus on personal failings and negative outcomes

- Quickly lose confidence in personal abilities.(p. 87)

Self-regulation, which is an umbrella term for time-management, has been shown to have a powerful influence on enhancing individual's self-efficacy (Schunk, 1990). Bandura (1993) recommends that educators foster or facilitate increased levels of self-efficacy beliefs by teaching students self-regulated learning strategies. As the strategies of time-planning and time-management have been widely considered as key factors of self-regulation (Zimmerman &Schunk, 2008), it seems that teaching time-management strategies to students may affect their self-efficacy. Time-management is better planning, controlling things that can be controlled and spending most productive time on important issues that lead to doing more in less time (Cronk, 1987).

Review of literature

The goal of training low-anxious and self-efficacious students can be achieved by using special strategies. According to Waterworth (2003), students who followed coping strategies related to time-management skills had lower levels of test-anxiety. There are some other studies which examined the relationship between time-management and test-anxiety. Their results showed that time-management decreases test-anxiety. For example, Abdel–Aziz, Eid and Safan (2012) in a study examined the relationship between test-anxiety and time-management skills among 776 Faculty Nursing students. The results indicated that there was a negative correlation between test-anxiety and all components of time-management skills.

In addition, Wilson and Onwuegbuzie (2003) studied the factors which increase and decrease anxiety among 70 doctoral students at two research universities. The results showed that the most prevalent elements for increasing anxiety level were the amount of work due in the educational research class, the amount of material covered in class, taking tests, the difficulty of the material covered in class, the amount of work in another class, preparing individual research projects, and personal time-management. The top elements for reducing anxiety were receiving a good grade and instructor's encouragement.

Similarly, Sannsgiry and Sail (2006) examined the association between students' perceptions of course load, their ability to manage time, and test-anxiety. This study was conducted on 198 Pharmacy students at University of Houston. According to the results, test-anxiety was positively correlated with students' perceptions of course load and was negatively related to their ability to manage time with course work.

Furthermore, Misra and Mckean (2000) investigated the interrelationship among academic stress, anxiety, time-management, and leisure satisfaction among 249 university undergraduates by age and gender. Results suggested that students who had effective time-management behaviors consequently had less academic stress and anxiety.

In another study, Macan, Shahani, Dipboye, and Philips (1990) studied the correlation of time-management with academic performance and stress among 165 students. Results showed that

students' control over time led to greater evaluations of their performance, greater work and life satisfaction, less role ambiguity, less role overload, and fewer job-induced, and somatic tensions.

The motive behind the present study was that, to the knowledge of the researchers, the issue of time-management has not been tackled much in the EFL context of Iran. Also, the researchers could not find any study concerning the effect of time-management on test-anxiety in Iran. On the other hand, the results of the studies concerning the effect of time-management on self-efficacy in other countries were contradictory. For example, the results of Terry and Doolittle's (2008) study on 64 graduate and undergraduate students showed that there were no significant increase in the self-efficacy of the students who used time-management strategies. However, in another study, Pintrich and De Groot (1990) confirmed a positive relationship between time-management and self-efficacy. They studied relationships between motivational orientation, self-regulated learning, and classroom academic performance among 173 seventh graders from eight science and seven English classes. The results indicated that involvement in time-management that is one component of self-regulated learning is tied closely to student efficacy beliefs and increases it.

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of time-management on test-anxiety and self-efficacy of Iranian EFL learners. To achieve this goal, the following research questions were proposed:

1. Does time-management training affect Iranian EFL learners' test-anxiety?

2. Does time-management training affect Iranian EFL learners' self-efficacy?

Based on these research questions, the following research hypotheses were formulated:

1. Time-management training decreases the mean scores of Iranian EFL learners' test-anxiety.

2. Time-management training increases the mean scores of Iranian EFL learners' self-efficacy.

Method

Participants

The participants in this study were thirty-eight BA students majoring in TEFL. Half (19) of the participants were from Tabriz Azad University and half of them were from the University of Applied Science and Technology. Both English Conversation 48 courses were instructed by the same teacher. Seventeen participants were female and two of them were male at each class. They

were sophomores within the age range of 20 - 29. According to the results of PET test, the participants' proficiency level was intermediate.

