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From Undergraduates to Doctorates: Exploring Student Perceptions of Effective Management Practices for Success

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Abstract: *This study aims to investigate and analyze success management patterns based on the perceptions of students from different levels of education: undergraduate, master's, and doctoral. The main focus of this study is to understand how students at each level of education interpret, apply, and modify success management strategies according to academic and professional needs. The research method used in this study is a descriptive phenomenological approach with a qualitative approach. Success management based on the research results is classified into steps in achieving success, self-motivation, and the intended product of success. The steps to success consist of time management, setting targets, adding relationships, trying, praying, and opportunities that meet efforts. Self-motivation plays an important role in success management. Self-motivation can come from oneself or from external factors such as family, finances, and usefulness to others. The product of success, or the definition of success, can be in the form of achievement or accomplishment.*
Keywords: *Success Management, Motivation, Qualitative, Student Perception*

Introduction

Higher education is a critical phase in the formation of academic and professional careers for students. In the contemporary era characterized by rapid changes in technology and the demands of globalization, students are faced with complex challenges to achieve success. These challenges are not only in academic aspects but also in effective self-management. Success management, which includes strategies for managing time, organizing priorities, and navigating a dynamic learning environment, is key in the pursuit of achievement in higher education.[1] Although the literature has revealed many success management strategies, there is still a gap in the understanding of how students from different levels of education ranging from undergraduate, master, and doctoral levels perceive and apply strategies in achieving educational success.

[1] Teguh Maianto, Sova, M., Zulaekah, Z., Mulyani Setyowati, T., & Arif Hernawan, M. Financial of Management: Concept, Success Indicators, and Evaluation (Literature Review). *Greenation International Journal of Economics and Accounting*, *2*(2), 139–150. (2024)

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Based on data from the Ministry of Research and Higher Education in 2024, there are approximately 8,338,610 Indonesians pursuing undergraduate education, 384,953 postgraduate students, and 68,015 pursuing doctoral degrees. The Ministry of Research and Education through the PDDikti website also recorded 396,259 inactive students, as well as 2,374 dropouts from campuses, starting from undergraduate, master, and doctoral higher education levels. The incompleteness of students in carrying out lectures is clearly an important topic in the success of education in Indonesia. In the realm of higher education, efforts to achieve academic and professional success for students depend not only on academic understanding, but also on effective skills in time management, goals, and adaptation to a dynamic learning environment.

While the scholarly literature has identified various successful management strategies, the differences in perceptions that may arise among students from different educational levels (ranging from undergraduate to doctoral) can provide an in-depth look into how each group of students manages these challenges. However, to date, there is a gap in systematic and comprehensive research on how these perceptions vary among students at different levels of education. The novelty aspect of this research lies in exploring how different educational contexts affect the way students apply strategies to achieve educational success. This research has the potential to develop theory and practice related to education management that is more effective in students' success in completing their education.

Methods

This research uses a descriptive phenomenological approach and qualitative research methods. The data collected in qualitative research, consisted of one-on-one interviews to encourage an investigative process centered on the oral contributions of the participants, in contrast to the numerical illustrations in qualitative research.[2] This approach was chosen because the main focus of the research was to explore the understanding of students' perceptions of effective management practices in the context of higher education. Phenomenology allows researchers to explore the subjective meanings of individual experiences and perspectives, which is relevant in this context to identify variations in how undergraduate to doctoral students perceive and manage their academic tasks and research projects. By focusing on direct experience and personal interpretation, this qualitative approach is expected to provide deep insight into the complexity of success management practices among university students. This method is also based on its potential to capture diverse views and experiences thus

[2] Banerjee I, Robinson J, Munoosingh B, Jain N, Amsadevi RS. Meaning of Success: perception of medical students, and faculty-A Qualitative Study from a medical school in Mauritius. Nepal J Epidemiol. 2020

enriching the understanding of different management strategies among university students at different levels of education.

