



# How Media Construct Time Management: A Linguistic Analysis (2020–2025)

Novikova V. P.<sup>1</sup>, Mohammad Ibrahim Moneeb<sup>2\*</sup>, Raihanullah Mohmand<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Candidate of Philological Sciences, Associate Professor of the Department Foreign Languages of the K.G. Razumovsky Moscow State University of Technologies and Management (FCU).

<sup>2</sup>Master Student at HSE University, Russia

\*Corresponding Author

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## ABSTRACT

This study investigates how English-language media linguistically construct the concept of time management through the use of metaphor and framing strategies during the period from 2020 to 2025. Adopting a mixed methods qualitative discourse-analytical approach, the research examines a corpus of 25 media texts (approximately 48,000 words) drawn from influential outlets, including BBC, CNN, *The Economist*, *Financial Times*, *The Guardian*, and *Harvard Business Review*. These sources were selected to represent a range of journalistic genres, such as business journalism, lifestyle media, and professional advice discourse. The analysis combines the Metaphor Identification Procedure Vrije Universiteit (MIPVU) with frame-semantic analysis and systematic lexical classification to uncover recurring linguistic patterns in media representations of time.

The findings reveal four dominant metaphor families used to conceptualize time, namely TIME IS MONEY, TIME IS A RESOURCE, TIME IS A MOVING ENTITY, and TIME IS AN ENEMY. These metaphors are embedded within five recurring interpretive frames: productivity, urgency, self-optimization, wellness, and neoliberal responsibility. Together, these linguistic strategies contribute to the transformation of time from an abstract experiential dimension into a quantifiable, manageable, and morally charged resource. The study demonstrates that media discourse does not merely describe time management practices but actively shapes normative expectations regarding efficiency, responsibility, and self-discipline.

To illustrate the linguistic mechanisms underlying this transformation, the study proposes a conceptual model that distinguishes between the lexicon of time, the lexicon of time management, and their intersection, where hybrid expressions naturalize managerial approaches to temporal experience. The results contribute to media discourse studies, cognitive linguistics, and critical discourse analysis by providing a systematic account of how contemporary media participate in the ideological construction of time. The study also offers a theoretical foundation for future research on the relationship between language, media, and temporal perception in digitally accelerated societies.

**Keywords:** time management, media discourse, metaphor analysis, framing; MIPVU, productivity, neoliberal ideology

## INTRODUCTION

In business news, lifestyle media, self-help literature, and online productivity platforms, time is consistently framed as something to be optimized in order to increase efficiency and maximize output. Although time management has been a widely studied behavioral skill of psychology and organizations with quantifiable consequences on well-being and performance (Aeon and Aguinis, 2021; Claessens, Van Eerde, and Rutte, 2007), much less academic interest has been given in the realization of how time management is linguistically created by the media. This research gap is especially relevant considering the fact that the media is one of the main sources of social knowledge and normative directions in modern societies. This matters because when time is



described like a resource (something to save, invest, or waste), it can also create pressure and guilt. In a period where burnout and digital overload are becoming normal topics in public discussion, media language does not only reflect these pressures, but can also shape how individuals internalize responsibility for them.

This paper argues that media discourse does not merely describe or report on time-management practices but actively persuades audiences by constructing social, economic, and moral meanings of time through strategic linguistic choices. Media texts objectify time, turned into an object of economic, personal, and moral responsibility, through metaphor, framing, and lexical patterning. The ideological change that the view of time as a resource to be controlled instead of experience to be lived is a notable conceptualization that media can embody and uphold.

The time-frame of 2020-2025 is a particularly prolific period to study the media constructions of time management because of a number of overlapping social changes. The global COVID-19 outbreak led to the mass implementation of remote work policies and has essentially eroded the traditional time frames of professional and personal space (BBC News, 2021). Disruptions to daily life caused by the pandemic, as well as the increased pace of digitalization in various spheres of life, generated new concerns and openings associated with time organization. At the same time, increasing complaints about burnout, fragmentation of attention, and digital overloads increased the interest of people to the discourses of productivity and efficiency (Rodriguez, 2024). These circumstances made a cultural instability of time management questions, especially those concerning how to divide time.

The research question that is discussed in this paper is the following: In what ways do English-language media linguistically construct the concept of time management between 2020 and 2025? The study uses systematic metaphor, framing and lexical pattern analysis to establish the prevailing linguistic processes that affect the conversion of time into a resource that can be managed. The analysis is conducted in multiple steps, beginning with metaphor families which are identified with the help of the MIPVU procedure, analyzing the interpretive frames that define perceptions of readers, sorting lexical units into time conceptual fields, and finally suggesting a conceptual model representing the linguistic production of time into time management. Therefore, the aim of this study is not only to identify metaphors, but to show how these metaphors support a moral framing of productivity, where efficiency becomes a virtue and wasting time becomes a failure.

To clarify this process, the study proposes a simple conceptual model with three zones: (1) time lexicon, (2) time-management lexicon, and (3) an intersection zone where hybrid expressions such as “save time” or “time budget” normalize managerial thinking about time.

This study is not only important in terms of analysis of academic discourse. This study contributes to the study of media literacy so that the readers can analyze the discourses of productivity critically by exposing the linguistic processes through which the media construct the temporal perception. Moreover, the results can be applied to the field of organizational communication, mental health discussion, and cultural conceptualizations of work-life balance in more fast-paced societies.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Traditional conceptualization of psychological research on time management has been the range of behavioral skills and thought processes, which are intended to organize time successfully. In their extensive review, Claessens et al. (2007) find three main elements: (1) the establishment of goals and priorities, (2) the introduction of planning and scheduling systems, and (3) use of monitoring and evaluation methods. The approach is skillsbased, and it is more concerned with individual behaviors and their relation to such outcomes as job performance, academic achievement, and a psychological well-being.

In a meta-analytic study, Aeon and Aguinis (2021) present significant correlations between self-reported behavior of time management and positive outcomes such as reduced stress, higher job satisfaction and enhanced academic performance. Nevertheless, these psychological paradigms often consider time management as a value-neutral set of skills, with little interrogation to the way that cultural values, economic frameworks or media images define what should be considered an effective time management approach. The individualistic nature of



this study tends to ignore that social structures and discourses are in themselves a source of creating the same conditions which make time management look both needed and desirable.