Instruments

The following three questionnaires were used to gather data for the present study:

a) The *Time-Management Behavior (TMB)Scale*, constructed by Macan, Shahani, Dipboye, and Philip (1990), contains 46 items, which have a five-point response scale. Twelve items are scored in reverse manner. In their studies Total TMB scores were calculated, ranging from 0 to 185 with a mean score of 106.4 (*SD* = 22.1) and an internal consistency of 0.83 (Francis-Smythe, 2006). In our study, the *time-management questionnaire* was given to the participants to find out the degree of their time-management and select the ones who had low degree of time-management.

b) The *Westside Test-Anxiety Scale* (Driscoll, 2007) is a brief screening instrument meant to identify students with anxiety impairment. It contains ten items, which are in a five-point scale ranging from 1 (not at all true) to 5 (extremely true). Driscoll (2007) showed the utility of the scale to predict test-anxiety in a study of test- anxious students who were divided into intervention and control groups. Anxiety scores and test scores were obtained before and after the interventions. Driscoll gave anxiety-reduction training to intervention group and the results, measured by Westside scale, indicated reduction in anxiety. There was a correlation of .44 between anxiety reduction on the Westside anxiety scale and test gains (students' performance), that is, changes in the Westside scale accounted for 20% of the changes in objective test. According to Spielberger (1983), alpha of the test is .78, split half reliability is .77 in a Nigerian sample and it enjoys a concurrent validity of .51, p< .001, by correlating the scale with trait anxiety.

c) The *General Self-Efficacy Scale,* constructed by Jerusalem and Schwarzer (1992), assesses personal competence to cope with a variety of stressful situations. The German version of this scale which contained 20 items later was reduced to a 10-item version (Jerusalem & Schwarzer,1992, cited in Schwarzer, Bäßler , Kwiatek , Schröder & Zhang ,1997).Responses are made on a 4-point scale ranging from 1 (not at all true) to 4 (exactly true). Jerusalem and Schwarzer (1992) found the Cronbach alphas in different studies conducted among 23 nations to range from .76 to .90. Schwarzer, et al. (1997) found a discriminant validity of -.52 and -.60 by correlating the scale with depression scale by Zerssen (1976) and anxiety scale by Spielberger (1983), respectively. Not only was the scale reliable, but also it was valid in terms of convergent and discriminant validity. For example, it has a positive correlation with self-esteem and optimism, and a negative correlation with anxiety, depression, and physical symptoms (Schwarzer, Bäßler ,Kwiatek , Schröder & Zhang ,1997).

d) *PET* (Cambridge Preliminary English Test) is a test used to evaluate people who can use every day written and spoken English at an intermediate level. It covers all four language skills: reading, writing, listening and speaking. The researchers used the reading and writing parts of this test to assure the homogeneity of the participants in terms of these skills. The papers contained 43

items totally (35 reading and 8 writing items). A total of 70% across the two skills was needed to pass the exam, that is, they had to gain 70% of the writing and reading score at least.

The validity of the Time-management behavior scale, the Westside test-anxiety scale, the General self-efficacy scale and PET test have been proved in various studies and there was no need to test the validity of scales.

The reliability of the Time-management behavior scale, the Westside test-anxiety scale, the General self-efficacy scale and PET test was confirmed in this study by Cronbach's alpha coefficient, providing the researchers with reliability indices of 0.82, 0.85, 0.80 and 0.84, respectively.

Design

The research design, employed in this study, was quasi-experimental, and can be presented as follows:

Table 1

Quasi experimental design

EG	T_1	**X**	T_2
CG	T_1		T_2

EG: Experimental Group

CG: Control Group

T_1: Pretest

T_2: Posttest

X: Treatment (Hatch & Farhady, 1982, p.22).

In this study, there were three variables. Time-management was considered as the independent variable, and test-anxiety and self-efficacy were considered as the dependent variables, which were measured to determine the effect of the independent variable (time-management) on them.