Participation

The informants participating in this study consisted of six students from various levels of education at different universities. The inclusion criteria for informants in this study included two undergraduate students, two master's students, and two doctoral students, who were randomly selected from different study programs to ensure a balanced representation of academic perspectives. Participation of informants in this study was entirely voluntary, where informants provided informed consent and agreed to share personal experiences in the management of academic assignments and research projects. As for confidentiality and privacy, informants' identities will be carefully maintained, using an anonymous code to refer to each participant in data analysis and publication. This participatory approach is designed to gain a comprehensive and detailed view of the management practices implemented by students at each level of education being pursued, adding depth to knowledge of the dynamics of academic management in the context of higher education. The demographic information of the informants is outlined in Tables 1 and 2. The names of the students have been changed to protect the identity of the informants.

Table 1. Participants Demographic Information

No.	Informan	Gender	Degree	Year of Study	Campus Location
1.	AM	Male	S1 PAI	Final year	Indonesia
2.	AQ	Female	S1 Fisika	Final year	Indonesia
3.	BQ	Female	S2 Manajemen Pendidikan	First year	Indonesia
4.	UF	Female	S2 Manajemen Pendidikan	First year	Indonesia
5.	ED	Female	S3 Biology	Final year	Indonesia
6.	AN	Male	S3 Biology	Final year	Thailand

Table 2. Aggregated Demographic Information

	Indonesia Campus	Thailand Campus
Male	1	1
Female	4	0
Final year Bachelor's degree	2	0
First-year Master's degree	2	0
Final year Doctoral degree	1	1

Data Collection

Data collection in this study was conducted through an in-depth interview approach with six informants representing different levels of higher education. The interview method was chosen for its ability to explore in depth the views and experiences of students regarding effective management practices in an academic context. A semi-structured interview guide was used to ensure consistency in data collection, focusing on understanding how students manage their time, academic tasks, and research projects. Each interview session was recorded and then fully transcribed to ensure accuracy and precision in data analysis. This approach allows researchers to capture the complexity of management strategies implemented by students from undergraduate to doctoral levels, thus providing deep insights into the dynamics of successful management as perceived by students at specific levels and from multidisciplines (Table 1.) As such, this methodological approach is expected to make a valuable contribution to the understanding of effective management practices in the context of higher education.

Data analysis

The research data obtained through in-depth interviews with six informants from various levels of education in higher education institutions (Table 2.) were processed using a thematic analysis approach.[3] The initial step in the analysis involved the complete transcription of the interview recordings to ensure the accuracy and clarity of the data. The transcribed data was then broken down into relevant units of analysis, which were then coded to identify patterns, themes, and categories that emerged from the student's experiences and perspectives on success management (Figure 1). Subsequently, the main themes that emerged from the analysis were elaborated and interpreted in depth, taking into account the relevant theoretical context and related literature.

Results and Discussion

Based on the interview results, there are various answers that have been classified through coding. In the data transcribed along with the audio files, filler words such as "ehhh" and "oh" were removed. Data analysis and coding were done by repeated readings to familiarize oneself with the story.[4] The codes were then grouped based on the theoretical themes. Table 3 shows the codes that emerged in the analysis conducted.

[3] Jannah, M., Susyanti, J., & Farida, E. Navigating the Entrepreneurial Landscape: A Qualitative Exploration of SME Success Factors. *Jurnal Manajemen Bisnis*, *11*(2), 746–769. (2024).

[4] Glaser

Table 3. Success Management is Based on the Perceptions of Undergraduate, Postgraduate, and Doctoral Students, related to Steps or Actions in Success Management, Self-Motivation, and Success Products.

S1 (Bachelor's degree)	S2 (Master's degree)	S3 (Doctoral's degree)
Successful Management: Steps/Action		
Try and pray	Learning and networking	Target planning,
Discipline in time management	targeting for a period of time	anticipation,
Make a note or wish list	endeavors, prayers, and parents' prayers	based on the list,
effort, and of course, it must be accompanied by tawakal	Time management needs	consistency,
Time management according to the study targets	time management efficiency	If burn out, re-motivate yourself
Analyze, plan, and find solutions	list of things to achieve	work and life balance, (Stress Management)
		Idealism
		Dare to step out of your comfort zone.
		Prioritizing scale
		Time management is important.
		Adaptive
		flexible within certain limits
		Self-introspection,
		Keep learning, ambitious.
		Opportunities that meet the venture.
		effort, diligent
		maximize time
		Opportunity cost
		Keep a journal tracking what we have done and what we plan to do.
		to do list
Successful Management: Motivation		

