

EFFECTS OF PROCRASTINATION ON THE PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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Abstract

This study sought to measure the impact that academic procrastination has on the psychological well being of students in a university setting as well as to ascertain the relationship, if any, between the two variables along with the difference in gender of students with procrastination. The study was designed as a cross-sectional survey with a quantitative approach and achieved this by completing the necessary threshold of 400 standardised students aged 18-24 years in the undergraduate domain of Sindh University, Jamshoro. The data collection was accomplished using the Pure Procrastination Scale and Ryff's Scales of Psychological Wellbeing as well as other demographic criteria. As per the study findings students in the undergraduate domain of study formed the sample with respect to the three age cohorts and were classified as 27.0% aged 18-20 years, 49.0% aged 21-23 years with the remainder being classified as 24.0% aged 23 years and older. The respondents were fairly balanced in gender 50.0% being classified as male and the other 50.0% as female. The research indicated that procrastination and psychological well being were negatively correlated with a moderate score of ($R = -.362$), whereby academic procrastination could only account for 13% of the variance of the well being. The adjusted R-squared value illustrates the amount to which including academic procrastination as a predictor, positively enhances the fit of the model in reference to the data. The number of regression and residuals was 1 and 399 which confirms that there was a limited degree of predictor to the dependent variable; however the degree to which the dependent variable was impacted, was considerable. The results have shown that academic procrastination is a significant predictor of psychological well being for university students.

Keywords: Procrastination in academics, Psychological well-being, Gender, Stress, Anxiety

1. Introduction

Multitasking on any normal day is bound to warrant various complications. The hassle could lead to completing the task in the shortest time possible or delaying the task at hand. Additionally this could be linked to procrastination, or the tendency to delay or avoid the completion of a task entirely (Steel, 2007). This scenario is hardly a unique one: several studies indicate procrastination is predominantly widespread among the younger generations (Carranza et al, 2013). Research from Latin America indicates that around 61% of adolescents demonstrate procrastination, with 20% doing so habitually (Ferrari & Tice, 2007). This means that procrastination is a widespread phenomenon that has the potential to impact work, health, and education. Out of which, the most alarming is academic procrastination, particularly to younger generations. This raises a lot of concerns in systems of higher education, which are critical to every society. Hence, how some folks think the wealth or poverty of countries is, at least in part, shaped by the standard of its higher education, which is pivotal for economic growth, socially constructive, a foundational pillar for the nurturing of talent and culture, and a sine qua non for sustainable development and enhancement in the wellbeing of the populace (Choudhary & Paharia 2018).

Describing perfectionists as: meticulous, unrelenting, and in need of showing off, leads one to conclude the behavioral focus of such individuals is toward effective performance and achievement of high academic goals. Accordingly, the higher scores of perfectionism have been correlated with increased self-efficacy and studying (Loscalzo et al, 2019). These, in unison, lead to performance enhancement. Whether these personality attributes (meticulousness, unrelenting, and the need to show off) can ever be a constraint to achievement, is a separate discourse. In this regard, some studies have pointed out that the high perfectionistic worriers end in a state of feeling helpless and out of control as described by Madigan (2019) and, more problematically, this is a state that is correlated with under-achievement.

1.1.Problem Statement

"Much research on academic procrastination or purposeful postponement of starting or finishing academic work, suggests that postponement discrimination is prevalent among university students. Although chronic procrastination has been the subject of various theories, the psychological workings of this phenomenon remain largely uninvestigated. Chronic procrastination is capable of inducing stress, rising anxiety levels, depression, and even negatively impacting the subject's mental health, and such implications would seem painfully obvious. The unique academic pressures associated with university life render undergraduates particularly vulnerable to procrastination. The inability to conform to deadlines and procrastination of work not only causes procrastination of more important tasks, but also lowers the debating mental effectiveness of the subject having to face such tasks. Consequently, such procrastination behavior has been demonstrated, using various formulations of psychological techniques, to lower rather than to enhance motivation and negatively impact the targeted goal behavior, in this case, academic attainment. "

1.2. Objectives of the Study

The objectives addressed are:

- To estimate the consequences that psychological well-being increases impacts on academic procrastination of students in a university setting.
- To identify the degree of association that exists between academic procrastination and psychological well-being of university students.
- To analysis the difference between the male and female university students' academic procrastination.

