

# Relationship of gender differences procrastination and academic achievement psych...



Procrastination is prevalent among students today and has become a hindrance to positive academic achievements. The purposes of this research were to investigate the relationship between procrastination and academic achievement as well as procrastination across genders. The sample included 120 Sunway University College students (60 male and 60 females) who consisted of various ethnicities and religious affiliations. Two hypotheses were investigated in this study. Both hypotheses were measured using the 44-item Procrastination Assessment Scale- Students (PASS). The researchers found no statistically significant relationship between procrastination and academic achievement. However, significant differences were found between gender and procrastination. The strengths, limitations, implications and future directions for further research were discussed in this study.

Procrastination is a topic that has been studied for centuries to measure what the antecedents and effects are for those who practice it. Amidst many college and university students today, academic procrastination has been prevalent despite the ethnic backgrounds or the gender of individuals. There has been previous research indicating that academic procrastination has resulted in lower academic achievements. Additionally, a significant difference was found in procrastination behaviours across genders whereby males were predicted to procrastinate more than females when in regards to academic tasks. Hence, this study was conducted to investigate the relationship between procrastination and academic achievement as well as if a difference exists for procrastination across genders.

Procrastination has been defined in several context based on which aspect it has been used and studied. Firstly, Scher and Osterman (2003) defined <https://assignbuster.com/relationship-of-gender-differences-procrastination-and-academic-achievement-psychology-essay/>

procrastination as the propensity for individuals to delay work that is necessary for goal achievement. In addition, these authors described procrastination as the interference to one's academic success (Scher & Osterman, 2003). Furthermore, procrastination has also been defined as the intentional postponement of required tasks despite knowledge of the possible negative outcomes (Klassen, Krawchuk, & Rajani, 2008). In terms of tasks related to studies, procrastination is the tendency for one to defer beginning a task, having to be rushed by others as well as only partially completing the task when the due date arrives (Orpen, 1998). Furthermore, Solomon and Rothblum (1984) characterised procrastination as a behaviour whereby individuals put off their tasks with no apparent reason till a point where subjective discomfort is experienced. Lastly, procrastination has been defined in terms of academic procrastination whereby individuals fail to perform the action of completing a task within a given period of time despite knowing it is necessary and required as well as wanting to complete the given task (Wolters, 2003).

Academic achievement on the other hand has been defined in terms of an individual's target goals whereby individuals determine their expected performance standards and attempt to follow through these goals till a task is completed (Corker & Donnellan, 2011). Moreover, academic achievement has also been defined in terms of an individual's performance or grades following the completion of an examination or assignment (Solomon & Rothblum, 1984).

Gender differences in procrastination has also been an area of research that aims at identifying the possibilities of which gender has the higher tendency <https://assignbuster.com/relationship-of-gender-differences-procrastination-and-academic-achievement-psychology-essay/>

for procrastination or are there simply no gender difference in procrastination. With this, Reeves and Baden (2000) referred to gender in two facets which are sex and gender itself whereby an individual's sex refers to the biological characteristics that categorises someone in male or female while gender is defined as the socially determined ideas and practices of what is to be male or female. Additionally, gender is defined by Scott (1986) as a grammatical term to talk of persons or creatures of the masculine or feminine sex. Also, gender can either be defined in terms of sex whereby being male or female is biologically rigid or by gender itself which refers to the existing societal expectations, roles, places and life stages required distinctively by men and women (Phillips, 2005).

Procrastination can be measured in several facets depending on whether it is directed towards the individual's internal attribution to do so or the actions of individuals that portray their procrastination behaviours. In a study by Klassen, Krawchuk and Rajani (2008), procrastination was measured in terms of late assignment submissions and burning the midnight oil nights before examinations. The theory that was applied in explaining the procrastination behaviour and how it affected individuals' academic achievement is self-efficacy theory which implies that the belief of an individual about their success being a result of their ability and effort put into the given task (Baron et al., 2009). Individuals with high self-efficacy were found to have higher self-esteem thus leading to an increase of confidence in confronting the challenges associated to the task (Klassen et al., 2008). This decreased the likelihood of procrastination happening. Additionally, self-efficacy acted as a motivating drive for self-regulation whereby students resist distractions,

develop realistic and interesting strategies that help facilitate and improve learning as well as make the completion of schoolwork within the allocated time easier (Klassen et al., 2008; Wolters, 2003). With this, individuals with self-regulation revealed a high desire for goal mastery and adaptive motivational attitudes and beliefs towards the desire (Wolters, 2003). Low self-regulated learners however were individuals who often procrastinated by taking longer time to begin and were not motivated to complete the given task (Klassen et al., 2008; Wolters, 2003). The researchers explained that this may be results of having low confidence levels in planning out schedules for task completion and difficulty in initiating self-learning (Klassen et al., 2008). Hence, the inability to practice self-regulated learning because of low self-efficacy has led to higher procrastination tendencies and with this, individuals who procrastinated reported negative academic performances such as lower grade point average scores (GPAs) and poorer assignment and examination results (Klassen et al., 2008).

