

## The relationship between anxiety level and time management among senior high school students in preparing for the university entrance exam

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### Article Info

#### Article history:

Received: August 1, 2025

Revised: November 17, 2025

Accepted: November 20, 2025

#### Keywords:

Anxiety; Students; Time management; University Entrance.

#### Article type:

Research article

### Abstract

**Introduction:** The UTBK-SNBT is a crucial college entrance exam for students seeking to pursue higher education. However, the number of students who fail the test highlights the vulnerability of those dealing with mental health issues, including anxiety. Studies have shown that effective time management can reduce the impact of anxiety among students. Therefore, time management is crucial in preparing students for the UTBK-SNBT exam.

**Objective:** This research aims to investigate the relationship between anxiety levels and study time management among senior high school students preparing for the UTBK-SNBT.

**Method:** This descriptive correlation study employs a proportional stratified random sampling technique, with a sample size of 162 students. The instruments used include demographic data, the Hamilton Anxiety Rating Scale (HARS), and the Time Management Questionnaire. Data analysis involved frequency distribution and assessing the relationship between the two variables.

**Results:** The findings indicate that the majority of students were female (84%), that 38% exhibited mild anxiety, and that 41% were classified as having sufficient study time management skills. Bivariate statistical analysis revealed no significant relationship between anxiety levels and study time management, with a p-value of 0.926 and a correlation coefficient of -0.007, indicating a very weak relationship.

**Conclusion:** Future researchers are encouraged to further explore the effectiveness of time management and its indicators to obtain more comprehensive findings.

### Journal homepage:

<https://primasakti.web.id/index.php/npj>

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## 1. Introduction

In 2023, the Indonesian Ministry of Education (Kemenristekdikti) introduced a new policy for college student admissions, known as the National Selection Based on Tests (SNBT). This marks a shift from previous years, which relied on the Computer-Based Written Examination (UTBK). A study conducted by Hidayat and Nuryani (2023) found that this new policy has caused anxiety among high school students preparing for university entrance exams.

Students must adapt to the latest testing format, which is significantly different from those used in prior years (Hidayat & Nuryani, 2023; Lacosta & Sarajar, 2024)

According to reports from Kemenristekdikti in 2020, a total of 702,429 students registered for the university entrance exam. However, only 167,653 students, or 23.87%, passed, while 534,767 students, or 76.13%, failed (LTMPPT, 2020). Similar trends were observed in 2021 and 2022, where only about 20% of students passed the university entrance test. Additionally, a report by BPPP in 2023 indicated that out of 803,852 students who registered for the university exam, only 223,217, or 27.77%, passed (BPPP, 2023). The data highlights a concerning low pass rate for students over the past four years. A study by Rindu and Mulachela (2022) indicates that these low pass rates contribute significantly to mental health issues among students. Specifically, anxiety and depression are inversely related to academic performance, with higher levels of these mental health issues correlating with lower GPAs (Jehi et al., 2024). Students experiencing these disorders often lose interest in learning, which negatively impacts their academic success (Otieno, 2024; Ansari et al., 2024).

Anxiety is a state of restlessness that often lacks a clear cause and is frequently accompanied by a sense of an unknown threat and emotional turmoil (Pardede & Sitepu, 2018; Vanin, 2008; Muniv & Takov, 2021). This mental condition can lead to feelings of being overwhelmed and may result in a diagnosis of a mental illness in the future (Permana & Harahap, 2017). Research by Jamilah and Tumanggor (2022) suggests that anxiety has a significant impact on students' learning processes. It can manifest in both physical and psychological symptoms, including dry mouth, difficulty breathing, fatigue, excessive sweating, and intense fear. These symptoms can disrupt learning by impairing focus and academic performance. Additionally, students may experience shortness of breath and sleep disturbances, which can interfere with their daily activities and responsibilities (Berutu & Mutiawati, 2023; Amalia et al., 2023).

Depression is a mood disorder characterized by a persistent feeling of sadness and a loss of interest, commonly referred to as major depressive disorder or clinical depression (ManiMala et al., 2016; Salman & Güneş, 2024). Several studies have found a significant negative correlation between depression and academic performance. For instance, a study conducted in Peru reported a strong negative correlation, with a Spearman correlation coefficient of -0.898. This indicates that higher levels of depression are associated with lower academic performance (Bardales-Encinas et al., 2023). Additionally, another study revealed that depressive symptoms were negatively correlated with academic performance, particularly in math scores (Feng et al., 2022). Moreover, a significant correlation was found between depression and academic performance, with a p-value of 0.010, suggesting that depression is a critical factor affecting students' academic outcomes (Nyayieka et al., 2020). Addressing depression may potentially enhance academic results.