1.3.Importance of Study

This study would help bridge the knowledge gap in the intricate nexus between procrastination and the psychological dimensions of well-being for students in the higher education system.

a. Procrastination , Poor mental health and Academic Productivity:

This study seeks to explain the relationship between procrastination and mental health. Procrastination is the postponement of intended actions and its psychological roots need to be understood. Addressing these procrastination psychological roots can be effective in enhancing academic and general student success.

b. Mental Health Issues and Stigma Associated with Procrastination:

This study explores the procrastination of completing academic work and the mental health issues of procrastination such as heightened stress levels, anxiety, and depression. Understanding the procrastinator mental health issues is the first step to mental health intervention programs specifically tailored to assist these students.

c. Policy and Practise Evidence:

The academic climate issues that impact the support students may be able to gain are formulated from the findings of this research. This relates to the policies and practices of the university in question. These policies and practices must be responsive to the causative

phenomena of procrastination and the resulting academic support given to students should be proactive in the promotion of effective time management, self-control, and general mental health.

d. How the Research Improves Existing Knowledge:

The further development of this work aims to strengthen the existing theory on the relation between procrastination, positive and negative emotions, and overall psychological health, alongside well-being and procrastination.

2. Review of Literature

2.1.Procrastination in the Academic Field

With reference to Garcia-Ayala, 2009, procrastination is configured in panic where an individual postpones the beginning or completion of scheduled tasks or spends an excessive amount of mental energy over the potential repercussions of such postponements. Yet, 'Delaying tasks or work that is associated with an academic goal is the focus of a...procrastination phenomenon,' (Álvarez-Blas, 2010). 'Research in procrastination indicates that there are...two types of procrastination: sporadic and chronic.' (Schouwenburg, 2004). In reference to Clariana, 2009, 'Sporadic procrastination is a one-time phenomenon, and chronic procrastination is the...considered to be the dominant form of studious behavior.' Associated with mental constructs are the demonstrations of academic procrastination and procrastination and mental imagery such as in Jesús et al. (2014). In this sense, a study in Ecuador by Moreta Herrera et, al., 2018 identified the predictors of emotional regulation and academic performance as procrastination, and there was no gender-differentiated performance.

2.2.Prevalence of Academic Procrastination

Procrastination can be described as an important epidemiological factor that deals with the development and control of acute and chronic health issues due to stress and other health issues (Sirois & Pychyl, 2016). Procrastination among medical students was also ascertained in the outcome of a study conducted at the Shiraz University of Medical Sciences in Iran. The most cited instances of procrastination pertained to the completion of assignments and the writing of papers. This study noted that 29.25% of medical students reported issues with academic procrastination frequency, in a study conducted in Central Park Medical College Pakistan noted an increase with 47% medical students procrastinating their tasks (Shah, Mumtaz and Chughtai 2017). 65% of respondents reported procrastination tendencies. Khan et al. (2020) reported the procrastination behavior of university students in Islamabad with a prevalence of 62%, which portrays a significant portion of students indulging in procrastination. Shi et al. (2021) reported an increased prevalence of 62% to 73% among graduate students with varying levels of academic procrastination, further supporting the notion of widespread procrastination habits. Ali et al., (2021) investigated the procrastination patterns of college students in Karachi and discovered a prevalence of 60%. Backed by the multitude of studies we have explored in this research, we acknowledge that academic procrastination is rampant among university students in Pakistan, with prevalence rates stretching between 54% - 65%.

2.3.Gender Differences

According to Khan et al. (2014), men procrastinate in their academic tasks more than their female counterparts. Khan et al. (2014) conducted research on the gender gap in academic procrastination among college students aged 16 to 27. The data from this research indicates there is a gap between males and females, with males in this case, showing much more procrastination than their female peers. In the same manner, Tezer et al. (2020) conducted research and discovered, during the COVID-19 pandemic, there were much higher rates of academic procrastination and, higher rates of internet use among males as compared to females.

2.4.Impact of Academic Procrastination on Psychological Wellbeing amongst University Students

Procrastination, specifically on academic work, is the more common form of delay which students undertake, and is increasingly becoming a global phenomenon among university students. There is a growing body of research seeking to identify the effects of academic procrastination on university students' psychological wellbeing. Steel (2007) in her study, concluded that procrastination is highly correlated with stress, anxiety and depression among students of higher learning institutions. In the same line, Sirois and Pychyl (2013) stated that academic procrastination doesn't just affect the students' performance, but also their self-esteem which is a worse case of diminishing psychological wellbeing.

