

Academic procrastination and academic achievement



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Academic procrastination has almost always been a substantial reason for poor academic performance especially among student who are academically capable which is shown in a study done by Onwuegbuzie and Jiao (2000), where 95% of students engage in academic procrastination in a college level while approximately 60% procrastinate at a graduate level. Despite students knowing that procrastination leads to poorer academic performance, students rarely try overcome procrastination and instead claim that the pressure to perform enables them to complete the assignments. However according to Ferrari and Tice(2000) in an experimental setting where time was limited, the results showed that the participants generally produce poor quality performance when under pressure (limited time was the stimulus for pressure). Thus, as it can be seen, academic procrastination is undoubtedly a common problem amongst students (Solomon & Rothblum, 1984 from Antecedents of procrastinations).

Procrastination consists of the intentional delay of an intended course of action, in spite of an awareness of negative outcomes (Steel, 2007). Thus academic procrastination is defined as a ' tendency to put off or delay tasks related to one' studies so that they are either not fully completed by their due dates or have to be rushed to be finished' (Soloman & Rothblum, 1994). Procrastination in simpler terms therefore, is putting off tomorrow what should be done today. Procrastination however should not be interchangeable with the word delay as it is different from delays, as delays have rational reasons behind putting-off something as opposed with procrastination (Steel, 2011). As such procrastination is also defined as

differing action due to indecisiveness or without good reason (Oxford English dictionary).

Procrastination is a well know phenomenon that has the ability to interfere in the effectiveness and to a greater extend the quality of one's life depending on which two areas the procrastination has an effect on; academic procrastination or neurotic indecisiveness (chronic procrastinators as it affects every aspect of their life) which is the inability to make decisions thus resulting in much time lost through indecisiveness. However this research paper would focus of academic procrastination. It is presumed that procrastination would have a negative relationship with academic achievement.

There are numerous reasons as to why students procrastinate, despite knowing the negative effect of doing so, and they attribute this to lack of self-confidence, feeling of being overwhelmed, peer influence, evaluation anxiety, task aversiveness, dependency and even fear of success. However failing to set appropriate time to finish assignments and such have just as many consequences be it internal consequences (such as regret, despair, and self-blame) or external consequences such as impaired academic and work improvement, lost opportunities and even strains relationship as the burden of responsibility in group work is shifted unto others, who understandably become resentful (Burka & Yuen, 1983; Ferrari, 2003). An individual's health is also not spared as stress resulting from procrastination can compromise one's immune system thus making it more open to the common cold and flu, and can also cause gastrointestinal problems, strained

and knotted muscles, and to some extent breathing difficulties (Ferrari, 2003).

In trying to explain the procrastinatory behavior of students that have increased significantly over the years, behavioural theorist attempts to explain procrastination by stating that humans have been conditioned over time to have a preference for pleasurable activities as a short-term reward (by putting off something unpleasant), whilst psychodynamic theorist attempts to explain procrastination as a form of rebellion against exceedingly demanding or overindulgent parents (which will be explained in gender differences in procrastination) (McCown, 1986).

As it can be seen, procrastination is an interesting and complex phenomenon that should be better understood in regards to academic achievement and gender. Thus the following literature review will be of the relationship between procrastination and academic achievement, followed by gender difference in procrastination.

Procrastination and Academic Achievement

Academic achievement which is also known as academic performance is defined as obtaining high grades and test scores. (Ablard & Parker, 1997).

Academic performance is a measure as to the extent to which pre-determined educational goals are achieved which can be done either in continuous assessment (such as assignments) or final examination systems both of which have their own advantages and disadvantages (Ward, Murray-Ward, Stoker, 1996)

According to Owens and Newbegin(1997) although the majority of the students submit their assignments before the dateline, there are some who do hand in their work late or do not hand it in at all. Whilst there are multiple reasons as to why the work was not handed in on time, most of the time the reasons given are illegitimate or not plausible (Ferrari et al., 1998)