Procedure

The researchers had access to two English Conversation 51 classes at Islamic Azad University of Tabriz and Tabriz University of Applied Sciences and Technology. One of the classes was randomly selected as the experimental group and the other as the control group. At first, the PET test was used to determine the homogeneity of the participants. According to the results of the test, 19 students at each class passed the test with at least 70 percent across the papers and they were found to be at the same level (intermediate). So the researchers selected 19 students from each class as participants in the study and excluded the others. First, the researchers distributed the time-management questionnaires to the participants to measure their time-management .They completed it in 15 minutes. In the next session, self-efficacy and test-anxiety questionnaires were distributed among the participants in the experimental and control groups before the midterm exam to determine the level of test-anxiety and self-efficacy. A maximum time of 30 minutes was given to all participants (experimental and control group) to complete both questionnaires. Then, a time-management booklet, consisting of useful ways of managing time, was given to the experimental group. The handbook contained The Successful Person's Guide to Time-Management (Flashman, Fetsch & Bradley, 2008) and Olsson's Handbook of Success (2011). The English Conversation 51 classes were held twice a week (for 31 sessions) and each session took 90 minutes. During the sessions, between mid-term and final exam the teacher allocated 15 minutes of each session to teach the experimental group some ways of managing time according to the booklet. At first, the teacher asked them to have a notebook, write their plans in sequence according to their priorities, and importance and each session they reported to the class about the plans that they could apply and the plans which they could not apply by using the techniques that they had discussed in the class, so the teacher got feedback about how participants used time-management strategies. The techniques that the teacher explained included planning, settings priorities, delegation of less important tasks to others, single handling (working on one task at a time until it is completely finished, momentum (action orientation), and creating time log.

Again, after the final exam, the test-anxiety and self-efficacy of the participants in both groups were measured, and the results were compared and analyzed using SPSS.V.17.

Results

As discussed earlier, this research was carried out to find answers to the following questions:

1. Does time-management training affect Iranian EFL learners' test-anxiety?

2. Does time-management training affect Iranian EFL learners' self-efficacy?

In the present study, to determine the homogeneity, the researchers used the following tests:

In order to select the participants who were at intermediate level, *PET test* was administrated. For this purpose, as it is illustrated in Table 2, the mean scores of the control and the experimental groups were compared by running an Independent Samples t-test.

Table 2

The comparison of the mean scores of the PET test for control and experimental groups

Variable	N	Mean	S.D	Df	T	P
Experimental Group	19	39.52	4.67	36	-0.83	0.40
Control Group	19	40.73	4.22			

As it is shown in Table 2, there is no significant difference between the mean scores in two groups. Thus, it can be concluded that both groups were at the same level of proficiency ($p = 0.40 > 0.05$).

The time-management questionnaire was given to the participants to find out the degree of their time-management and select the ones who had low degree of time-management. The results of the questionnaire showed that all participants' scores were lower than average.

The test-anxiety questionnaire was given to the participants to determine their level of test-anxiety before the intervention. Then, as it is illustrated in Table 3, the mean scores were compared by running an Independent Samples T-test.

Table 3

The comparison of the mean scores of the control and experimental groups' test anxiety in the pre-test

Variable	N	Mean	S.D	Df	T	P
Experimental Group	19	31.10	4.61	36	-0.82	0.41
Control Group	19	32.15	3.13			

As it is shown in Table 3, there is no significant difference between the mean scores in two groups before the intervention (p= 0.41 > 0.05).

The Self-efficacy questionnaire was distributed among the participants to determine their self-efficacy degree before the intervention. The mean scores of the control and experimental groups' self-efficacy were compared by running an Independent Samples t-test, as reported in Table 4.

Table 4

The comparison of the mean scores of the control and experimental groups' self efficacy in the pre-test

Variable	N	Mean	S.D	Df	T	P
Experimental Group	19	30.05	3.08	36	1.94	0.06
Control Group	19	28.47	1.74			

As it is shown in Table 4, there is no significant difference between the mean scores in two groups before the intervention (p= 0.06 > 0.05).