All in all, the patterns of academic procrastination seem to indicate a high prevalence of stress, anxiety, and depression, which means that there is a greater need to control procrastination and therein to enhance the psychological wellness of students.

Procrastination is the act of delaying an action that is associated and expected to be completed in the near future. Usually, procrastination is associated in a negative way with one's performance and physical and psychological health. There is performance-related behavior, the relationship with performance is probably not as strong as most would expect. Regarding students, there is a tendency to withdraw from work, and the correlation with academic achievement is weak, $r_s = -0.13$ to -0.19 (Kim & Seo, 2015). Perhaps it is not the main reason for which people consider procrastination a major issue.

3. Methodology

3.1.Design

The Research focused on developed structured cross-sectional surveys within the defined types of methodologies that are sequential explanatory designs. For this particular research, the method used was the cross-sectional method.

3.2.Sampling

The target population was defined as all university undergraduates from all the faculties of Sindh University, Jamshoro. For the research, a sample of 400, made up of 200 females and 200 males was drawn through a random technique. The respondents within this sample ranged the age of 18 to 24.

3.3.Instruments of Data Collection

The scales listed below were completed together with a demographic survey.

a. Piers Steel's Pure Procrastination Scale (Steel, 2007)

The 12-item Pure Procrastination Scale (PPS) serves to measure academic procrastination. In 2010, Piers Steel constructed this scale by amalgamating the highest loading items from three other assessments of procrastination. Answers were generated by the respondents on a 5-point Likert scale.

b. Ryff's Scales of Psychological Well-Being (Ryff, 1995)

The Scale of Psychological Well-Being has been one of the most commonly utilized scales in social sciences and was introduced by Ryff in 1995. This scale has 42 items and a self-report structure, measuring 6 dimensions of psychological well-being: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relationships, life purpose, and self-acceptance. Responses to the items are provided on a 6-point Likert scale.

c. Demographic Form

The purpose of this form was to collect participants' demographic data such as age, sex, educational qualification, division, social class, and whether they lived in an urban or rural area.

4. Procedure Followed

All relevant authorizations were secured from different departments and the research intention discussed with them. Informed consent was obtained from students before data collection commenced. Prior to answering the questionnaires the students were engaged in conversation to help establish that rapport. The researcher apprised participants and guided them through the process of responding to the items. The data was anonymized to ensure protective measures were in place.

5. Analysis of Results

5.1. Demographic Data

| | N | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|------------------|------------|----------|-----------|-------------|----------------|
| Age | 400 | 1 | 3 | 1.97 | .714 |
| Education | 400 | 1 | 4 | 2.48 | 1.137 |
| Residence | 400 | 1 | 2 | 1.49 | .501 |
| Gender | 400 | 1 | 22 | 1.5 | 1.141 |
| Valid | 400 | | | | |

The table presented above illustrates the sample demographics for the participants in this study having a sample size of 400. The first row of the table refers to the variable age. The average age is almost at the maximum value which signifies a concentration of older individuals within the sample. The second row refers to the participants' level of education. The average education level is slightly below 3 which indicate the participants possess a moderate level of education. The next row contains the variable residence which has an average value of 1.5 indicating a balanced distribution between the two categories (e.g. urban and rural). The last row refers to the variable gender which indicates an even distribution of male and females for this study.

In this study, a total of 400 adults (18 above) were evaluated based on age distribution showing 27.0% aged 18 – 20 years, 49.0% aged 21 – 23 years, and 24.0% aged 23 years and older. This shows that close to one-half of the participants were aged 21 – 23 years. As for the gender of participants, it was the same for all 400 adults with men (n = 200) and women (n = 200) both accounting for 50.0%.

This helped to guarantee balanced participation of both men and women in the study. As for year of study, 23.3% participants were in the first year, 34.3% in the second year, 13.8% in the third year, and 28.7% in the final year of study. The second year group was the largest, while the third year group was the smallest. In terms of participants distribution by department, a great majority (84.8%) were in the Social Science department, 13.8% in the Natural Science department, and a very small portion (1.5%) were in the Art department. This shows that there was a great amount of Social Science students in the study. As for place of residence, 50.7% of participants were living in the town and urban area. The breakdown of respondents by department indicated that a noticeable majority (84.8%) belonged to Social Science, 13.8% were in Natural Science, and a tiny portion (1.5%) belonged to the Art department. Such statistics underlie the overabundance of Social Science participants in the research. Concerning the participants' place of living, 50.7% resided in towns while 49.3% lived in the countryside. This close to balanced ratio demonstrates a good representation of students from urban and rural settings.