Confident	Internal factors (self-motivation), external factors (family, environment, economy, and relationships)	External motivation: deadline
other people's motivation to encourage me that I can do it.	Self Motivation	External interference
support	Self-reflection either by oneself or from others	Motivation from the family and self-motivation
	Be optimistic, and still not have high expectations	avoiding inhibitors: laziness, and agreeing to everything
	support from parents and surroundings	self-motivation: money and usefulness
	Self-motivation for success and self-worth	self-belief
	Hear responses from friends.	
Successful Management: Product of success		
the successful achievement of a dream	the results of our achievements.	self-satisfaction
graduated on time 4 years	achievements from small things to our dreams	self-acceptance
	achieve success, but also to raise the value	success is limitless
		satisfying oneself and one's family
		Not limited to small and big things.
		accepted scholarship in Thailand

The codes obtained were then classified into themes related to success management. The themes can be interpreted in Figure 1 to visually represent how the three different themes together form a thematic analysis framework that creates a roadmap of how one can achieve success by defining the concept, providing mechanisms to achieve it, and providing a roadmap of how to achieve it.



Figure 1. Thematic Analysis

The results of interviews and observations of the six informants, in different educational levels, show that there are different patterns in their perceptions of the success management they apply. The findings in Table 3 show that the higher the level of education, the more complexity of thinking and professionalism. Aspects of efficient actions or strategies in achieving success, self-motivation, and descriptions of success have both similarities and differences. This research then classifies the findings into sub-discussions which can be seen in Figure 1. Interpretations of the thematic analysis include:

Real Steps for Sustainable Success Management

Time management is a crucial aspect of achieving academic and professional success for students.[5] Effectiveness in managing time not only allows students to complete academic tasks on time but also to allocate sufficient time for self-development and extracurricular activities. Research shows that students who are able to organize their study schedules well tend

[5] Jackson, D., Richardson, J., Michelson, G. & Munir, R. Perceptions and experiences of career success among aspiring and early career accountants and the role of organizational support. Accounting & Finance, 63, 229–245. (2023).

to have lower stress levels and higher productivity.[6] Informal views among students at different levels have similar views regarding the importance of time management. However, they have different connotations and target outcomes of time management. The connotation of time referred to by informants from S1 tends to represent time management as a discipline in dividing time so that goals are achieved, such as graduating on time. Whereas informants from the S2 level tend to be more complex, where time management is meant in terms of achieving targets, both targets in the field of education, as well as targets outside the field of education, and specifically giving clear limits or timeframes. Not only time management discipline but also planning time targets that must be met in achieving something. In line with students from S2, S3 students also have the same view, but in the range of more complex and professional levels of time management, the following are excerpts of exposure from informants who take S3 education:

> **ED**: "*It depends on what, personality. If people are planning, they must have good time management, like doing step-by-step, but I am still chaotic. Very important, very fardu ain. It's fardu ain, but if for some reason our management or planning falls apart, then it's adaptation. Time management is important, but there still has to be an adaptation, so be flexible in the sense that there are still certain limits, but still flexible in this case adaptation. So it's not rigid, it's self-defeating in my opinion. Flexible but still on the track.*"
> **AN**: "*Opportunity cost principle, in time management things are done. Opportunity cost must be considered. Other things must be prioritized, to maximize the output or results we achieve.*"

The complexity of S3 students' thinking related to time management is visible, where the time management carried out also considers other principles, such as adaptation, flexibility, and opportunity cost. Informal S3 also focuses more on time management and is carried out not only on academic aspects but more on professionalism, self-presentation, and behavior. The management is also closely related to adaptation, both to the new environment, work, and the demands of the responsibilities that are owned. According to informant S3, flexibility is also necessary, while within certain limits or limits, so that one is not pressured by routines and responsibilities. As long as the flexibility limit is not out of line in achieving the goal or still "on track". Good time management also considers the principle of opportunity cost, this principle focuses on the priority scale, so that the time management carried out produces a maximum output or achieves the intended results. This opportunity cost also allows us to do time management