Moreover, procrastination was examined in terms of individual study habits. The study habits were categorised in three aspects which were the amount of time spent studying or completing a task and the early or overdue submission of assignments as well as the pace at which students completed the given task (Solomon & Rothblum, 1984). Individuals in this study were divided into 2 groups of procrastinators which were the homogenous procrastinators and heterogeneous procrastinators. While homogeneous procrastinators had low self-esteem and high fear of failure, the heterogeneous group had high averting task tendencies which correlated highly with their study habits (Solomon & Rothblum, 1984). Additionally,

Rothblum, Solomon and Murakami (1986) conducted a similar study which measured study habits in terms of behavioural postponement in task or assignment completion. In this study however, the two groups of procrastinators were distinguished by high and low procrastinators. Those who portrayed low procrastination behaviours often thought of their success as a result of their effort and capability whereas those who often procrastinated attributed their academic achievements to external factors such as luck (Rothblum, Solomon, & Murakami, 1986). Both studies presented results indicating that those who procrastinated and waited till the last minute to complete their assignments or study for examinations yielded lower grades and overall academic achievement for the semester (Solomon & Rothblum, 1984; Rothblum, Solomon, & Murakami, 1986). The researchers attributed their low academic performances and procrastination to the extreme anxiety experienced by high procrastinators, difficulty in decision making about where to begin the task, the lack of assertion and the fear of what expectation others will have in the future if they succeed (Solomon & Rothblum, 1984). However, researchers observed that despite negative academic consequences, individuals still portrayed poor study habits (Solomon & Rothblum, 1984; Rothblum, Solomon, & Murakami, 1986).

Subsequently, Scher and Osterman (2002) as well as Howell and Watson (2007) both conducted studies that investigated the negative academic consequences of procrastination. Different individuals viewed the direction of their goals dissimilar to others and were orientated towards only relevant goals (Scher & Osterman, 2002). While some individuals were task-mastery-orientated individuals, others belonged to the task-avoidance- orientated

category. The orientation of goals for those who had intention of task mastery were frequently driven by the desire to acquire new skills and improve abilities while those who avoided difficult ones did so because they disliked the ample of effort that was required of them (Scher & Osterman, 2002). Additionally those who portrayed lesser procrastination of tasks focused on acquiring a new skill rather than completing it as an obligation or requirement and merely increasing their performance level (Scher & Osterman, 2002). Also, those who practiced the mastery approach based on the theory of Temporal Motivation Theory were intrinsically motivated and completed their tasks on time for greater self-satisfaction and they also focused on the short terms rewards for good academic achievements (Howell & Watson, 2007). In contrast, individuals who often procrastinated portrayed no desire for acquiring new skills thus did not regulate their learning or left things to the last minute and were highly disorganized (Scher & Osterman, 2002; Howell & Watson, 2007). With this, individuals with the desire to have new learning experiences procrastinated lesser and achieved better grades and achievements than while those who procrastinated obtain lower overall academic performances.

Procrastinators are often thought about indifferently as well as individuals who possess lower cognitive ability than others (Schraw & Wadkins, 2007). Despite evident research that show how academic achievement is inhibited by procrastination as the quality and quantity of performance is gravely affected, there has been several studies that have yielded results whereby procrastination did not affect individual academic achievements. The reasons that were identified in this studies that led to procrastination were

boredom due to long semesters and tasks that were irrelevant to academic needs (Schraw & Wadkins, 2007). The study conducted by Schraw and Wadkins (2007) on third and fourth year college students found that poor academic achievement were not necessarily associated to those who procrastinated. Instead, the researchers found that high procrastinators mostly consisted of students with higher ability rather than those with lower academic abilities and yet had small and insignificant impact of academic performance (Schraw & Wadkins, 2007). Additionally, individuals who procrastinated were able to maintain a better flow for studying schedules thus leading to lesser fear of failure and better academic grades (Schraw & Wadkins, 2007). The researchers explained that the high efficiency in performance results may be due an increase in motivation to regulate self-learning. Furthermore, procrastination provided an optimal stress level for putting off tasks to the last minute that allowed individuals to perform at peak efficacy (Schraw & Wadkins, 2007) whereby individuals produce better quality of work when under moderate pressure.

