

Female Traders and Time Management: A Case of Traders at the Makola Market, Ghana

Cynthia Gadegbeku^{1*}, Sampson Ebonyi¹, Esther Nunoo¹, Susannah Narkotu¹, Bernice Sowah¹

1. Department of Department of Family & Consumer Sciences, College of Agric. & Consumer Sciences, University of Ghana, P. O. Box 91, Legon, Accra - Ghana

* E-mail of the corresponding author: cgadegbeku@ug.edu.gh

Abstract

This study was conducted to gain insight into how traders perceive and actually manage time. Data was collected from 200 traders using a structured interview guide. Data was hand coded and analyzed using the Statistical Package of Social Sciences (S.P.S.S. Version 18), and presented in form of frequency and percentage distribution tables and graphs. The study revealed 74% of the study sample had varied understanding of the concept of time management. While 50% felt time management was the sensible use of time, 3% indicated it was having proper control of one's life. Since 59% of respondents spent more than 10 hours at the workplace, to effectively perform their dual role (productive and reproductive roles), most of these traders delegated responsibilities to ensure they had ample time for trading. All respondents' indicated time management was beneficial. Eighty (80%) felt it helped increase job performance while 25% explained that it made individuals disciplined. Generally 86% of the study sample exhibited a polychronic attitude towards time management. Procrastination was the main obstacle hindering effective time management by the study sample. The major strategy adopted by respondents to effectively manage time was delegation of responsibility. In conclusion, time is a very important resource so traders need to adopt good time management practices to ensure effective management of their businesses. In view of the findings of the study, it is recommended that training be organized for traders to refresh their memory on effective time management. Relevant stakeholders including the mass media could also be used to achieve this aim. Since the school was identified as the main source of information about time management, their curricula could be further enriched to ensure people turn out as better time managers.

Keywords: Traders, Time management

1. Introduction

Many people have one time or other in their lives wished there were more than twenty four hours in a day because they were unable to perform certain important daily tasks. The simple truth is we can accomplish tasks we set out to perform each day if we manage the activities in our life in relation to time effectively. Time management is simply, making the best possible use of available time. It is also the act of performing activities using certain tools or instruments and following schedules to allow for improving personal effectiveness and having control over your life (Burt & Kemp, 1994). It could also be said to be the process of planning, organizing, implementing and evaluating the use of time in order to accomplish or perform certain tasks or duties" (Anyakoha & Eluwa, 1999).

Time is an intangible and scarce resource and considered the most limited resource available because it is within time that all other activities or duties are performed. It is also the only resource that everyone has in the same amount. It cannot be saved, stopped or controlled in any way. It is irreversible as time lost cannot be gained. Time acts as a pivot for the development of all other tangible and intangible resources (Burka, 2008). Because of its importance, there is a need to effectively manage time. In the last two decades, as a result of increasing global competition and increased demands for goods and services, it has become important to manage time (Orlikowsky & Yates, 2002). Traders are no exception.

When time is managed, it helps in achieving desired goals; puts you in control of life's affairs and enables you to avoid stressful situations; permits you to meet deadlines and make room for leisure; ensures that important tasks are not left undone; makes you achieve personal effectiveness and a well balanced lifestyle and allows one to do more important tasks first (Wright, 2002). Time management is also associated with profit maximization. Managing time especially at the workplace is one of the strategies that make life easy so everyone needs to use various strategies to manage time effectively.

In terms of culture, the degree of importance attached to time varies from culture to culture. For instance most people

in developed societies (e.g. European countries) view time as a scarce resource and therefore see the need to manage it wisely. A different scenario however pertains in Africa, where there is a more leisurely and less rigorous scheduled lifestyle approach to the use of time. This kind of approach has been branded "*African Time*" by Davis (2000). In Ghana, African time is referred to as *GMT* – "*Ghana Man Time*."

Literature suggests that from time immemorial, certain problems prevent people from effectively managing their time (Drucker 1967; Lakein 1973; Mackenzie 1990; Shraw et al., 2007). These include: procrastination, work overload, lack of adequate knowledge about techniques used in time management and cultural differences. This study therefore sought to ascertain female traders understanding of time management; opinions about the benefits or importance of time management; attitude towards time management; strategies used in managing time and barriers if any, to effective time management.