| Age Group | Frequency | Percentage |
|-----------------------|------------|-------------|
| 18-20 years | 108 | 27% |
| 21-23 years | 196 | 49% |
| Above 23 Years | 96 | 24% |
| Total | 400 | 100% |

Table 5.2 Age Group

Table 5.2 Gender Distribution

| Gender | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------------|------------|-------------|
| Male | 200 | 50% |
| Female | 200 | 50% |
| Total | 400 | 100% |

Table 5.3: Study Year

| Year | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------------|------------|--------------|
| First | 93 | 23.3% |
| Second | 137 | 34.3% |
| Third | 55 | 13.8% |
| Final | 115 | 28.7% |
| Total | 400 | 100% |

Table 5.4: Department

| Year | Frequency | Percentage |
|-----------------------|------------|--------------|
| Social Science | 339 | 84.6% |
| Natural | 55 | 13.8% |
| Arts | 6 | 1.5% |
| Total | 400 | 100% |

Table 5.5 Analysis of Regression

| Predictor | R | B | SE | T | P |
|---------------------------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|---------------|-------------|
| Psychological Well Being | -.362 | -68.422 | 10.555 | -6.482 | .000 |
| R Square | .131 | | | | |
| Adjusted R Square | .129 | | | | |
| F | 60.100 | | | | |
| Degree of Freedom (df) | 399 | | | | |

With regards to the regression analysis aimed at assessing the consequences of academic procrastination on psychological well-being, the R-value of -0.362 illustrates the degree of association procrastination has on psychological well-being is moderate and negative. Likewise, the R-Square value of 0.131 establishes the degree to which procrastination correlates to the overall psychological well-being is 13.1%. The 0.129 Adjusted R-Square value demonstrates the effect is stable and is maintained after the number of predictors is controlled for. The B value of -68.422 suggests the pattern of association is that for every unit increase in procrastination, there is a 68.422 unit decrease in overall psychological well-being. The determination of the value is precise given the Standard Error (SE) of 10.555. The association

is significant as demonstrated with the t-value of -6.482, and p-value of 0.000. Further, the regression value is significant with an F-value of 60.100 (df = 399, $p < 0.001$) which emphasizes the regression model asserts the consequences of academic procrastination is substantial to the overall psychological well-being.

Table 5.6: Analysis of Regression: Evaluation of Impact for Procrastination in academics onto the psychological (Well-Being) - (Autonomy as Predictor)

| Predictor | R | B | SE | T | P |
|--------------------------|--------|------|-------|--------|------|
| Psychological Well Being | -.384 | -343 | 1.079 | -3.469 | .000 |
| R Square | .148 | | | | |
| Adjusted R Square | .145 | | | | |
| F | 68.892 | | | | |
| Degree of Freedom (df) | 399 | | | | |

With respect to the multiple regression, 'procrastination on academic work, which is the psychologically delay score, and psychological autonomy well being is assessed with specific focus on the psychological autonomy as a dependent variable ('Y'). Corresponding to the constructive t-test values, the constant 'b' is as stated as: 'b is equal to negative 0.343' which indicates a negative shift as the academic delay score increases. The scholar indicates that the p is less than 0.05 in each and every one of the regression t-tests, in which a p value less than 0.05 indicates reliability. Professor 'K' postulates that the delay scores 'R' is equal to -0.384 and indicates an autonomic shift. The delay t-test, however, shows significance of the backward shift of the 14.8%. The ownership requires 'b b is negative 0.343' indicating that 'Y' is being gripped and controlled which means the 'Y' is constantly reduced to lower value of 'Y 0.343'. The model predicts psychological well being autonomy and procrastination as the predictors. The presence of the procrastination is relied on as only values with the F of 68.892 significance are considered. 'X' is academic procrastination and low psychological well being is housed'. Hence, 'X' is accepted with the proposition that 'X' is academic procrastination and well being is psychological. The delay scores is then accepted as the values in 8 is the negative values.