Subsequently, the area of gender differences and procrastination has been studied over time. In a study by Bronlow and Reasinger (2000), procrastination was measured in terms of the number of hours spent studying in preparation of examination; fewer hours spent were indications of high procrastination. Also, individual procrastination behaviours were associated with longer time students took to return materials to professors (Bronlow & Reasinger, 2000). The tendency for procrastination depended on the motivation towards given assignments; whereby dissatisfaction of the course generally as well as having low intrinsic motivation in completing



tasks was associated to higher procrastination tendency (Brownlow & Reasinger, 2000). The study revealed that men who were often extrinsically motivated and dissatisfied with the given assignments were more likely to procrastinate as compared to women. Despite the fact that women also procrastinated with reasons such as the need to produce perfect work (perfectionism) and thus put off starting the assignment given in effort to protect their academic ability if outcomes were unpleasant, women still procrastinated lesser than men and completed their tasks with regards to potential compensations provided by educators (Brownlow & Reasinger, 2000).

Moreover, a significant difference was found between gender and procrastination that was viewed in terms of individual locus of control (Hampton, 2005). In this study, men reported more procrastination behaviours than women. The researchers explained that men had a higher tendency to believe that a particular situation is controlled by external factors and not one's self (Hampton, 2005). Ergo, men portrayed lower perseverance in completing a given task and increased procrastination due to high external locus of control (Hampton, 2005). Additionally, Hampton (2005) also found that procrastination was more frequent for difficult tasks as they increased stress levels. In contrast, despite also having external locus of control, women in this study procrastinated lesser than men. This study is parallel to a study conducted by Sarid and Peled (2010) which found higher academic tasks procrastinations in males compared to females. The researchers attributed the findings to individuals' attitude towards multi-drafting whereby females had more positive attitudes towards making

multiple drafts of their assignments prior to completing and submitting them whereas males were more reluctant to do so (Sarid & Peled, 2010).

Similarly, another study by Yong (2010) revealed difference in procrastination across genders among students that have completed the English and Communication Skills subject. When in regards to their academic achievements, males were found to procrastinate more than females on several aspects especially academic tasks delays (Yong, 2010). These findings were parallel to a recent study by Ozer, Demir, and Ferrari (2009) which found significant gender differences for academic procrastination. The researchers attributed the findings to the students' inability in decision making, low self-esteem, poor time management and perfectionism which hindered individuals from either starting or completing a task within a given time frame (Yong, 2010).

Nevertheless, there have been numerous studies that have found no gender differences in procrastination tendencies. In a study by Onwuegbuzie and Jiao (2000), procrastination was measured in terms of the level of library anxiety that the participants experienced which led to the postponement in the usage of the library facilities to complete assignments. An increase in library anxiety was associated with the individual's fear of failing to either complete the task with quality work or the result of the assignment after submission (Onwuegbuzie and Jiao, 2000). Also, in a previous study on 314 undergraduate students, procrastination was more apt to occur in the light of irrelevant tasks whereby students avoid the given task and prefer delegating necessary responsibilities over taking the effort to complete it (Milgram, Sroloff, & Rosenbaum, 1988). The procrastination behaviour was found to be <https://assignbuster.com/relationship-of-gender-differences-procrastination-and-academic-achievement-psychology-essay/>

more apparent for perceived difficult tasks that may produce undesirable academic outcomes later. Despite males exerting slightly higher library anxiety, the overall academic procrastination of students indicated no gender difference and that the behaviour was equally practised by men and women (Milgram, Sroloff, & Rosenbaum, 1988; Onwuegbuzie and Jiao, 2000). The researchers explained that the slight increase in male library anxiety may have been attributed to the small sample of males in the study.

Based on the above findings, two hypotheses were developed. The first hypothesis predicted that there is a significant negative relationship between procrastination and academic achievement. With this, people who procrastinate are predicted to have lower academic achievement. The second hypothesis however predicts that males procrastinate more than females.