2. Methodology

A cross sectional study was conducted on 200 traders at the Makola market in Accra Central. The study population was sampled using the convenience sampling method. Data was collected using a structured questionnaire with 9 items adapted from the Time Management Questionnaire (Britton and Tesser, 1991). The items comprised of questions with Likert-like scale responses that ranged from 1 = always true to 5 always false. The items were added up and respondents with a total score of 9 – 26 were said to exhibit a monochronic attitude while those with total scores from 28 – 45 exhibited a polychronic attitude to time management. Those who had a total score of 27 were those who had a blend of the two attitudes depending on the activity they were performing. Data was hand coded and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (S.P.S.S. Version 18). The data was presented in the form of pie charts, frequency and percentage distribution tables.

3. Results & Discussion

3.1. Demographic characteristics.

Respondents were distributed according to their age, ethnicity, and religious affiliation, marital and educational status as shown in Table 1. Most respondents (55%) were 30 years and above, Akans (39%), Christians (88%), married (60%) and had some form of formal education (91%).

3.2. Understanding the concept of time management.

While a minority of respondents (36%) had no understanding of time management, 74% had some form of understanding of the concept. An analysis of responses presented in Table 2 shows the study sample varied in their understanding of the concept of time management. Majority (51%) indicated it was the sensible use of time while a minority (3%) felt it was having proper control of your life.

Since majority of the study sample had some form of formal education, it was not surprising to realize that the main source of information about time management for 50% of the respondents was the school. Other sources of information included friends (15%), work colleagues (10%), church (10%), family members (9%) and the mass media (6%).

3.3. Hours spent at the workplace.

Women in the past played the reproductive role and took care of the family while men played the productive role (Hevi – Yiboe & Aglobitse, 2004; Holroyd, Bond et al. 2002; Munjanja, Kibuka et al. 2005; Tuyizere, 2007). This role of women has currently changed because of current economic conditions, changing gender roles and women's own cultural evolution (Hevi – Yiboe & Aglobitse, 2004; Holroyd, Bond et al. 2002; Munjanja, Kibuka et al. 2005; Tuyizere, 2007). In addition to performing their reproductive role, women now play an important role in the household economy – the productive role. Women work in both formal and informal sectors of the economy in order to earn income to support themselves and their families. The study sample is no exception. From Fig. 1 it can be deduced that most respondents (59%) spent 10 hours or more at their workplaces. These female traders just like modern women, carry out other family responsibilities thus they have to balance their reproductive and housekeeping role with their productive role.

As a result of the length of time spent at their workplace, most of these traders (70%) delegate or employ helpers to

assist with household chores and taking care of their children. The use of helpers ensured that the traders had additional free time for trading, which required their expertise. These traders used multiple sources of assistance thus helpers came in the form of paid house helps (57%), biological children (43%), siblings (38%) and other family members (40%). This finding supports finding of Dodd & Sundheim (2005) as cited in Chapman & Rupured, (2008) that delegating or getting help from others is one of the strategies for better time management.

3.4. Benefits of time management.

The benefits of time management are numerous (Anyakoha & Eluwa 1999; Chapman & Rupured, 2008; Dodd & Sundheim, 2005; Wright 2002). An analysis of findings presented in Table 3 shows respondents had varied knowledge about the benefits of time management. All respondents (100%) indicated time management was beneficial to individuals. Majority (80%) felt effective management of time helped increase job performance while 25% felt it made you an organized person.

3.5. Attitude towards time management.

Time management is an area where attitude plays a major role in individuals' effectiveness (Reilly, 2005). These attitudes according to Reilly (2005) drive behaviour. Attitudes towards time management have been classified differently by authors (Kaufman – Scarborough, & Lindquist, 1999; Reilly, 2005). The study based its classification on the monochronic and polychronic attitudes towards time management. Items adapted from the Time Management Questionnaire (Britton and Tesser, 1991) were used to assess respondent's attitude towards time management. The findings are presented in Fig 2.

Findings in Fig 2 show majority of traders preferred to exhibit a polychronic attitude towards time management. Such traders exhibited the following traits: did many things at the same time, were easily distracted when performing their duties, considered time commitment more casually, borrowed and lent things more often (Britton and Tesser, 1991). Minority (10%) of respondents who had monochronic attitude towards time management exhibited some of these characteristics: they do one thing at a time, concentrate on the job at hand, take time commitments seriously, have respect for private property and rarely borrow or lend (Britton and Tesser, 1991). It was further observed that depending on the activity a minority (4%) preferred to switch from one preferred type of attitude towards time management to the other. This attitude was also realized in studies by Kaufman – Scarborough, & Lindquist, (1999) and Slocombe & Bluedorm (1997).