Hypotheses Testing

A Paired Samples t-test and an Independent Samples t-test were used to test the research hypotheses that follow:

Hypothesis one: Time-management training affects Iranian EFL learners' test-anxiety.

As it is illustrated in Table 4, the researchers used Paired Samples t-test to compare the mean scores of the experimental group's test-anxiety before and after the intervention.

Table 5

The comparison of the mean scores of the experimental groups' test-anxiety in the pre-test and post-test

Variable	N	Mean	S.D	Df	T	P
Pre-test	19	31.10	4.61	18	5.67	0.00
Post-test	19	27.73	4.45			

As it is shown in Table 5, there is a significant difference between the mean scores before and after the intervention ($p= 0.00 < 0.05$).

As it is illustrated in Table 6, for comparing the mean scores of test-anxiety in the control group before and after the intervention, another Paired Samples t-test was used.

Table 6

The comparison of the mean scores of the control groups' test-anxiety in the pre-test and post-test

Variable	N	Mean	S.D	Df	T	P
Pre-test	19	32.15	3.13	18	-1.54	0.14
Post-test	19	33.68	2.84			

As it is shown in Table 6, there is no significant difference between the mean scores of the control groups' test-anxiety before and after treatment ($p= 0.14 > 0.05$). In Table 7, the mean scores of test-anxiety in the control and experimental groups after the intervention were compared by running Independent Samples t-test.

Table 7

Comparison of mean scores of experimental and control group test-anxiety in post-test

Variable	N	Mean	S.D	df	T	P
Experimental group	19	27.73	4.45	36	-4.90	0.00
Control group	19	33.68	2.84			

As it is shown in Table 7, there is a significant difference between test-anxiety mean scores in the control and experimental group after intervention ($p= 0.00 < 0.05$)

Hypothesis two: Time-management training affects Iranian EFL learners' self-efficacy.

As it is illustrated in Table 8, Paired Samples t-test was used to compare the mean scores of the experimental group's self-efficacy before and after the intervention.

Table 8

The comparison of the mean scores of the experimental group's self-efficacy in the pre-test and post- test

Variable	N	Mean	S.D	Df	T	P
Pre-test	19	30.05	3.08	18	-5.26	0.00
Post-test	19	34.15	3.98			

As it is shown in Table 8, there is a significant difference between the mean scores before and after the intervention ($p= 0.00 < 0.05$).

As it is illustrated in Table 9, for comparing the mean scores of self-efficacy in the control group before and after the intervention, a Paired Samples t-test was used.

Table 9

The comparison of the mean scores of the control group's self-efficacy in the pre-test and post-test

Variable	N	Mean	S.D	Df	T	P
Pre-test	19	28.47	1.74	18	-0.51	0.61
Post-test	19	28.84	3.02			

As it is shown in Table 9, there is no significant difference between the mean scores in the pre-test and post-test (p= 0.61> 0.05).

As it is illustrated in Table 10, an Independent Samples t-test was used to compare the mean scores of self-efficacy in the control and experimental groups after the intervention.

Table 10

The comparison of the mean scores of the experimental and control group's self-efficacy in the post-test

Variable	N	M	S.D	Df	T	P
Experimental group	19	34.15	3.98	36	4.62	0.00
Control group	19	28.84	3.02			

As it is shown in Table 10, there is a significant difference between self-efficacy mean scores in the control and experimental groups after the intervention (p= 0.00 < 0.05).

Discussion

The present study was designed to determine the effect of time-management training on test-anxiety and self-efficacy of Iranian EFL learners. The findings of the study confirm the hypotheses of the study as argued below.

In the first hypothesis, the researchers assumed that time-management training affects EFL learners' test-anxiety. The mean scores of the experimental group's test-anxiety before and after the intervention were compared through Paired Samples t-test and the results showed that there was a significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group's test-anxiety before and after the intervention ($p= 0.00$). In other words, experimental group's test-anxiety was decreased after intervention. In addition, the results which were computed through an Independent Samples t-test showed that there was a significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group and control groups' test-anxiety after the intervention ($p= 0.00$).Therefore, we can claim that time-management training affects EFL learners' test-anxiety. These findings are consistent with the findings of the research by Abdel–Aziz et al. (2012), Macan et al. (1990), Misra and Mckean (2000), Sannsgiry and Sail (2006) and Waterworth (2003). They confirmed negative relationship between time-management and test-anxiety.