## **Methods**

### **Study design**

The study design that was employed for this research was non- experimental survey design in the form of questionnaires. Additionally, convenience sampling was used in the process of obtaining the sample of the study. Convenience sampling was the most feasible option of sampling for this study as it is based on the ease of access to participants, which in the case of this study, were participants who were currently Studying a course in Sunway University College under one specific collaborating University, Lanchester University (LU). Using a survey design for this study was appropriate to investigate the hypotheses made; (1) individuals who

procrastinate have achieve lower academic performance and (2) males procrastinate more than females.

## Participants

The participants in this study consists of 120 Lanchester University students (60 males and 60 females) with age ranging from 18 to 24 years old (Mean age= 1. 09 years,

SD= 0. 29). A hundred and nine participants were within the age group of 18 to 21 years old while 11 others age ranged between 22 to 24 years old.

There were no participants above the age of 24 despite the criteria given in the demographic sheet. Additionally, the participants were from different ethnic backgrounds. The race that made up the sample majority is the Chinese (82. 50%), followed by the Indians (8. 30%), the Malays (4. 20%) and then the other races (5. 00%) which consisted of the Sikh, Sinhalese, Eurasians and other races. Furthermore, the participants were from various degree courses under the Lanchester University such as Psychology, Accounting and Finance, Mass Communication and also the School of Business. Additionally, international students were excluded from the sample to enable the results to be generalized to only the Malaysian population. The demographics of the participants are as shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographics

Characteristic

N

%

Age

18 - 21

22 - 24

> 24

Gender

Male

Female

Race

Chinese

Malay

Indian

Others

Education

Diploma

Degree

Year of Education

Year 1 Sem 1

Year 1 Sem 2

Year 1 Sem 3

Year 2 Sem 1

Year 2 Sem 2

Year 2 Sem 3

Year 3 Sem 1

Year 3 Sem 2

Year 3 Sem 3

Examination Results

A (70-100)

B (60-69)

C (50-59)

D (40-49)

E (30 -39)

109

11

0

60

60

99

5

10

6

0

120

0

42

24

21

16

7

6

1

3

98

150

160

64

8

90.8

9.2

0.0

50.0

50.0

82.5

4.2

8.3

5.0

0.0



100.0

0.0

63.6

36.4

47.7

36.4

15.9

60.0

10.0

30.0

20.4

31.3

33.3

13.3

1.7

## Measurement

Procrastination Assessment Scale- Students (PASS; Solomon & Rothblum, 1984). The PASS was administered to the participants to be able to classify

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the participants into groups of low or high procrastinators. The PASS is a 44-item instrument designed to measure procrastination by measuring the frequency of cognitive-behavioural antecedents of procrastination. The PASS was developed to measure 3 facets: (1) the prevalence of academic procrastination, (2) the reasons for academic procrastination, (3) to compare scores on the PASS with behavioural indices of procrastination and other related constructs.

Additionally, the PASS is divided in to aspects. While the first part measures the prevalence of procrastination in six academic areas, the second part assesses reasons for procrastination. With this, the PASS is both useful at identifying potential focal areas for I intervention and tracking changes in procrastination over time. The scoring of the PASS is determined using a likert-scale whereby the scores on the 5-point likert-type scale (a= 1, b= 2, c= 3, 4= d, 5= e) are summed for each academic task. The scores on the academic task range from 2 to 10. The sum across the six academic function areas ranging from 12 to 60 is also calculated. Meanwhile, the scores for reasons of procrastination and desire for changing the behaviour are summed as separate subscales. Lastly, summing all the individual subscale scores will provide the total score for procrastination assessment.

Moreover, the PASS has shown low levels of internal consistency based on a recent research regarding procrastination frequency. However, with a test-retest conducted within a month, the PASS revealed high and stable correlations for the total frequency score of procrastination. The validity of the PASS on the other hand has excellent construct validity. Also, the PASS correlates significantly with the Beck Depression Inventory, Ellis Scale of <https://assignbuster.com/relationship-of-gender-differences-procrastination-and-academic-achievement-psychology-essay/>

Irrational Cognitions, Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, and the Delay Avoidance Scale. Additionally, between the number of self-spaced quizzes and PASS scores, significant correlations were found. Similar results were obtained between the total grade point averages and the PASS whereby higher PASS scores correlated with lower GPA scores.