3.6. Barriers to time management.

There are a number of obstacles or "time wasters" that hinder effective time management (Mackenzie 1990; Shraw, et al 2007). Those stated by the study sample have been presented in Table 4. Procrastination (57%) was the main "time waster" identified among the study sample while sleeping too much (10%) was the least. This conforms to findings of Shraw et al (2007) that most people consciously or unconsciously procrastinate.

3.7. Strategies for better time management.

Time is both valuable and limited so it must be used wisely. It is therefore beneficial to manage time as most respondents indicated in Table 4. There are various strategies for effective management of time (Chapman & Rupured, 2008; Reilly, 2005). Strategies used by the study sample in managing time are presented in Table 5. The main strategy used by 70% of respondents was to delegate responsibility or get help from others while the least strategy used was to put off their cell phones while at work (4%). Putting off the phone may not be a good strategy because the traders could miss important business calls in the process. Literature is replete with better time management strategies which were not indicated by the study sample. These include spending time wisely, setting priorities, using a planning tool, getting organized, scheduling time appropriately, stop procrastinating, managing "time wasters", avoiding multi-tasking among other strategies (Chapman & Rupured, 2008). This suggests the need for further education on effective time management.

Despite their knowledge about time wasters and the benefits of time management, 30% of the study sample did nothing about their situation. These respondents explained they were aware such an attitude was not productive but

then it had become part of their behaviour and was difficult to stop. This supports findings by Reilly (2005) that everyone has time management habits whether effective or not and individual's attitude drives their behaviour. For such traders to manage time effectively there would need for a conscious effort to change this unproductive time management habit.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, most respondents had knowledge about the concept and benefits of time management and had a polychronic attitude to managing time. Time is a very important resource thus if these traders adopt good time management practices, it would go a long way to help them manage their businesses better. Suggested future works include further training of traders on good time management practices. Students of the Department of Family & Consumer Sciences and relevant stakeholders could liaise with the market queens and organize extension programmes to educate these traders about the importance of time management and strategies for managing time effectively. Since the school was identified as the main source of information about time management, their curricula could be further enriched to ensure people turn out as better time managers. Future research could also be conducted on workers in the formal sector of the Ghanaian economy to understand how they actually plan their time, prioritize their work activities, perform planned actions and implement time management techniques, their time wasters and remedies adopted to manage time.

References

- Anyakoha, E., & Eluwa, M.A., 1999, *Home Management for Schools and Colleges*. Africana – FEP Publishers Limited, Nigeria.
- Britton, B. K., & Tesser, A. 1991, "Effects of time-management practices on college grades." *Journal of Educational Psychology*, **83**, 405-410.
- Burka, Y., (2008). *Procrastination: why you do it, what to do about it now*. Dacapo Lifelongs Books, New York:
- Burt, C. D. B., & Kemp, S., 1994, "Construction of activity duration and time management potential." *Applied Cognitive Psychology*, **8**, 155-168.
- Chapman, S. W., & Rupured, M., 2008, *Time management: 10 strategies for better time management*. The University of Georgia, Cooperative Extension, College of Agriculture & Environmental Science and Family & Consumer Sciences. U.S.A.
- Davis, M. A. 2000, "Time and the nursing home assistant: Relations among time management, perceived control over time, and work-related outcomes." Paper presented at the Academy of Management, Toronto, Canada.
- Dodd P. & Sundheim, D. 2005, *The 25 Best time management told and techniques: How to get more done without driving yourself crazy*. Ann Arbor, MI: Peak Performance Press Inc.
- Drucker, P. F. 1967, *The Effective Executive*. Harper & Row. New York
- Hevi – Yiboe, L.A.P., & Aglobitse, D.M., 2004, "Women, men and housework in Ghana." *Journal of ARAHE*, Vol **11** No. 4.
- Holroyd, E. A., Bond M. H., et al. 2002, "Perceptions of sex – role stereotypes, self-concept, and nursing role ideal in Chinese nursing students." *Journal of Advanced Nursing* **37** (3): 294 – 303.
- Kaufman – Scarborough, C., & Lindquist, J. D. 1999, "The polychronic attitude index: refinement and preliminary consumer marketplace behaviour applications." American Marketing Association Winter Educators Conference Proceedings, *Marketing Theory and Applications*, Vol. **10** pp 151 - 157
- Lakein, A. 1973, *How to get control of your time and your life*. New America Library, New York
- Mackenzie, A. (1990). *The time trap* (3rd ed.). American Management Association, New York
- Munjanja, O.K.S. Kibuka et al., 2005, "The nursing workforce in sub-Saharan Africa." *The Global Nursing Review Initiative* (7).
- Orlikowsky, W.J., & Yates, J. 2002, "It's about time: temporal structuring in organizing." *Organization Science*. Vol **13** (6) pp 684 – 700.
- Reilly, T., 2005, "Value added Time Management" *Repertoire* Vol. **13**. No. 9
- Schraw, G., Wadkins, J, Olafson, L. 2007, "Doing the things we do: A grounded theory of academic procrastination." *Journal of Educational Psychology* Vol **99** (1) pp 12-25.
- Slocombe, T. E. & Bluedorm A. C. 1997, "Organizational behaviour implications of the congruence between