Organizational literature has expanded the psychology-oriented methods in looking at time management in the workplace, in terms of productivity indicators, efficiency-related policies, and performance management software (Davenport, 2020). This is a literature about how organizations are introducing more and more employee time monitoring and regulation via digital surveillance technologies, making what Wright (2024) calls the efficiency mindset. Although it could be useful in conducting workplace practices, organizational research tends to make natural but not challenge the economic reasoning behind the discourse of time management.

### **Sociological Approaches To Temporal Experience**

The sociological views would be a vital background to conceptualizing the media representation of time since temporal experience is culturally controlled and socialized. In his masterpiece, Norbert Elias (1992) does not consider time as a natural phenomenon but rather as a product of civilization, a symbolic tool that was created to synchronize even more complicated social relations. This view can be used to justify why various societies and historical periods establish different temporal regimes where they place dissimilar emphasis on punctuality, scheduling and measurement of time.

The social acceleration theory by Hartmut Rosa (2013) presents a particularly appropriate concept of interpreting the modern media discourse of time management. Rosa singles out three dimensions of acceleration that exist in the contemporary societies: (1) technological acceleration in communication and transportation, (2) acceleration of social change and cultural innovation and (3) acceleration of the pace of life. This threefold acceleration produces what Rosa calls a dynamic stabilization in which social systems must be in some form of continuous growth, innovation, and speed in order to uphold the structure. The discourses of media that promote time management may be viewed as cultural responses to such pressure of acceleration, providing people with tactics of coping with the growing faster tempos in society. However, treating time management as a neutral skill does not fully explain why productivity becomes morally loaded or why individuals experience guilt when they fail to optimise their time. To address this, it is necessary to move from behavioural explanations to broader sociological and critical perspectives.

In his ideas of discipline and governmentality, **Michel Foucault (1977)** helps to explain why time management has become not only a practical concern but also a moral imperative in modern societies. The disciplinary power analysis by Foucault demonstrates how institutions produce docile bodies by carefully regulating the time and activity. These disciplinary processes when internalized in the form of discourse turn into forms of selfgovernment whereby individuals check and streamline their own time performance. Neoliberal governmentality brings this logic to the point of considering self-optimization as an economic imperative as well as an ethical imperative.

### **The Use Of Cognitive Linguistic Approaches To Temporal Metaphors.**

Cognitive linguistics offers fundamental theoretical resources to stress the influence of the media language on conceptual perception of the time. The initial contributions of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980) have formed the basis that metaphors are not just varieties of decorative language but of constructive form in human thought which determine reasoning and experience. The fact that they identified conceptual metaphors like TIME IS MONEY and TIME IS MOTION indicates the way abstract time ideas are framed using more concrete, embodied experience.

The study of cognitive linguistics that followed gave us a wider insight into the temporal metaphor in language and societies. Although certain metaphors like TIME IS MONEY seem to be common in industrialized cultures, cultural differences in conceptualizing time can bring out the importance of metaphors in reinforcing the values of a given culture (Boroditsky, 2011). Recent studies as follows by Xu et al. (2024) discuss the way in which the temporal metaphors in digital communication may reflect the evolving relations towards time in technologysaturated settings, but not many of them are systematic in correlating the patterns of language with the wider ideological discourses of productivity and efficiency.



Steen et al. (2010) have developed a systematic approach to discourse metaphor identification called MIPVU (Metaphor Identification Procedure Vrije Universiteit) method. In contrast with more intuitive metaphor identification methods, MIPVU sets definite standards of analyzing literal and metaphorical language based on the opposition of the contextual and the basic meanings. Such methodological rigor determines MIPVU as the most appropriate means used to analyze the discourse of the media in which metaphor use can be subtle or conventionalized.

### **Theory Of Media Discourse And Framing.**

The theory of media framing describes the process through which media representations influence the audience perception outlying some details of reality and hiding the others. According to Robert Entman (1993) framing can be defined as the choice and emphasis of certain aspects of events or issues, and the establishment of relationships between such aspects in a manner that favors a certain interpretation, assessment, and/or solution. Media frames shape the audiences to have concrete perceptions about social phenomena through the selection of words, metaphor, narrative and source.

The critical discourse analysis by Norman Fairclough (1995) is a continuation of the theory of framing because it analyses how the power relations are reproduced and naturalized through media discourse. The three dimensional framework of text, discursive practice, and social practice offered by Fairclough offers the means of relating particular linguistic features to the larger social systems and ideologies. The method is especially useful in understanding the discourse of time management because it enables the scholars to trace how seemingly impartial tips regarding productivity can advance neoliberal ideals of individualism, competition, and selfcontrol.

Recent uses of framing theory in lifestyle and productivity media have shown how these discourses advance certain subject positions and ways of being. To mention but a few, discussions of personal productivity and life hacking often position individuals as entrepreneurial figures who are responsible for maximizing their human capital through careful self-management (Wood & Wood, 2019). This kind of framing can be compared to what Brown (2015) refers to as the **neoliberalization of the self**, a process through which market logic comes to govern not only economic practices but also the most intimate aspects of personal life.

### **Research Gap And Contribution.**

Regardless of the heavy research in psychology, sociology, cognitive linguistics, and media studies an existing research has not been carried out to integrate metaphor analysis, frame-semantic analysis and lexical classification in order to focus on the way media linguistically constructs time management. The existing studies have generally concentrated either on a single dimension which is metaphor, framing or a lexical pattern without combining all these approaches to give a holistic explanation on how language influences temporal understanding.