According to Klassener, Mullner and Rajani (2008), student who achieve higher GPA tend to have lower levels of procrastination compared to those with lower GPA indicating perhaps it is not so much as a causal relationship but more of a two-way relationship, as continuing success motivates a person to procrastinate less as a measure of a motivation to approach. The relationship can also be explained by social learning theory of operant conditioning, where the continuous success, confirms the behavior to not procrastinate. Similarly, Day, Minsks and O'Sullivan (2000) also found that most students received lower grades due to delay in starting on the assignments and thus theorized that procrastination is largely about failure in getting started on time. The reason as to why most students find it hard to get started on their assignments can largely be explained by the term planning fallacy which is the tendency to make optimistic predictions regarding the length of time required in completing an assignment. Humans being optimistic in nature (Optimism Bias) (psychology textbook)also figure that they can complete the assignment in the time they have estimated it will take to complete through faulty time perception (Lay, 1998). Combining both of these errors of social cognition gives rise to the explanation as why so many students still procrastinate because although they recognize that their past predictions have been overly optimistic, they still delude into

thinking that their current predictions are realistic (Buehler, Roger; Griffin, Dale, & Ross, Michael, 2002). Collectively, there appears to be consistent empirical evidence suggesting a negative correlation between academic procrastination and academic achievements.

However a more recent study on procrastinatory behavior on performance have shown startling results with Chu and Choi (2005) claiming that there are positive effects of procrastination of performance. However in this context Chu and Choi (2005) differentiated between two forms of procrastination as passive procrastinators and active procrastinators. Chu and Choi (2005) defined passive procrastinators as those who procrastinate due to indecisiveness and thus fail to act and complete the given tasks on time. In other word, passive procrastinators cab be thought of as procrastinators in the traditional sense. In contrast, active procrastinators on the other hand are those that deliberately make decisions to procrastinate as they prefer to work under pressure. Procrastination is not simply a problem resulting from lack of time management, but involves cognitive, affective and behavioural dimensions. As such passive procrastinators due to their inability to make decisions in a timely manner thus show that the difference in cognitive aspect in comparison to asctive procrastinators who are cognitively able to make quick and rational decision while considering the priority of the task, thus being able to perform at high standards.

Conclusively, active procrastinators obtained significantly higher GPA in comparison to passive procrastinators despite procrastinating as well.

On a related note, while the studies above were conducted with mainly Caucasian students, Prohaska, Morrill, Atilas, & Perez (2000) found that, <https://assignbuster.com/academic-procrastination-and-academic-achievement/>

there are significant differences between cultures in the six areas of academic functioning of the PASS scale. Caucasian students mainly procrastinate in writing a term paper and attendance tasks while African-American students procrastinate lower on attendance task and administrative task. Older students and females on the other hand have lower academic procrastination tendencies. According to Klassen et al (2009) in a cross-cultural study of procrastination between Canadians and Singaporeans, Klassen found that Singaporeans had higher levels of procrastination compared to their Canadian counter-parts and despite the higher levels of procrastination, Singaporeans achieve outstanding grades. The results is as such because Singaporean parents are known to be notoriously authoritarian in dealing with their children's education and according to Pychyl (2010) this can significantly increase task-aversion (due to fear of failure) towards assignments/studying for exams thus explaining the higher levels of procrastination amongst Singaporean youth. As such, there is a need to investigate procrastination tendencies and the corresponding academic achievement in Asians as the empirical evidence that links procrastination to lower academic achievements in Asians are not conclusive at this point.

Gender differences in Procrastination

There are many research that do imply that gender differences do exist when it comes to academic procrastination. Reeves and Baden (2000) defined gender in two facets, sex and gender itself. While an individual's sex refers to the biological characteristics that differentiates male from female, gender is defined as the socially determined ideas and practices expected

from being male or female. Another definition of gender is by the Committee on Understanding the Biology of Sex and Gender Difference established by the Institute of Medicine (IOM), which defines gender as “ a person’s self-representation as male or female, or how that person is responded to by social institutions on the basis of the individual’s gender presentation” (p. 786; as cited in Torgrimson & Minson, 2005).