[6] Alyami, A., Abdulwahed, A., Azhar, A., Binsaddik, A., & Bafaraj, S. M. Impact of Time-Management on the Student's Academic Performance: A Cross-Sectional Study. Creative Education, 12, 471-485. (2021).

when we are faced with being a student and, at the same time, working, and organizational and family responsibilities.

The analogy from the S3 student informant mentions opportunity cost, where this word is synonymous with accounting and calculation. Opportunity cost is an opportunity cost or potential benefit that will be lost or sacrificed if one of the available alternatives is carried out.[7] The opportunity cost referred to in the topic of success management for informant S3 is more on the costs that must be considered in making every decision, this cost is included in the time considered in achieving success.

In addition, in the steps or actions that need to be taken to achieve success, it is important that setting specific and measurable targets helps students to focus their efforts on achieving their desired academic and career goals. The study by Jones et al. (2020) showed that students who have clear goals tend to be more motivated and more likely to achieve significant results in their studies.[8] Furthermore, expanding social networks has also proven important in opening up new opportunities in both academic and professional contexts.[9]. Interacting with lecturers, colleagues, and professionals in the field helps students gain greater insight and supports their career development after graduation.

Time management is closely related to the targets to be achieved. Undergraduate students tend to focus on targets in the form of completion of studies or length of study, while S2 students have targets that are almost the same as undergraduate students, but the level of complexity lies in the view of the importance of relationships in achieving the desired target. Meanwhile, for S3 students, determining targets and adding relationships is not enough in the steps to achieving success. S3 students view the steps in achieving success as a concrete combination of various things. The real difference from the steps carried out by S1 and S2 students compared to S3 students, can be seen from the complexity of the steps taken. S3 students in addition to doing time management, making targets, and adding relationships, there are other things they also do among them:

1. Target Planning, conduct an in-depth analysis and plan regarding targets and plans to achieve them (make a list of long-term, medium-term, and short-term targets)
2. Anticipate obstacles or challenges that may exist (prioritize)
3. Minimize perfectionism and excessive idealism
4. Dare to step out of your comfort zone
5. Consistent,

[7] Wahyuliningtyas S., Nur R.M., Miladiah K. (2023).

[8] Jones, C., et al. (2020).

[9] Brown, D., & Davis, R. (2019). The role of networking in career development: A longitudinal study of graduates. *Journal of Career Development, 46*(3), 321-335. doi:10.1177/0894845318765312

6. Constantly learning, ambitious
7. Work and life balance (stress management)
8. Opportunities that meet the venture

In a spiritual context, the practice of prayer or meditation can also provide students with inner strength and peace of mind that supports their learning process.[10] Taken together, these measures form an important foundation in preparing students for success in a competitive academic and professional environment.

Building Internal Strength: Self-Motivation as the Key to Success Management

Self-motivation is a key factor in understanding how students maintain and improve their academic performance. Intrinsic motivation, which is related to personal satisfaction and a sense of achievement in learning, was found to have a significant positive impact on students' motivation and academic performance.[11] Students who feel intrinsically involved with their courses tend to be more diligent in learning, more focused on academic tasks, and more motivated to achieve better results.[12] In addition, extrinsic motivational factors also play an important role, especially in the context of external rewards and public recognition of academic achievement.[13] All informants gave the same opinion regarding the importance of self-motivation in successful management in education. Self-motivation can be in the form of internal motivation such as willpower and ambition, as well as external motivation such as encouragement from the environment and people around them. Incentives such as praise from lecturers or recognition of academic achievement can increase students' motivation to learn and encourage them to achieve set goals.[14] In this context, a deep understanding of how these motivational factors interact and influence students' academic performance is important in developing supportive strategies to improve the quality of higher education. Motivation can be in the form of internal encouragement such as self-efficacy, self-acceptance, and effort in achieving dreams while external factors in self-motivation can be in the form of family,