Such a gap is addressed by this study that provides an integrated model of analysis allowing correlating microlinguistic detail (metaphors, lexical choices) with macro-discursive patterns (frames, ideologies). Through an analysis of the intersection of time and time management lexicon, this study shows exactly how abstract time ideas transform into definite resources to be handled. Moreover, due to the consideration of the particular historical period of 2020-2025, this study will capture language reactions to distinct social circumstances such as disruption during the pandemic, the naturalization of remote work, and the increased fear of burnout and digital overload. Overall, the literature suggests that time management can be understood as a behavioural strategy, a response to social acceleration, and a discursive mechanism of self-discipline. What remains underexplored is how these dimensions intersect at the lexical level in mainstream media discourse. This study attempts to bridge that gap.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

The research design is the qualitative discourse analysis which is the combination of metaphor identification, frame analysis, and lexical classification. The integrated strategy enables the study of the interaction between particular linguistic elements to create certain meanings of time management. The study represents a cyclic process of analysis between text and interpretation and the reverse so that a pattern can be revealed in a systematic study of the corpus.



## Corpus Construction

It is analyzed using a corpus of 25 English-language media texts published in the period between January 2020 and December 2025 built specifically to analyze the topic. The 2020–2025 time frame was selected to capture contemporary media discourse during and after the pandemic period. However, the aim of the study is structural rather than diachronic; therefore, the analysis focuses on identifying stable metaphorical patterns rather than tracing detailed year-by-year change. The corpus contains about 48,000 words that have been collected across six large media companies whose influence and credibility were chosen; these are BBC, CNN, The Economist, Financial Times, The Guardian, and Harvard Business Review. These sources were selected as they are examples of different genres in media (news reporting, business analysis, lifestyle journalism, professional advice) and are still of high editorial quality. Although the corpus consists of 25 texts, it was designed for close qualitative analysis rather than statistical generalization. Since MIPVU works at the level of lexical units and requires detailed coding, the focus here is methodological precision and consistency. The findings therefore describe dominant patterns within selected mainstream outlets rather than the entire field of English-language time management discourse.

The selection of the texts was based on three criteria: (1) **concentration on time-management-related themes**, including productivity, efficiency, and scheduling as the main theme; (2) the publication date within the specified time period to reflect the current discourse of time management; (3) the variety of genres to focus on the dissimilar discursive trends in time management. Articles covering news, opinion pieces, business analyses, lifestyle features, and advice columns of professional advice are represented in the corpus, and they offer a multifaceted perspective of time management construction in media contexts.

## Analytical Procedures

### Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIPVU Procedure)

The analysis of metaphors was based on the method of MIPVU formulated by Steen et al. (2010) offering systematic guidelines in determining metaphor-related words (MRWs). It is a four-step procedure done to every lexical unit of the corpus:

1. Defining contextual meaning: Determining the way that a word is used in the particular text.
2. Determining the more concrete, physical or embodied meaning of the word: This is in order to find the basic meaning.
3. Evaluating contrast: The judgment that there is a difference between contextual and basic meanings to suggest metaphorical use.
4. The coding decision: According to the assessment of the word as contrasting, the word is directly metaphorical, indirectly metaphorical, or non-metaphorical.

An illustrative example can be found in the expression “*fight the clock*.” In this context, the verb *fight* refers to a temporal struggle against time pressure, whereas its basic meaning involves physical combat between opposing forces. The difference between these meanings recognizes that *fight* was metaphorically applied and it belongs to the family of metaphor TIME IS AN ENEMY. In this study, the primary focus is placed on direct metaphor-related words, as these are more explicit and therefore allow clearer identification and classification within a small qualitative corpus. Since the aim of the research is to trace how media openly construct and frame time as a resource or opponent, direct metaphors provide more observable evidence of this framing process.

Indirect metaphors, although often more frequent and conventionalized, can be more difficult to separate from literal meanings in journalistic discourse, especially when metaphorical language becomes normalized. Because of this, indirect metaphor identification would require a larger dataset and additional coding layers. Therefore, the decision to prioritize direct metaphors was methodological rather than theoretical. However, this choice may lead to under-representation of highly conventional metaphorical patterns, which should be addressed in future research.



## Frame-Semantic Analysis

The frame analysis established time management interpretive frames that categorized reader knowledge on time management. Based on the framing theory as then proposed by Entman (1993) and frame semantics proposed by Fillmore, this analysis discussed how texts establish the problem, diagnose its source, make moral judgments and recommend solutions regarding the time use. The identification of frames was based on repetitive keywords, narrative patterns, source choice, and implicit responsibility and agency suppositions.

The iterative coding resulted in five dominant frames, including (1) productivity (emphasizing production maximization), (2) urgency (emphasizing the time pressure), (3) self-optimization (emphasizing the selfimprovement), (4) wellness (emphasizing the well-being), and (5) neoliberal responsibility (emphasizing personal responsibility). The texts were coded in terms of primary and secondary frames with a close focus on the way the frames overlap to form certain time management discursive constructions.

## Lexical Classification

The content analysis was used to organize lexical units into three conceptual areas in a systematic way:

1. Time Lexicon: Directly temporal words (e.g. hours, minutes, deadlines, ticking, calendar, schedule, future, past).
2. Time Management Lexicon: The terms describing time management practices (e.g., scheduling, prioritizing, planning, organizing, efficiency, productivity).
3. Intersection Lexicon: Words that implicate both temporal and managerial terms (e.g., save time, lose time, invest time, allocate hours, control minutes).

This categorization enabled mapping of the linguistic transformation of time out of an abstract dimension into a resource that can be handled. Special focus was placed on the intersection zone where the temporal concepts are subjected to the managerial interventions.

## Analytical Rigor and Limitations

In order to achieve analytical rigor, the study was also using intercoder reliability checks on a sample of texts, resulting in an agreement on metaphor identification (85%), and frame coding (88%). The discussion and coding criteria refinement were used to solve disagreements. The process of analysis was iterative and provided the texts with the opportunity to continually compare them and modify the categories of coding as patterns started to be discovered.

The research has a number of limitations. To start with, the corpus (25 texts) offers depth and not breadth of analysis. Second, the emphasis on the English-language media that are provided by majorly Western sources restricts cultural applications. Third, the analysis is based on textual and not multimodal aspects, that is, there are no visual aspects that support or oppose a textual message. Fourth, the research focuses on media production, not audience reaction and questions remain open regarding how readers are actually interpreting the discourse of time management. These restrictions are indicators of the future research, such as bigger cross-cultural corpora, multimodal analysis, and reception studies.