According to Laforge (xxxx), there were significant statistical relationship between procrastination scores and gender, in which the males had higher scores than females in the PASS survey. Similarly, Pychyl (2002) also found that males have more procrastinatory tendencies than females and attributed this to the type of parenting style that the parents exercise on participants. If one was to trace back as to one of the major indicator as to why people do or do not procrastinate, it would lead back to parenting styles, where differing parenting styles is used in trying to explain procrastination and gender as a moderating effect. According to Pychyl (2002), parents continue to play a significant role in a child’s development despite the shift in orientation from parents towards their peers as the children become adolescence. As such, Pychyl (2002) found that for males, there was no significant relation between any of the four parenting styles; maternal authoritative parenting, paternal authoritative parenting, maternal authoritarian parenting, and paternal authoritarian parenting. However for females, all four parenting styles have an effect on procrastination be it directly or indirectly. Both maternal forms of parenting were significantly associated with self-worth, which in turn was a predictor for procrastination. As for paternal parenting, fathers were not associated with self-worth but

nevertheless was a unique predictor for procrastination in females. Pychyl (2002) concluded by proposing that perhaps the reason why parenting styles had no effect on males was perhaps procrastinations has a differing meaning to them that is not associated to self-worth. As such Pychyl (2002) stated that procrastination might be a type of deviant or rebellious behavior against perceived control that is more socially acceptable in males than in females thus explaining why males have more procrastinatory behavior than females.

However Haycock, McCarthy, and Skay (1998) found that there were no significant gender differences in procrastination score and attributed this both males and females having similar scores in their self-efficacy and trait anxiety. According to Bandura's(1977) self-efficacy theory, strong efficacy expectations leads to greater task initiation and persistence, however weak expectations produce task avoidance and less persistence, and procrastination is considered as a type of avoidance behavior. Thus as it can be seen, there are more than one factors that can predict and affect procrastinatory behavior as Fleet, Blankstein, Hewiit, and Koledin (1992) also found that perfectionism also has a moderating effect on procrastinatory behavior depending it is adaptive or maladaptive perfectionism.

Another factor thought to have gender differences in relation to procrastination is the degree to which one is assertive and according to Fung(2010), females are generally less assertive than males, and due to their inability to refuse unreasonable requests that can take up considerable amount time (thus leaving little time for assignments), they thus are considered to be more procrastinatory in nature. However females with lower levels of assertiveness are mostly found in collectivistic cultures as <https://assignbuster.com/academic-procrastination-and-academic-achievement/>

individualistic cultures extol people who can “speak their mind” which is just a layman’s term for being assertiveness.

There are also differences in cultures such as Eastern/Western culture and individualistic/collectivistic cultures. In Eastern cultures there are significant difference in the levels of procrastination as shown in a study by Ozer, Demir, and Ferrari (2010) who found that due to their collectivistic culture, women who are restricted by tradition in have difficulty in expressing their individualistic concerns (being assertive) and thus are subject to stricter control (to prevent from dishonoring their family). The motivations to achieve in females are also strongly determined by feelings of loyalty and familial obligation in individualistic cultures.

Continuing the line of thought from above, levels of motivation is also a predictor for procrastination as Brownlow and Reasinger (xxxx) explained the such finding was due to the levels of motivation and attributed the procratulatory tendencies to either intrinsic or extrinsic motivation. (Ferrari and Tice, brownlow-motivation). Intrinsic motivation is where one... and extrinsic motivation is one where....

Generally people with high intrinsic motivation tend to perform better than those who have similar value of extrinsic motivation. Individuals who have high intrinsic motivation usually have higher self-esteem and self-efficacy and tend to study or do assignments for betterment of their knowledge as opposed to those with external motivation that do it for rewards or recognition of competency. To explain the relationship of motivation, Atkinson (1974) developed a self-enhancement theory that states that

students who have lower self-esteem and perceived control would be predisposed to feel anxious about failure and in an attempt to ensure their self-worth will engage in avoidant behavior, as a form of intrapsychic defensive process to reduce their anxiety of failure (Helmke & Aken 1995). Individuals both have tendencies to achieve (T_a) as well as tendencies to avoid failure (T_{as}). Thus one's total tendency is as following $T_{total} = T_a + T_{as} + \text{extrinsic motivation}$. The total tendency might lead to either doing the task or avoiding the task depending on which motivation is higher; motivation to achieve and motivation to avoid failure. Thus if one's motivation to achieve is higher than their motivation to avoid failure, then the tendency of the person is to attempt the task. Vice versa, if one's motivation to avoid failure is higher than their motivation to succeed, their tendency would be to avoid the task. (Atkinson, 1974). However, according to Zarick and Stonebraker (2009) whilst men did indeed procrastinate, there was no significant differences in the quality of the assignments, indicating perhaps males procrastinate as risk taking-behaviour but are still able to perform at a similar level to females. As it can be seen the literature available on gender effects on academic procrastination is still inconsistent, and further research is warranted to be able to expand the knowledge in this field.