In the second hypothesis, the researchers assumed that time-management training affects EFL learners' self-efficacy. The results which were computed through a Paired Samples t-test showed that there is a significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group's self-efficacy before and after the intervention ($p= 0.00$). In other words, experimental group's self-efficacy increased after intervention. In addition, the mean scores of the experimental group and control group's self-efficacy after the intervention was compared through an Independent Samples t-test and the results showed that there is a significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group and control group's self-efficacy after the intervention ($p=0.00$). Therefore, we can claim that time-management training affects EFL learners' self-efficacy. These findings tally with the result of the study conducted by Pintrich and De Groot (1990) that confirmed a positive relationship between time-management and self-efficacy.

However, the findings are not consistent with the results of the study conducted by Terry and Doolitos (2008). They studied sixty-four graduate and undergraduate students and investigated the use of a web-based tool designed to influence levels of student self-efficacy by engaging participants in a time-management strategy. They concluded that there was no significant increase in students' self-efficacy as a result of time-management training. The reason of this contradiction might be the differences in the intervention method and the number of the participants.

Conclusion

The objective of the present study was to determine the effect of time-management training on test-anxiety and self-efficacy of Iranian EFL learners.

Regarding test-anxiety, the results of the study revealed that the experimental group who had been taught time-management techniques showed a lower level of anxiety than the control group who had not been taught any techniques. Also, after comparing the experimental group's test-anxiety scores before and after the intervention, it was found that test-anxiety scores showed a noticeable

reduction after the intervention. Therefore, it can be concluded that time-management training affects EFL learners' test-anxiety and decreases it.

As regards self-efficacy, the results of the study revealed that the experimental group who were taught time-management techniques showed high level of self-efficacy compared with the control group who were not taught any techniques. Moreover, after comparing the experimental group's self-efficacy scores before and after the intervention, it was found that self-efficacy scores had slight increase after the intervention. Therefore, it can be concluded that time-management training affects EFL learners' self-efficacy and increases it.

As it was mentioned before, high test-anxiety and low self-efficacy affect students' academic performance and achievement negatively. So, it is possible to conclude that time-management training can have positive and constructive role in education and research field.

The findings of this study are supposed to have some implications in the field of education. One of the important implications in this field is for teachers. Considering the key role of test-anxiety and self-efficacy in students' performance and achievement, teachers should do their best to decrease test-anxiety and increase self-efficacy of students. Using the findings of this study, teachers can allocate some of the class time to training time-management techniques and as a result have self-efficacious students who can show their real knowledge without high level of test-anxiety.

The other implication in education area is for universities and institutions. To educate high self-efficacious, low test-anxious students who show high academic performance, it is better for universities and institutions to consider time-management training in their curriculum.

Another implication of this study is for research field. The findings of the study can encourage interested researchers to conduct further research in several new areas that were not discussed in the present study; some of them are introduced as follows:

1- Researchers can replicate this study by larger number of EFL learners at different levels of proficiency and compare them.

2- Researchers can include age variable in their studies.

3- Further research can be carried out to identify the role of students' gender on students' time-management and its effect on their test-anxiety and self-efficacy.

The present study does have its limitations. First of all, as the researchers had access to only one class at each university, the number of subjects was limited. Not only the number of subjects but also the amount of time for time-management was limited. Only 15 minutes of each session were allocated to time-management training: Secondly, this study was limited to Iranian EFL learners of Islamic Azad University and University of Applied Sciences and Technology. Therefore, the results of the study could not be generalized to other groups of students. Finally, the present study was limited to students at intermediate level within the age range of 20-29; therefore, its results could not be generalized to students at other age groups and proficiency levels.

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