Table 5.7: Analysis of Regression: Evaluation of Impact for Procrastination as relationship with others onto the psychological (Well-Being) -

| Predictor | R | B | SE | T | P |
|--------------------------|--------|---------|-------|--------|-----|
| Psychological Well Being | -.365 | -12.559 | 2.321 | -5.411 | .00 |
| R Square | .133 | | | | |
| Adjusted R Square | .131 | | | | |
| F | 61.153 | | | | |
| Degree of Freedom (df) | 399 | | | | |

Within the framework of the psychological domain of well-being, procrastination's predictive value pertaining to the ability of procrastinators to form and maintain relationships is notable. An R value of -0.365 with a B value of -12.55 represents a moderately strong inverse correlation, while the R Square of 0.133 indicates that procrastination accounts for 13.3% of the variance in positively relating to others. The Unstandardized Coefficient (B) of -12.559

indicates that for each unit change in procrastination, the outcome decreases by 12.559, scaled in negative values (greater negative values being...) significant (i.e., t-value of -5.411 and p-value of 0.000). All other values being equal, the overall model stands as equally important underscored by an F-value of 61.153.

6. Discussion

The current study was developed with the aim of understanding the role of academic procrastination with regard to the psychological health of students in a higher educational institution, assessing the relation of these constructs, and analyzing the difference in academic procrastination between male and female students. It was a cross-sectional survey in which debit data was collected on the basis of quantitative research methodology and standardized instruments were employed, particularly, the Pure Procrastination Scale (PPS), Ryff's Scales of Psychological Well-being, and a demographical questionnaire to a sample that consisted of 400 students (200 male and 200 female) ranging between 18 to 24 years old at Sindh University, Jamshoro. The demographic data of the sample corresponds to a 50.0% male and female ratio and a majority of the sample was between the ages of 21 to 23 years old (49.0%). Most of the respondents were Social Science students (84.8%), and the sample was equally representative of the urban (50.7) and rural (49.3) populations.

The results distress the procrastination-well-being paradox: participants reported moderately high levels of procrastination and procrastinators reported a significantly lower psychological well-being. Academic procrastination was demonstrated to account for 13% of the variance in psychological well-being, thus monotonically reshaping the relationship between the two. Added to this, adjusted R-squared suggests that academically procrastive students could account for a substantial amount of the variance.

Moreover, the interest in gender differences in procrastination has been the subject of many studies. As men and women procrastinate differently, sometimes in equal measures, Gustavson et al. (2016) posited that the underlying causes of procrastination differ. For example, men might procrastinate during the performance phase of a task because of the fear of failure, whereas women might delay performance on 'aversion' tasks (that are deemed unpleasant or very hard) more strongly. The model predicts with an error of standard deviation (1.29828) This accuracy is surprisingly, or rather, a function of the significant (F-Statistic=18.642, $p < 0.05$) and the proof in independence of the. Academic procrastination and psychological wellbeing (with the regression sums of squares and degrees of freedom (1,399) with significant, infer the above in the prediction) is able in autonomy. The value estimate (1.29828) shows how closely the predictions of the model match the outcomes. Though statistically significant (F-statistic = 18.642, $p < 0.05$), academic procrastination alone demonstrated significant predictive ability for psychological well-being, as shown in the regression sums of squares and associated degrees of freedom (1, 399). Research by Gustavson et al. (2016) found that men and women may procrastinate to the same degree, but for different reasons. For example, men may procrastinate more as a result of fear of the outcome of a performance, whereas women may procrastinate more as an aversion to more unpleasant or more difficult tasks. These specific reasons behind procrastination may affect how it influences psychological well-being in male and female university students and emphasize the importance of gender specific strategies to reduce procrastination and improve mental health outcomes. Based on these points of comparison, the current work adds to the existing literature by elucidating the role of academic procrastination on psychological well-being of university students in a given culture and educational system.

7. Recommendations

Future studies should employ longitudinal designs to examine the space and interconnections between procrastination and well-being over time and utilize qualitative approaches to capture

more detailed and complex variables (e.g., coping strategies and traits) that may influence procrastination and well-being outcomes.

Current research confines its audience to university students; further study investigating academic procrastination and mental health should be carried out on high school and college students. As well, future research needs to address the degree of psychological well-being in these groups, and the influence time, management, counseling, and training interventions might have.

8. Conclusion

The research elucidated that among university students, academic procrastination stands as the principal indicator of psychological well being, although the extent and quality of this relationship is shaped by several situational and personality factors. Within the framework of educational environment, the issue of procrastination must be handled alongside the issues of students' psychological and academic wellbeing.

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