## Dictionary-Based Core Of Time Management

To establish the core meaning of *time management*, dictionary definitions were first examined. According to the **Oxford English Dictionary**, time management refers to “*the ability to use one’s time effectively or productively, especially at work.*” Similarly, the **Cambridge Dictionary** defines time management as “*the practice of using time effectively so that the right amount of time is allocated to the right activities.*” These definitions emphasize efficiency, productivity, planning, and effective allocation of time, which together constitute the **core**, conventional understanding of time management.



While dictionary definitions capture the standardized and widely accepted meaning of the term, they do not account for metaphorical, evaluative, or context-dependent extensions. Such meanings emerge in actual language use, particularly in media discourse, and form the **periphery** of the concept, which is examined through metaphor and framing analysis in this study.

## RESULTS

To systematize the findings, the analysis additionally applies a core–periphery perspective to the concept of time management. The core captures the most typical and widely shared meanings of time management in media discourse, reflected in high-frequency lexical items and standardized principles such as efficiency, productivity, planning, and scheduling. The periphery captures context-sensitive and informal extensions of the concept, including idioms, slang, and identity labels that add experiential, emotional, or culture-specific meanings. This distinction allows the analysis to show how time management functions both as a stable “default” concept and as a dynamic set of extensions shaped by discourse and context.

### Metaphor Frequencies and Patterns

Analysis identified 213 metaphor-related words (MRWs) across the 25-text corpus, representing approximately 4.4 metaphorical expressions per 1,000 words. Four dominant metaphor families accounted for 82% of all MRWs, indicating consistent patterns in how media conceptualize time.

Table 1: Dominant Metaphor Families in Time Management Discourse

Metaphor Family	Frequency	Percentage	Representative Examples
TIME IS MONEY	62	29.1%	"spend your morning wisely," "invest time in learning," "time budget," "wasting hours"
TIME IS A RESOURCE	49	23.0%	"allocate your hours carefully," "limited time reserves," "time allocation," "resource management"
Metaphor Family	Frequency	Percentage	Representative Examples
TIME IS A MOVING ENTITY	36	16.9%	"time is slipping away," "the coming weeks," "approaching deadlines," "time flies"
TIME IS AN ENEMY	28	13.1%	"fight the clock," "battle against time," "time pressure," "racing the clock"
Other metaphors	38	17.9%	"time is space," "time is a container," "time is a journey"
Total	213	100%	

To observe whether metaphor patterns shift across the 2020–2025 period, a basic year-by-year comparison was conducted. While this does not constitute a full diachronic corpus study, it allows for a preliminary view of how dominant metaphor families appear during the pandemic and post-pandemic years.

The family of metaphors **TIME IS MONEY** was the most widespread in the corpus, appearing in 22 out of 25 texts (88%). Within this metaphorical framework, time is constructed as a valuable economic asset that can be



invested, optimized, or wasted, encouraging audiences to treat temporal decisions in terms of cost, efficiency, and return. “The pressure to optimize your working hours and hack your routine can sometimes feel relentless.” (*The Economist*, 2021). This economic framing invites readers to evaluate everyday activities through financial-style reasoning, positioning efficient time use as both a rational strategy and a moral expectation within productivity-oriented media discourse.

The metaphor **TIME IS A RESOURCE** complements the economic framing of time management by emphasizing scarcity, allocation, and limitation. Within this metaphorical structure, time is conceptualized as a finite asset that must be distributed across competing domains such as work, leisure, and personal well-being. This framing normalizes the idea that individuals are responsible for managing limited temporal resources efficiently, often prioritizing productivity over rest or recovery. By presenting time as a scarce resource, media discourse reinforces managerial logic and legitimizes the need for constant planning and optimization.

The metaphor **TIME IS A MOVING ENTITY** representing time as an active force that advances, accelerates, or approaches, rather than as a static resource. Within this metaphorical framework, time is portrayed as something that progresses independently of individual control, generating a sense of urgency and inevitability. By framing time as constantly moving forward, media discourse intensifies perceptions of speed and pressure, encouraging audiences to keep pace with accelerating schedules and approaching deadlines. This metaphor supports the normalization of haste and reinforces the experience of temporal acceleration in contemporary work and lifestyle contexts.

The metaphor **TIME IS AN ENEMY** constructs time as a hostile force that must be resisted, defeated, or overcome. Within this metaphorical framework, time pressure is framed as an adversary against which individuals are expected to struggle, particularly in contexts of deadlines, workload management, and performance evaluation. By representing time as an opponent, media discourse legitimizes stress, urgency, and aggressive productivity practices, while normalizing the perception of constant temporal conflict. This metaphor reinforces a combative orientation toward time, positioning endurance and resistance as indicators of personal competence and success. Additional examples from the corpus include “race against time,” “beat the clock,” and “battling deadlines.” In these expressions, time is represented as an active opponent that must be defeated or resisted. The language implies conflict, urgency, and competitive struggle.

Periphery expressions also contribute to time-management meaning by describing lived experience in informal and metaphorical terms. A key example is **yak shaving**, which refers to chains of secondary tasks that appear productive but ultimately delay the primary objective. This periphery metaphor highlights how time management can become self-defeating when optimization turns into endless preparation rather than task completion. ‘Yak shaving’ is a term for tasks that lead on to further tasks which distract you from your original goal.” (*The Economist*, 2021). This periphery expression complicates the core efficiency model by showing that excessive time-organization practices may generate inefficiency rather than reduce it.

Periphery expressions also include evaluative labels that reflect ironic or critical attitudes toward time management discourse. One such expression is **productivity porn**, which refers to media content that promises increased efficiency while functioning primarily as a form of distraction. Rather than enabling effective time use, productivity porn frames productivity as an aesthetic or motivational fantasy, often reinforcing guilt and unrealistic expectations rather than practical change. “Reading about how to optimise your time has become a great way to waste it.” (*The Economist*, 2021). This periphery expression extends the core concept of time management by exposing the contradiction between the promise of efficiency and the actual experience of time being consumed by productivity-oriented media itself.