According to previous studies, effective strategies for managing anxiety include time management (Qonita & Amalia, 2022; Dimitrova & Mancheva-Ali, 2018; Kristanto et al., 2023). Time management involves planning daily activities, organizing tasks, and monitoring progress to achieve specific goals (Syelviani, 2020). This approach is particularly important for enhancing work efficiency in educational settings. It aids in structuring planning processes, minimizing time spent on non-essential tasks, and improving both the speed and quality of problem-solving (Panchenko, 2023; Peddisetty, 2025). Implementing effective time management has been shown to better support students in managing emotional anxiety and appropriately reducing its symptoms. Additionally, a study by Rianita and Sinaga (2023) noted that engaging in hobbies and self-directed study helps mitigate the effects of anxiety during the

learning process. Therefore, this study aims to explore the relationship between anxiety levels and time management skills among students preparing for the UTBK-SNBT at SMA Negeri 6 Padangsidempuan.

## 2. Methods

This research is a descriptive study aimed at examining the relationship between anxiety levels and time management among high school students. The population for this study consisted of all class XII students at SMA Negeri 6 Padangsidempuan, totaling 272 students. The sampling technique employed was proportional stratified random sampling, with 162 students participating as the research sample. Samples were randomly selected from three XII classes. This research received ethical clearance approval under letter number 353/KEPK/USU/2024 in April 2024.

The research instrument consisted of three parts: demographic data, the Hamilton Anxiety Rating Scale (HARS) to assess anxiety levels, and a time management questionnaire to evaluate students' study time management skills. Validity and reliability tests were conducted with 30 students who were not part of the research sample. The validity test results for the HARS questionnaire showed correlation coefficients ranging from 0.477 to 0.766, exceeding the r-table value of 0.361. Similarly, the validity test for the Study Time Management questionnaire yielded coefficients ranging from 0.561 to 0.751, surpassing the r-table value of 0.361. The significance level results indicated that  $0.000 < 0.05$ , confirming that each question in the questionnaire was statistically significant for use. The reliability test for the HARS questionnaire yielded a value of  $\alpha = 0.867$ , while the Learning Time Management questionnaire had a reliability value of  $\alpha = 0.910$ . According to the Cronbach Alpha method, a questionnaire is considered reliable if the Cronbach Alpha value is greater than 0.60. Therefore, the research instruments are deemed valid and reliable.

Data collection involved distributing questionnaires directly to the respondents. The analysis was univariate, aimed at describing the characteristics of each variable and assessing the levels of anxiety and study time management among respondents, and was analyzed using frequency distribution tables. For this study, the Spearman Rank correlation test was applied since the data were not normally distributed. This test is utilized to determine the relationship and influence between two variables measured on an ordinal scale. The guidelines for hypothesis testing were as follows: if the significance value was less than 0.05, the alternative hypothesis ( $H_a$ ) was accepted; if the significance value was greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis ( $H_o$ ) was rejected.

## 3. Results

The research findings indicate that 54% of the participants were women, with the majority (84%) falling within the 18- to 19-year age range. Most of the samples (81%) were students enrolled in natural sciences. Additionally, it was observed that 77% of the students had not participated in tutoring or additional activities for an extended duration. Furthermore, most participants engaged in out-of-class study for 1-2 hours per day, accounting for 50.6% of the sample. For more detailed information, refer to Table 1 below.

**Table. 1 Respondent Characteristics**

Respondent Characteristics	n	Percentage (%)
Sex		
Male	74	46
Female	88	54

Respondent Characteristics	n	Percentage (%)
<b>Age (years)</b>		
16-17	14	9
18-19	137	84
20-21	11	7
<b>Majoring</b>		
Natural Science	131	81
Social Sciences	31	19
<b>Learning Outclass Duration (hours)</b>		
1-2	44	27.2
2-3	24	14.8
3-4	12	7.4
<b>Additional Lessons</b>		
Yes	38	23
No	124	77

Based on a frequency distribution analysis, the data revealed that 38% of students fell into the mild anxiety category, 20% were classified as having moderate anxiety, 15% were in the severe anxiety category, and only 1% experienced very severe anxiety. Regarding student study time management, the analysis showed that most students had a moderate level of time management (41%), while only 4% considered themselves to have excellent time management skills. Further details can be found in Table 2.

**Table 2. Characteristics of Anxiety and Student Study Time Management**

Variable	n	Percentage (%)
<b>Anxiety</b>		
No Anxiety	43	26
Mild Anxiety	61	38
Moderate Anxiety	32	20
Severe Anxiety	24	15
Very Severe Anxiety	2	1
<b>Study Time Management</b>		
Poor	31	19
Moderate	66	41
Good	59	36
Very Good	6	4

The results of the hypothesis testing yielded a P-value of 0.926, which is greater than the significance level  $\alpha = 0.05$ . This indicates that we reject the alternative hypothesis (H1) and accept the null hypothesis (H0). Therefore, we conclude that there is no significant relationship between anxiety levels and study time management among students preparing for UTBK-SNBT at SMA Negeri 6 Padangsidimpuan.