preferred polychronicity and experienced work-unit polychronicity,” *Journal of Organizational Behaviour*, **18**.

Tuyizere, A. P. 2007, *Gender and development: The role of religion and culture*. Foundation Publishers, Makerere University, Kamapala,

Wright T.A. (2002). “Dialogue: The importance of time in organizational research.” *Academy of Management Review* Vol. **14** pp 361 - 384.

Table 1. Distribution of sample by demographic characteristics

Characteristic	Frequency (n = 200)	Percentage
Age (Years)		
18 – 25	28	14
26 – 30	62	31
31 – 35	38	19
36 – 40	64	32
41 – 50	8	4
Ethnicity		
Akan	78	39
Ga	50	25
Fante	34	17
Ewe	24	12
Nzema	8	4
Gonja	4	2
Dagomba	2	1
Religious affiliation		
Christianity	176	88
Moslem	24	12
Marital status		
Married	120	60
Single	60	30
Separated	16	8
Cohabiting	4	2
Educational status		
No formal education	18	9
Basic education	98	49
Senior Secondary School	54	27
Vocational/Technical education	26	13
Tertiary education	4	2

Table 2. Distribution of respondents by their understanding of the concept of time management

Perception	Frequency	Percentage
Sensible use of available time	76	51
Using time for planned purpose	44	28
Doing things that do not waste time	16	11
Using time for what is expected	10	7
Having proper control of your life	4	3
Total	148	100

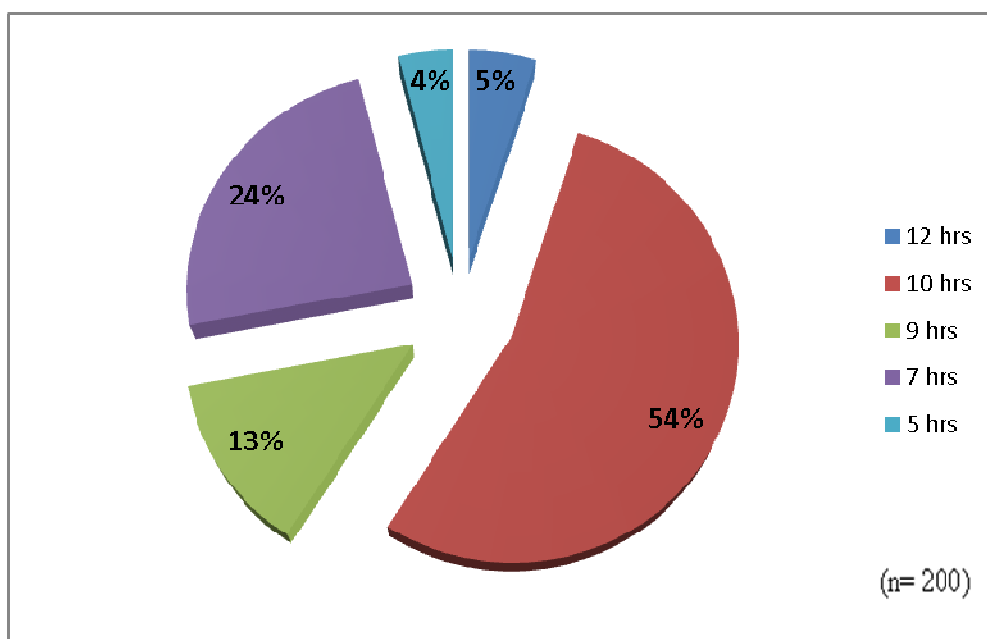


Figure 1. Distribution of respondents by time spent at the workplace

Table 3. Distribution of respondents by their knowledge about the benefits of time management