## Dominant Interpretive Frames

Frame analysis also identified five coherent patterns of time management in the media that are represented in interpretive frames. Every frame highlights various elements of the experience of time and also advances certain ideals and behaviors.

Table 2: Dominant Frames in Time Management Discourse



Frame	Frequency (Texts)	Key Features	Representative Examples
Productivity	21 (84%)	Emphasis on output maximization, efficiency metrics, performance optimization	"boost daily efficiency," "maximize output," "productive hours," "efficiency hacks"
Urgency	18 (72%)	Emphasis on time pressure, deadlines, acceleration, immediacy	"racing to meet deadlines," "timesensitive tasks," "urgent priorities," "immediate attention required"
Self-Optimization	16 (64%)	Emphasis on personal improvement, skill development, habit formation	"upgrade your time habits," "master your schedule," "optimize your routine," "personal productivity system"
Wellness	12 (48%)	Emphasis on well-being, balance, restoration, mental health	"protect your rest time," "mindful scheduling," "time for renewal," "balanced approach"
Neoliberal Responsibility	10 (40%)	Emphasis on individual accountability, entrepreneurial mindset, self-regulation	"you are accountable for every hour," "take ownership of your time," "personal responsibility," "selfmanagement"

The productivity frame was most prevalent, appearing in 84% of texts. This frame defines effective time management primarily in terms of output maximization, often using quantitative metrics such as tasks completed, hours utilized, or goals achieved. Productivity discourse frequently employs industrial and mechanical metaphors, comparing human activity to factory production or system optimization. For example, a Harvard Business Review article advises readers to "engineer your day like a production line, eliminating inefficiencies at every stage" (Davenport, 2020).

The urgency frame complements productivity by creating temporal pressure that justifies intensive management efforts. This frame often employs metaphors of racing, chasing, or fighting against time, depicting temporal experience as inherently competitive and stressful. Urgency framing appears particularly in business journalism, where time pressure is presented as both a problem to be managed and a natural condition of contemporary work. "The pressure to optimise your working hours and hack your routine can sometimes feel relentless." (The Economist, 2021). This framing normalizes constant time pressure as an economic reality rather than a social construct.

The self-optimization frame individualizes time management as a project of personal improvement. This frame draws on self-help discourse, presenting time management skills as learnable techniques that can be mastered through practice and discipline. Self-optimization discourse often employs athletic or educational metaphors, comparing time management to training or study. "Productivity advice often treats self-improvement as a continuous project." (The Economist, 2021).

The wellness frame is a counter-discourse, which disputes pure productivity strategies and focuses on well-being and balance. This frame is more common in the lifestyle news and after-pandemic coverage of burnout prevention. The ecological/medical metaphor of wellness frequently uses time management as a preventive



health/self-care process. To illustrate this, an article in the BBC Worklife cautions against the fallacy of productivity and instructs the readers to treat the restoration as serious as they treat work (BBC Worklife, 2023).

Time management in the neoliberal responsibility frame is explicitly linked with the rest of the ideological values of individualism, entrepreneurship, and self-regulation. This frame can be seen most of the time in business and financial journalism because efficient time management has been promoted as an economic requirement and a moral duty.

### Lexical Intersection Analysis

The lexical classification showed that there was a systematic language evolution that saw the introduction of temporal concepts as managerial concepts by using bridging terms. Three lexical spheres were picked having a large overlap in the overlapping zone.

The intersection lexicon is significant especially because it is the means of the linguistic process whereby time is made subject to being managed. These transitional words can be used to directly apply economic and managerial terms to the terms of time, which way, recasts time as something that can be saved, lost, invested, or optimized. As an example, the sentence "saving time" transposes financial reasoning (saving) onto more experience time (time): it strengthens the metaphor of TIME IS MONEY and implies the idea that time can be amassed in the same way as money.

The analysis showed that intersection terms become more and more frequent in post-2020 discourse, which indicates a faster idea fusion of managerial and time domains. Intersection terms in the corpus explained about 34 percent of all references to time, showing a lot of linguistic effort being invested into the transformation of abstract time into manageable time.

Table 3: Lexical Fields in Time Management Discourse

Representative Lexical Items	Conceptual Function
hours, minutes, seconds, days, weeks, months, years. deadlines, calendars, schedules, clocks, timers, past, present, future, duration, tempo, rhythm	<b>REFERENCES</b> temporal concepts as abstract dimensions or measurements
scheduling, planning, organizing, prioritizing, allocating, distributing, optimizing, maximizing, efficient, productive, effective, systematic, disciplined, structured, controlled, managed	<b>REFERENCES</b> practices of organizing or controlling activities
saving time, losing time, wasting time, investing time, spending time, allocating hours, managing minutes, optimizing schedules, maximizing days, efficient use of time, productive hours, time budget, time investment, time allocation	Bridges temporal and managerial concepts, transforming time into manageable resource

### Linguistic Transformation Conceptual Model.

According to the metaphor, framing, and lexical studies, an imaginary model was constructed to show the linguistic change of time into time management. Figure 1 illustrates the model, which illustrates three intersecting domains time concepts, management concepts, and how they overlap with particular linguistic mechanisms that help one move between domains.

Figure 1: The Linguistic Transformation Conceptual Model.

In the real manuscript, this would appear as a diagram with the following contents:



Time Domain: Time (duration, rhythm, tempo) is an abstract concept.

Management Area: Managerial concepts (efficiency, optimization, control).

Intersection Domain: Hybrid concepts (time management, productivity, scheduling).

Linguistic Mechanisms Metaphor (domain-to-domain mapping), Framing (interpretive structuring), Lexical blending (building intersection terms)

Directionality: Transformation is made between the abstract time and the manageable time by the linguistic mediation.

The model demonstrates that metaphor offers conceptual translations which reorganize time in managerial expressions (e.g. time is money). The reconfigured concepts are then framed into consistent narratives that have values and imperatives (e.g., productivity frame). Lastly, lexical blending will produce stable terminology that naturalizes the concepts that have changed (e.g., time investment). These interrelated linguistic processes help the media discourse to systematically recreate the experience of time based on managerial logic.