Research Question and Hypothesis

Research Question one: Is there a relationship between academic procrastination and academic performance? Based on the literature review, it is hypothesized that there is a significant negative relationship between academic procrastination and academic achievement.

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Research Question two: Are there gender differences in procrastination?

Based in the literature review, it is hypothesized that males have a higher tendency to procrastinate than females.

Methods

Study design

The study design used in this research was of a quantitative, non-experimental research design done by survey research. A convenience sampling was used as the participants were all from Lancaster University of Sunway University. In the first research question, procrastination is the independent variable and the academic achievement a dependent variable. For the second research question, gender is the independent variable while procrastination is the dependent variable.

Participants

A total of 120 participants from Lancaster University of Sunway University were the participants of this study. The participants comprised of 60 (50%) males and 60 (50%) females. 90.8 of the participants ranged from ages 18-21, whilst the remaining 9.2 of the participants ranged from 22-24. There were no participants that fell in the above 24 category. Students from Lancaster university were specifically chosen as the grading system would be the same for the entire faculty thus making the recording of grades (as a measure of academic achievement) to be standard measurement. The data comprised of Malaysian students only as it was our inclusion criteria, as such, the data of multiple ethnicity comprised of mainly Chinese with a percentage of 82.5%, followed by Indians 8.3% and Malays 4.2% and Others

comprised of the balance 5%. Table 1. The inclusion criteria of the participants is that only students from Lancaster are chosen whilst the non-Malaysians are excluded so as to be able to generalize the findings to Malaysians, students who were currently Year 1 Semester 1 was also excluded as they would not have examination results from Lancaster. The rest of the information on demographics can be found in Table 1.

Measurement

In this study two measurements were used, the first was the demographic questionnaire where participants were asked to state their gender, age, race, current level of education and self-report their most recent examination results (refer to Appendix B). The second measurement which was utilized was the Procrastination Assessment Scale-Students (PASS) (refer to Appendix C). The PASS was developed by Solomon and Rothblum (1984) which is used to measure procrastination. The scale consists of 44 items that measures the frequency of cognitive-behavioral antecedents of procrastination. PASS is divided into two main subscales which are the prevalence of academic procrastination and reasons for academic procrastination. The prevalence of academic procrastination encompasses of six academic areas which are Writing a Term Paper, Studying for Exams, Keeping up with Weekly Reading Assignments, Academic Administrative Tasks, Attendance Tasks and School Activities in General. Each of these six areas is rated by a 5 point Likert scale. The first question of each subscale was used to ascertain the frequency of procrastination on tasks (e. g., “ To what degree do you procrastinate on studying for exams?”) and ranged from 1 (never procrastinate) to 5 (always procrastinate). The second question

measured the degree to which procrastination on the task was causing a problem for them (e. g., “ To what degree is procrastination on studying for exams a problem for you?”) and ranged from 1 (not at all a problem) to 5 (always a problem). The third question measured the extent to which they have a tendency to decrease their procrastination behavior (e. g., “ To what extend do you want to decrease your tendency to procrastinate on studying for exams?”), ranging from 1 (do not want to decrease) to 5 (definitely want to decrease). The second part of the PASS comprised of 26 items, which are rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale that ranges from 1 (not at all reflects why I procrastinated) to 5 (definitely reflects why I procrastinated), which assesses the reasons for academic procrastination. It initially provides a procrastination scenario, which is about delaying writing a term paper, and then lists out a variety of possible reasons as to why an individual would procrastinate on the task. Two examples of the statements of reasons as to why the participant procrastinated are “ You didn’t think you knew enough to write the paper” and “ You felt overwhelmed by the task.”