Additionally, the calculation results produced a correlation coefficient (r-count) of -0.007, indicating that the strength of the relationship is very weak. The negative correlation coefficient suggests an inverse relationship; as anxiety levels increase, study time management decreases. Conversely, lower anxiety levels are associated with higher study time management. Below are the detailed descriptions of these findings.

**Table 3. The relationship between anxiety levels and study time management among students in preparing for UTBK-SNBT at SMA Negeri 6 Padangsidimpuan**

Anxiety Levels	Study Time Management				Total	P Value	r
	Poor	Moderate	Good	Very Good			
No Anxiety	6 (14)	19 (44)	16 (37)	2 (5)	43	0,926	-0,007
Mild	14 (23)	24 (39)	21 (35)	2 (3)	61		
Moderate	4 (12)	13 (41)	15 (47)	0 (0)	32		
Severe	7 (9)	9 (38)	6 (25)	2 (8)	24		
Very Severe	0 (0)	1 (50)	1 (50)	0 (0)	2		

## 4. Discussion

The main objective of this research was to explore the relationship between anxiety levels and time management skills among students at SMA Negeri 6 Padangsidempuan as they prepare for the crucial UTBK-SNBT exam. The research findings indicate that most students experience mild anxiety levels while preparing for the UTBK-SNBT exam. According to Hidayat and Nuryani (2023), students with mild anxiety tend to be more motivated in their learning due to improved perception and attention. This level of anxiety typically leads students to focus better and prepare more thoroughly for their exams. Additionally, the study revealed that students' time management skills while preparing for the UTBK-SNBT exam fall into the "good" category. The research suggests that students who are aware of effective time management demonstrate strong abilities in goal setting and prioritization. These students focus on distinguishing between long-term and short-term objectives while organizing and managing their time.

During this time management journey, students may encounter new experiences and challenges, particularly in preparation for the annual university entrance exam (UTBK-SNBT). Only about 20% of enrolled students pass this exam, while others may not succeed and instead prepare for other private university entrance exams. This high-stakes situation can contribute to mental health issues such as anxiety (Hidayat & Nuryani, 2023). Therefore, implementing effective time management strategies in their study routines can help students manage stress and anxiety more effectively (Mattern & Lansmann, 2019). Furthermore, as Juniarti and Regina (2021) point out, students with good time management skills tend to have better control over their time and experience less stress.

### 4.1 The Absence of a Statistical Relationship

This key finding is significant because it contrasts with a substantial body of literature suggesting a negative correlation between stress and time management. For instance, studies by Macan et al. (1990) have demonstrated that students with strong time management skills tend to experience lower levels of stress and anxiety related to their academic pursuits. The rationale behind these studies is that effective time management promotes a sense of control, which in turn reduces feelings of being overwhelmed.

The divergence of the current study from these conclusions warrants careful examination. Several factors may explain this non-significant outcome. Firstly, the specific context of the UTBK-SNBT examination, where only 20% of candidates succeed, serves as a pervasive stressor that may affect all students, regardless of their organizational skills. This intense



external pressure could create a "floor effect" for anxiety, complicating the identification of more subtle effects of time management.

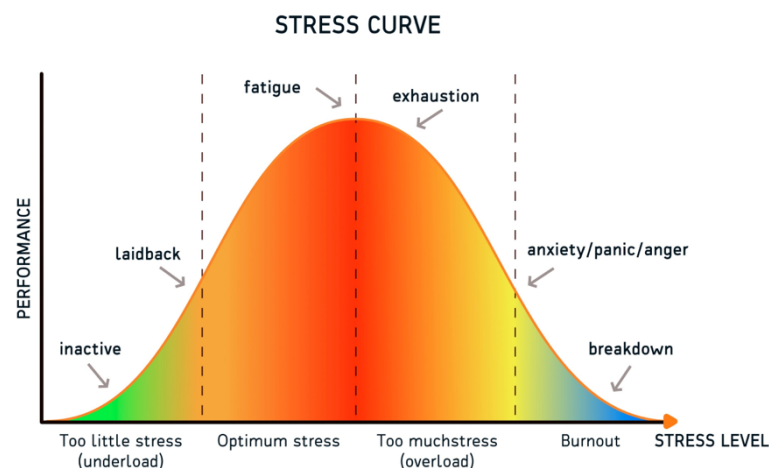
Secondly, the demographic uniformity of the sample (81% from natural sciences and 84% aged 18-19) from a single institution may limit the natural variation in both stress and time management. The study habits and anxiety triggers within this particular academic discipline may be more consistent than those found in the broader population.