The samples of coding and methodological specifications are presented in the Appendices.

## DISCUSSION

### **Morality of Time and Neoliberal Ideology.**

This discussion shows how the media discourse serves to insist on the benefits of neoliberal values by continually shaping time as an individual economic resource. With metaphorical appeals of TIME IS MONEY everywhere and neoliberal responsibility frames, the audiences are nurtured to internalize the concept of efficiency and selfdiscipline as moral obligation, as opposed to feasible decisions. This time utilization moralization turns time choices out of individual preference questions into moral annexes with the outcome of character evaluation.

At the same time, the presence of periphery expressions such as **yak shaving** and **productivity porn** indicates that media discourse does not solely promote efficiency-oriented ideals but also reflects ambivalence, irony, and critique toward them. These expressions complicate the core moral logic of time management by revealing the practical limits and emotional consequences of productivity-driven temporal discipline.

As an example, the sentence wasting your afternoon hours (BBC, 2023) uses the wasting metaphor (of the TIME IS MONEY family) to mean not only inefficiency but immorality. The preposition you make it clear that it is a personal thing and it is the responsibility that the person has whereas the adjective afternoon hour's measures time in terms of manageable units. Collectively, these rhetorical decisions create time waste as economic mistake and moral crime a potentially twice powerful reproach that is reaffirming neoliberal subjectivity.

This ethical aspect can assist in understanding the fact that time management discourse tends to cause anxiety and guilt even though it is claimed to be rather practical. When time is conceptualized as a moral resource, one cannot only find a waste of time unproductive but also immoral an abuse of his or her obligation to him/herself as an entrepreneurial being. Media talk is, therefore, part of what Cederstrom and Spicer (2015) refer to as the wellness syndrome where self-optimization is driven by a relentless moral command and no longer emerges as a choice.

The neoliberal construction of time as individual capital also makes personal the structural problems to do with the temporality organization. Concentrating on personal time management practices, the media discourse tends to erase the role of workplace pressures, caring ownership, socioeconomics and technological systems in defining time experience. This individualism is in line with the process of neoliberalism that Brown (2015) refers to as its neoliberalism-related responsabilization of social problems shifting collective problems onto individual responsibility.

### **Urgency And Temporal Pressure As A Normalization.**

Urgency framing in the media presentations makes fast-paced speeds to be naturalized as part of modern life instead of a choice of social policies or economic designs. The constant representation of time as limited, short



lived and hostile by media texts produces a feeling of crisis that is enduring and thus requires extreme management measures. There are serious psychological implications of this normalization of the sense of urgency, which can be one of the reasons of the time pressure and hurry sickness that have been highlighted in sociological studies (Rosa, 2013).

The figurative way of building time as an enemy or competitor (the clock is chasing workers, CNN, 2022), produces what Lazar (2000) refers to as a militarized subjectivity in which one is placed in time as a fighter. This paradigm supports violent management practices and presents unceasing struggle as a heroic, but not pathological, one. The enemy metaphor also externalizes time pressure and places it in time itself as opposed to the social arrangements, and, in this way, depoliticizes acceleration.

Urgency language often uses what Wajcman (2015) refers to as the scarcity trope the repeated claims that time is running out even though states in the industrialized world do possess greater amounts of discretionary time than their ancestors have. This perceived contradiction hints that urgency framing is not a reaction to the lack of time but to perceived speeding up and fragmentation of attention in cyberspace. The media talk therefore heightens as opposed to being a mirror of temporal pressure experiences.

The urgency is normalized, which has specific incidence on the workplace culture and expectations. Once the time pressure is introduced as a routine and unavoidable condition, it may become part of the employees themselves as they experience failure to keep up. Such an individualization of structural acceleration is consistent with what Fleming (2017) recognizes as the colonization of time within the contemporary capitalism the extension of control over time by managers to more intimate spheres of temporal experience.

### **Self-Optimization As Construction Of Identity.**

Media provides a systematized way of presenting people as projects to be streamlined in terms of careful time management. This self-optimization discourse correlates with what Brockling (2015) defines as the subject position of entrepreneurial self the application of business logic to every part of life that treats the personalities as human capital to develop and capitalize on. Time management becomes a leading technology of this entrepreneurial selfhood, which offers the means of endless self-development and maximization of values.

The widespread use of machine and system metaphor when talking about self-optimization (upgrade your productivity systems, HBR, 2021) indicates what Binkley (2014) refers to as the so-called cybernetic paradigm of our modern selfhood the belief that we can and must act like perfectly programmed systems. Such mechanistic framing simplifies human complexity into input-output relations and offers control by appropriate system design. The upgrade metaphor also indicates that self-optimization is not only constantly incomplete but technologically mediated, it needs continuous updates such as software.

There is a frequent use of what McGee (2005) terms the makeover paradigm the demonstration of personal change as something that is possible with the use of will and method when it comes to self-optimization. The makeover technology that will be central is time management, which promises to turn the hectic lives into wellorganized mechanisms. This mastery promise is the answer to what Giddens (1991) refers to as ontological insecurity in late modernity anxiety caused by the consciousness of the ultimate uncertainties in life.

Of special interest is the gendered aspects of the discourse of self-optimization. It has been shown that time management tips tend to support the established gender roles by creating a perception that women time is especially disjointed and requiring control (Sullivan and Smithson, 2007). In the media discourse, women are often viewed as the cause of productivity at work, as well as time management at home, which can further contribute to what Hochschild (1989) has referred to as the second shift. This gendered nature of temporality responsibility is not fully investigated in discourse of mainstream time management.

### **Wellness As Counter-Discourse And Co-Optation.**

The wellness frame is a new counter-discourse to pure productivity strategies and has put the argument on wellbeing, balance, and restoration. The frame has become more popular in the discourse of post-pandemic, showing that more focus is on mental health and burnout prevention. Framing wellness is commonly done using



ecological and medical metaphors and framing time management as a way to prevent personal care as opposed to output optimization.