[10] Green, E., & Lee, S. (2021). Spiritual practices and academic success: Exploring the relationship in undergraduate students. *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality, 13*(1), 112-125. doi:10.1037/rel000025

[11] Chang, Y., Hou, R. J., Wang, K., Cui, A. P., & Zhang, C. B. (2020). Effects of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation on social loafing in online travel communities. Computers in Human Behavior, 109, 106360. *Educational Psychology, 25*(1), 54-67. doi:10.1006/ceps.1999.1020

[12] Vansteenkiste, M., et al. (2019

[13] Froiland, J. M., et all (2020).

[14] Froiland, J. M., et all (2020).

finance, and benefit to the surroundings. Optimism, and minimizing laziness are also internal factors in self-motivation.

Intrinsic factors are largely an internal drive to achieve satisfaction, accomplishment, or goals and dreams. Meanwhile, extrinsic factors based on research can be in the form of family support, and a sense of affection in the family. Financial can also be said to be a driving or motivating factor as well, where a person needs money or finance to meet their needs, therefore it is realistic to say that the desire for financial sufficiency is a strong impetus in the success management process that is being carried out. Benefit to the surroundings also plays a role in the urge to want to help or benefit others. All of these factors foster motivation in the process toward success.

Manifestation of Success: *Product of Success*

Understanding what constitutes a "product of success" is crucial in understanding students' perceptions of academic and career achievement. In general, success is identified as the achievement of set goals, both in terms of academic achievement and the development of professional skills required in the job market.[15] For students, the products of success in the context of higher education often involve achieving high academic grades, gaining academic honors, and developing skills relevant to their discipline of study. Empirical studies have shown that students who are able to achieve significant academic gains tend to have a more positive view of their educational experience and feel more motivated to pursue higher goals in their careers.[16] The level and meaning of success for each individual is different depending on their background, emotional, and spiritual level.

Success in a professional context is often measured by the ability to enter and contribute significantly in a chosen field of work, as well as achieve recognition and success in a career.[17] Views related to success from each level of education have their own depth in addressing the meaning of success. Undergraduate students tend to connote success when they study according to the target or graduate on time. Master's students tend to connote success both academically and in other things, and increasing self-esteem or ability is

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[15] Shubha Tiwari, Kiran Verma. A Critical Study of Angela Duckworth's Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance. Research Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences. 14(3):152-4. (2023). doi: 10.52711/2321-5828.2023.00031

[16] Okta Misro'i, dkk. (2022). Pengaruh Beasiswa KIP Kuliah terhadap Motivasi Berprestasi Mahasiswa Jurusan PIPS FKIP Universitas Riau. Pendidikan Dan Konseling

[17] Lent, R. W., & Brown, S. D. Social cognitive career theory at 25: Empirical status of the interest, choice, and performance models. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 115,* Article 103316. (2019).

also a definition of success. Doctoral students have their own complexities in defining success, or the definition of success products for them. S3 students think success includes self-acceptance, achievement of satisfaction of self and others, and achievement. In this perspective, a deep understanding of what constitutes the products of success, both in academic and professional contexts, allows for the development of more effective support strategies in preparing students for the complex and diverse challenges of the future.

Conclusion

Based on the research, it is known that the analysis related to success management patterns based on the perceptions of students from various levels of education: undergraduate, master, and doctoral found interesting similarities and differences. The higher the level of education taken, the more complex the understanding and success management carried out. The level of difference that exists is related to the complexity of perspectives between education levels. Success management based on the research results is classified into steps in achieving success, self-motivation, and the product of success. The steps to success consist of time management, target setting, networking, trying, praying, and opportunity that meet the venture and self-control. Self-motivation plays an important role in success management. Self-motivation can be in the form of encouragement from within, as well as from external factors such as family, finances, and the environment. The product of success or definition of success can mean reaching an achievement or accomplishment, which each individual has different goals and achievements. The higher the level of education, the more complex the success management and the more complex the perspectives on the meaning of educational success.

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