Lastly, although the correlation was not statistically significant, its negative direction ( $r = -0.007$ ) aligns conceptually with the findings of Juniarti and Regina (2021), who propose that effective time management is linked to reduced stress. The data from the current study suggest that if such a relationship exists within this sample, it is exceedingly weak and not statistically significant.

#### 4.2 Interpreting Descriptive Findings: Anxiety Levels

Although no correlation exists, the descriptive statistics offer valuable insights. It's exciting to note that the largest group of students (38%) reports experiencing "mild anxiety." This observation aligns with the perspective presented by Hidayat and Nuryani (2023), who suggest that this level of anxiety may not be detrimental to the individual. Instead, it could serve as an adaptive response to a significant challenge.

This idea is effectively illustrated by the Yerkes-Dodson Law, which states that there is an inverted U-shaped relationship between performance and arousal.



A complete lack of anxiety was reported by 26% of participants, which could lead to complacency or a lack of motivation. In contrast, 15% experienced "severe" anxiety, and 1% reported "very severe" anxiety, both of which can result in debilitating consequences due to surpassing the optimal level of stress. Meanwhile, the groups experiencing "mild" (38%) and "moderate" (20%) anxiety, which together constitute 58% of participants, may be in the "optimal" range. This level of stress can enhance focus, perception, and preparation, as suggested by Hidayat and Nuryani (2023), without causing significant impairment.

#### 4.3 Interpreting Descriptive Findings: Study Time Management

The insights from the time management data are pretty revealing. The majority of students were categorized as having "moderate" (41%) or "good" (36%) time management abilities. This suggests that most students are not approaching their studies carelessly; instead, they possess functional, albeit not ideal, skills for organizing their study time. As indicated in the preliminary findings, this reflects an awareness of goal-setting and prioritization.

However, the mere 4% of students who reported "excellent" time management skills highlights a significant area for potential improvement. While students are effectively managing their time, they are not necessarily excelling in this area. This "moderate" level of competency may contribute to the "mild" anxiety levels observed. Students might feel they are only doing enough to keep up, lacking advanced strategies (Mattern & Lansmann, 2019; Sansgiry & Sail, 2006) that could enhance their sense of control and potentially reduce their anxiety, or at least prevent it from escalating into a more severe state.

## 5. Limitations and Implications

### 5.1 Limitations

These findings should be interpreted in the context of the study's limitations. Relying on self-report questionnaires for both anxiety levels and time management presents a notable methodological constraint. Students may inaccurately assess their skills due to social desirability bias or might be hesitant to disclose the extent of their anxiety fully. Additionally, the cross-sectional nature of the study limits our ability to conclude causality. We cannot determine whether anxiety affects time management, if poor time management leads to anxiety, or if both are influenced by an unmeasured third factor (such as parental expectations, intrinsic motivation, or past academic performance). Finally, as previously mentioned, the sample is heavily focused on SMA Negeri 6 Padangsidimpuan and primarily consists of students from the natural sciences. Therefore, the findings may not apply to the general population of all UTBK-SNBT candidates, particularly those in the social sciences or from diverse regions, who may face unique academic environments and support systems.

### 5.2 Implications

The results of this study have significant practical implications for SMA Negeri 6 Padangsidimpuan. The 16% of students experiencing "severe" or "very severe" anxiety represent a vulnerable group that requires immediate intervention from school counselors or mental health specialists. Furthermore, the substantial number of students with "moderate" time management skills (41%) presents an opportunity for the school to address this issue. The institution could introduce workshops aimed not only at developing study schedules but also at optimizing them, emphasizing evidence-based methods such as active recall, spaced repetition, and balancing study with adequate rest periods.

## 6. Conclusion

Based on the data analysis and discussion previously presented, it can be concluded that there is no relationship between anxiety levels and study time management among students preparing for the UTBK-SNBT at SMA Negeri 6 Padangsidimpuan. This conclusion aligns with the

results of the hypothesis test, which indicate a correlation coefficient of -0.007. This value suggests a negative and unidirectional relationship, with a p-value (Sig.) of 0.926, which is greater than 0.05. Therefore, it can be inferred that as anxiety levels increase, study time management skills decrease.

## Acknowledgments

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## Author contributions

RDT: Responsible for conceptualization, study design, and supervision; wrote and revised the manuscript. ABK: Managed data collection and analysis, contributed to result interpretation, and manuscript writing. Assisted in methodology development and was involved in the literature review and document formatting for journal compliance.

## Conflict of Interest

The authors declare there is no conflict of interest in this study.

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