Indicatively, such statement as to protect your rest time (BBC Worklife, 2023) uses the protective metaphor (a part of TIME IS A RESOURCE family) to transform non-productive time into valuable time instead of wasteful time. The person-focused possessive your underlines individual ownership and control, whereas the rest time approves passivity as a planned category. It is a radical contrast to the classic view of productivity that tends to represent rest as wasted time or time spent preparing to work more.

But the discourse of wellness is often subjected to what Cederström and Spicer (2015) refer to as the process of neoliberal logic co-optimization, where well-being becomes another optimization and performance domain. The wellness optimization language or strategic restoration uses the managerial approach to thinking about self-care, which may replicate the very pressures that wellness strategies are aiming to relieve. This co-optimization can be seen in such statements as "maximise downtime to get as much work done as possible on it" (HBR, 2024) that applies productivity reasoning to relaxation.

The conflict between performance and health portrays wider cultural paradoxes in the way the modern societies appreciate time. On the one hand, economic systems require the acceleration and maximization of output at all times; on the other hand, people suffer psychological expenses of such acceleration and need sustainable tempos. Media discourse is a maneuver to negotiate this contradiction; in providing time management as one of those solutions that is likely to balance productivity and wellness with good technique. The question of whether this reconciliation is possible, or that it is simply discursive, is left open with a lot of implications that are of great concern to the well-being of individuals and society as a whole.

### **Conceptual Model: The Transformation Of Time Into Time Management.**

The conceptual model (Figure 1) presented offers a framework of the linguistic transformation of abstract time into manageable time of the media discourse. The model is based on the identification of three domains of time concepts, management concepts, and the intersection of those concepts with particular linguistic mechanisms that help in passing to other domains.

The main device of conceptual mapping is metaphor, and abstract temporal concepts can be perceived in terms of more tangible managerial spheres. To illustrate, in the TIME IS MONEY metaphor, the characteristics of the financial domain (scarcity, value, investment, waste) are transferred to the temporal domain, and in effect, remake the conceptualization of time. Such metaphorical mappings are not decorative at all but constitutive they bring into being the very possibility of conceiving of time in managerial terms.

It is at this point that framing organizes these reconfigured ideas into comprehensible stories that contain unspoken values and demands. An example is the productivity frame, which structures temporal experience around efficiency in terms of output, and constructs a story where sound use of time can be determined by efficiency indices. Frames offer the interpretive framework in which managerial techniques of time appear natural and unavoidable instead of being culturally particular.

The lexical blending produces stable lexicon that naturalizes the modified ideas where they can be utilized in daily speech. Words such as time investment, efficient hours and productive scheduling combine both temporal and management terms and form hybrid ideas that are more familiar as opposed to contradictory. This naturalization of lexicon plays the critical role of creating the illusion of managerial approaches towards time as common sense as opposed to ideological fabrication.

The directional movement of the abstract time into the manageable time shows the working of ideology that is carried out by the media discourse. Time, as duration, rhythm, tempo, is abstract and uncontrollable; only with the help of a language can it be a resource that can be controlled. This change has certain social purposes: it legitimizes managerial interventions, makes individual the temporal issues, and normalizes speeded up tempos as natural requirements.

The model can also be used to explain the differences among media genres in discussing time management. Business journalism exists with productivity and urgency frames of TIME IS MONEY metaphors and with lifestyle media tend to balance those with wellness frames and TIME IS A RESOURCE metaphor. System



metaphors have self-optimization frames that are popular in professional advice literature. These differences are indicative of the way various media genres navigate the different concerns of the audiences as they are involved in discursive construction of time management in a broader way.

### **Limitations And Future Research Directions.**

This paper recognizes some of the limitations that indicate future research directions. To begin with, the moderate size of corpus (25 texts) was depthful to analyze but had low generalizability. Incorporation of additional texts during longer periods in future studies can be considered to offer the possibility to compare time management discourse changes through historical periods.

Second, cross-cultural applicability is restricted by the emphasis of predominantly Western media on Englishlanguage media. Time management concepts also differ greatly based on cultures that have varied time orientations (monochronic vs. polychronic time, past vs. future orientation) among others. Comparative studies on media discourse, where linguistic and cultural conditions vary, would show how time management is locally constituted and how discourses of the world are reworked or opposed.

Third, omission of multimodal components (images, layout, typography) does not acknowledge significant aspect of the media construction. Clocks, calendars, progress bars and before-after transformations are other visual elements that support textual time management messages. Multimodal discourse analysis can be further used in the future to analyze the interactions of verbal and visual components in the construction of time-related concepts.

Fourth, the research focuses on media production and not the reception and thus the question of how readers interpret and put into practice time management discourse when they read it remains open. The everyday practice of how media discourse is propagated, countered or reconfigured might be uncovered in ethnographic research or through a reader response analysis. Such studies would help to bridge the discursive construction and lived time.

Fifth, the emphasis on the written text does not include the audiovisual media that include podcasts, videos and other content on social media, which are increasingly defining the discourse of productivity and time management. Future studies may examine the ways in which various kinds of media make time management by different affordances and conventions.

Lastly, the study date (2020–2025) is a special historical moment of pandemic disruption and remote work normalization but might not reflect longer-term trends in time management discourse. Tracking the media representations over decades in longitudinal studies would show that the discourse of time management is responsive to more social, economic and technological changes.

### **CONCLUSION**

This paper shows that the English-language media creates time management in a systematic way using dominant metaphors and frames that make time look like a kind of economic, moral, and strategic resource. A 25-mediatext analysis of articles published between 2020 and 2025 indicates that the structure of time is constructed through four codes of metaphor (TIME IS MONEY, TIME IS A RESOURCE, TIME IS A MOVING ENTITY, and TIME IS AN ENEMY) and five interpretive frames (productivity, urgency, self-optimization, wellness and neoliberal responsibility) that put the audience into time. Although the corpus spans the years 2020–2025, the analysis is structural rather than longitudinal. The focus is on identifying dominant metaphorical patterns within contemporary discourse, rather than tracing detailed year-by-year shifts. A more systematic diachronic comparison would require a larger and more evenly distributed corpus.