Benefit	Frequency (n = 200)	Percentage
Increases job performance	160	80
Helps reduce or avoid stressful situations	142	71
Helps me do important things first	140	70
Gives job satisfaction	130	65
Helps me achieve personal effectiveness	110	55
It helps me deal with procrastination	80	40
Makes me more organized	75	38
Makes me disciplined	50	25

*Percentages exceed 100% because there were multiple responses

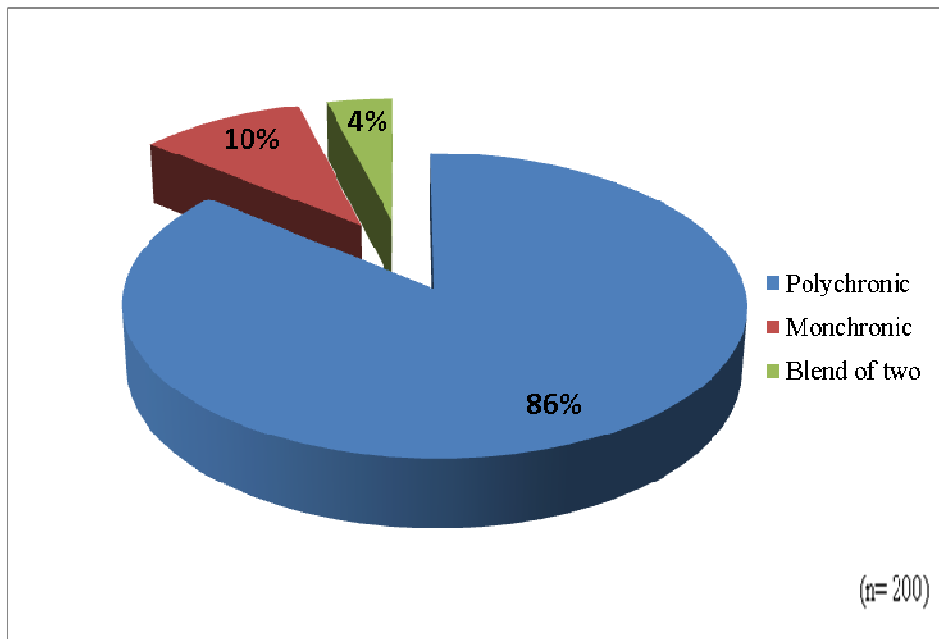


Figure 2. Distribution of respondents by their attitude to time management

Table 4. Distribution of respondents by their knowledge about time wasters

Benefit	Frequency (n = 200)	Percentage
Often procrastinate	114	57
Talk on phone too often and for too long	72	36
Receive too many visitors at the market	40	20
Sleep too much	20	10

Total percentage exceeds 100% because there were multiple responses

Table 5. Distribution of respondents by their knowledge of remedies for “time wasters”

Remedies	Frequency (n = 200)	Percentage
Try to delegate responsibility	140	70
Done nothing about it	60	30
Limit friends’ interruption	30	15
Wake up early to have more time for daily activities	24	12
Prioritize activities within the day	20	10
Put off phone	8	4

*Percentages exceed 100% because there were multiple responses

This academic article was published by The International Institute for Science, Technology and Education (IISTE). The IISTE is a pioneer in the Open Access Publishing service based in the U.S. and Europe. The aim of the institute is Accelerating Global Knowledge Sharing.

More information about the publisher can be found in the IISTE's homepage:

<http://www.iiste.org>

CALL FOR PAPERS

The IISTE is currently hosting more than 30 peer-reviewed academic journals and collaborating with academic institutions around the world. There's no deadline for submission. **Prospective authors of IISTE journals can find the submission instruction on the following page:** <http://www.iiste.org/Journals/>

The IISTE editorial team promises to review and publish all the qualified submissions in a **fast** manner. All the journals articles are available online to the readers all over the world without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself. Printed version of the journals is also available upon request of readers and authors.

IISTE Knowledge Sharing Partners

EBSCO, Index Copernicus, Ulrich's Periodicals Directory, JournalTOCS, PKP Open Archives Harvester, Bielefeld Academic Search Engine, Elektronische Zeitschriftenbibliothek EZB, Open J-Gate, OCLC WorldCat, Universe Digital Library, NewJour, Google Scholar