The linguistic shift of time to time management takes place through the related processes: metaphor generates conceptual mappings which reorganize time into managerial structures; framing makes these reorganized concepts into consistent stories with values and prescriptions; lexical blending constructs stabilized terminology that makes the transformed concepts more natural. All these processes convert abstract temporal experience into a manageable resource which justifies intervention but hides the ideological work being done.



The theoretical framework suggested in the given study gives the grounds on which the future research regarding the media representations of time will be conducted, in particular, the upcoming MA thesis of the author will extend the analysis to the cross-cultural and multi-genre domains. The results highlight the importance of critical media literacy, which acknowledges the role of linguistic decisions not as reflecting reality, but as contributing to shaping cultural disposition of productivity, value, and personal responsibility.

This realization of media time management construction has implications in the real world beyond academic discourse analysis. In the case of individuals, this consciousness can lead to a more critical approach towards productivity recommendations, through an understanding of how seemingly apolitical methods can support certain values and subject positions. To organizations, this discussion indicates a reconsideration of how organizational discourse in relation to time and productivity can be a contributor to the culture of burnout. To instructors, these results suggest that they should teach temporal literacy in parallel with media literacy and enable students to face the challenges of acceleration with a more proactive stance.

In the long run, this research paper will add to the bigger debates on time in modern societies the discussion of how we coexist with speed, the quality of time in our lives, and the ways in which we could envision a relationship with time to be more sustainable. This study addresses an existing gap and encourages a more conscious and deliberate approach to one of the most fundamental aspects of life by exposing the linguistic processes that cause these conversations to take place through the media.

The study is limited by its relatively small corpus and its focus on major English-language outlets, which reflect predominantly Western temporal norms. Future research could expand the dataset, incorporate indirect metaphors more systematically, and compare different cultural media contexts to test the stability of these metaphor families.

### **Endnotes**

The MIPVU process separates direct metaphors (where contextual meaning conflicts with basic meaning), and indirect metaphors (where the words have a metaphorical connection with concepts but are not metaphorical themselves). This paper dwelled on direct metaphors in order to be precise in the analysis.

Frame analysis was based on the emergent approach to coding where frames were found in patterns, rather than categories. These five frames found are hegemonic patterns and not comprehensive classification.

The lexical classification used both semantic criterion (relationships between meanings) and syntactic criterion (collocational patterns) to differentiate between temporal terms, managerial terms and intersection terms.

The conceptual model is introduced in a heuristic way to demonstrate the idea of linguistic change; in reality, the structures of both domains are more complicated since they cause each other.

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## APPENDICES Appendix A: Sample Analysis Examples

### A1. Metaphor Analysis Examples (MIPVU Procedure)

Example Text	MRW	Contextual Meaning	Basic Meaning	Contrast?	Metaphor Family
"Invest your morning hours wisely"	invest	Use time strategically	Put money into	Yes	TIME IS MONEY
"Battle against the clock"	battle	Struggle with time	Fight in war	Yes	TIME IS AN ENEMY
"Time is slipping away"	slipping	Passing quickly	Slide/fall physically	Yes	TIME IS MOVING ENTITY
"Allocate your time carefully"	allocate	Distribute time	Distribute resources	Yes	TIME IS A RESOURCE
"Save time by automating tasks"	save	Reduce time needed	Keep/reserve money	Yes	TIME IS MONEY

Note: MRW = Metaphor-Related Word identified through MIPVU procedure (Steen et al., 2010) A2.

### A3. Lexical Classification Examples

### A4. Corpus Sample Information

Frame Type	Example Text	Key Lexical Markers
Productivity	"Maximize output per working hour"	maximize, output, efficiency, productive



Urgency	"Racing to meet quarterly deadlines"	racing, urgent, deadline, pressure, now
Self-Optimization	"Upgrade your time management skills"	upgrade, optimize, improve, system, hack
Wellness	"Protect your rest time from work encroachment"	protect, rest, balance, wellbeing, recharge
Neoliberal Responsibility	"You own your schedule and its outcomes"	own, accountable, responsible, personal, choice

Table: Representative Texts from Corpus

Source	Year	Title Excerpt	Word Count
BBC Worklife	2023	The productivity trap: Are we managing time...	1,950
The Economist	2021	The new currency: How time became...	2,300
Harvard Business Review	2024	Attention as a resource: Designing work...	2,400
Financial Times	2022	Managing the clock: Productivity pressures...	1,950

Full corpus: 25 texts, ~48,000 words, 2020-2025, from 7 major outlets.

### A5. Coding Statistics Summary

Total metaphor-related words identified: 213

Dominant metaphor families: TIME IS MONEY (29%), TIME IS A RESOURCE (23%)

Frame frequency: Productivity (53 occurrences), Urgency (41), Self-Optimization (33)

Intercoder reliability: 85% agreement on metaphor identification Appendix B: Methodology Protocol Summary

### B1. MIPVU Procedure Steps Applied:

Determine contextual meaning of lexical unit

Identify basic, concrete meaning

Assess contrast between meanings

Code as metaphor-related if contrast exists



Classify into metaphor family

### **B2. Frame Analysis Procedure:**

Identify recurring keywords and phrases

Analyze problem definition and causal attributions

Examine moral judgments and recommended solutions Code dominant and secondary frames per text

### **B3. Lexical Classification Criteria:**

Time Lexicon: Primary reference to temporal concepts

Time Management Lexicon: Primary reference to control/organization

Intersection Lexicon: Blends temporal and managerial concepts

Classification verified through collocational analysis

## **AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY**

**Mohammad Ibrahim Moneeb** is a Master's Student, Intercultural Communication in a Global Information Space, National Research University Higher School of Economics (HSE Moscow). His research interests include media discourse analysis, cognitive linguistics, metaphor studies, and the intersection of language and temporality in digital societies. He is currently completing his MA thesis on Linguistic representation of the concept of time management in media discourse. ORCID: 0009-00077397-8359