## **Procedure**

Succeeding a literature review which portrayed supporting and opposing evidences for the two hypotheses made the data collection process begin. As the targeted participants were those currently taking a course under Lanchester University (LU) in Sunway University College, the locations of data collection was discussed and predetermined based on the areas in campus that the LU students are usually situated. With this, the data was collected around the con cost, cafeteria and student service department which are situated on the Ground floor of the campus. Also, data was collected from the Northwest and Northeast first, second and fourth floor classes as well as the graduate centre where LU students have their lectures. A hundred and twenty six surveys were distributed by a group of six researches and the distribution of these surveys was completed within three weeks. The total targeted sample was 120 participants and each researcher collected data from 20 participants. However, an additional six surveys had to be distributed as six participants from the initial sample did not complete the questionnaire. Prior to answering the survey, researchers approached the participants friendlily, informed them about our course, subject and assignment requirement. Later, the researchers inquired if they would be interested in participating in the survey by revealing the survey title and for

those who were, the participants were given a brief explanation of the survey topic and given the consent form (see Appendix A), demographic form (see Appendix B) and the questionnaire (see Appendix C). The consent form provided the aim of the study and the estimated time it would take to complete the survey while the demographic sheet which was stapled to the questionnaire contained questions necessary to validate the study hypotheses such as their gender, age, current education level, current semester and most recent academic grades. Additionally, the participants were encouraged to ask the researchers who stood close by about any unclear instructions or questions. For instance, some of the participants were unsure of the meaning of procrastination and when they asked, the researchers answered in a brief and simple manner to facilitate their understanding. Individuals who did not want to participate on the other hand were simply thanked for their time. During the collection of data for this study, no participants withdrew from the study. Upon completion, the surveys were collected from the participants and they were thanked for their participation. A total of 120 surveys were completed.

## **Results**

### **Hypothesis 1**

The first hypothesis in this study investigated the relationship between procrastination and academic achievement. It was predicted that procrastination was related to lower academic achievement. Since both the variables investigated were continuous variables, a correlation test was used to determine the relationship. The following are the results obtained from

investigating the relationship between procrastination and academic achievement.

The relationship between procrastination and academic achievement was investigated using a Pearson Correlation (see Table 2). Procrastination was tested in six facets which are writing a term paper, studying for examinations, weekly reading assignments, academic task, academic attendance and school activities in general.

Firstly, the relationship between the total scores of four degree subjects and the total procrastination scores was investigated using a Pearson correlation. There was no significant relationship between total scores of four degree subjects and the total procrastination scores,

$r(118) = -.092, p = .32$ . In conclusion, the total scores for degree subjects were significantly not related to total procrastination scores.

Secondly, the relationship between writing a term paper and total score of four degree subjects was investigated using a Pearson correlation. There was a significant correlation between procrastination on writing a term paper and the total score of four degree subjects,  $r(118) = -.205, p = .02$ . In conclusion, procrastination on writing a term paper had a negative significant relationship with the total score of four degree subjects of the individual. Hence, as procrastination on writing a term paper increases, the individual's total score of four degree subjects decreases.

Thirdly, the relationship between procrastination on studying for examinations and total score of four degree subjects was investigated using

a Pearson correlation. There was a significant correlation between procrastination on studying for examinations and total score of four degree subjects,  $r(118) = -.189$ ,  $p = .04$ . In conclusion, procrastination on studying for examinations had a negative significant relationship with the total score of four degree subjects of individuals. Ergo, as procrastination on studying for examinations increases, the individual's total score of four degree subjects decreases.

Subsequently, the relationship between procrastination on weekly reading assignments and the total score of four degree subjects was investigated using a Pearson correlation. There was no significant relationship between procrastination on weekly reading assignments and the total score of four degree subjects,  $r(118) = -.065$ ,  $p = .48$ . In conclusion, procrastination on weekly reading assignments was not related to an individual's total score of four degree subjects.

Next, the relationship between procrastination on academic tasks and the total score of four degree subjects was investigated using a Pearson correlation. There was no significant correlation between procrastination on academic tasks and the total score of four degree subjects,  $r(118) = .102$ ,  $p = .27$ . In conclusion, procrastination on academic tasks was not related to the total score of four degree subjects.

Furthermore, the relationship between the procrastination on academic attendance and the total score of four degree subjects was investigated using a Pearson correlation. There was no significant relationship between procrastination on academic attendance and the total score of four degree

subjects,  $r(118) = .017$ ,  $p = .85$ . In conclusion, individual procrastination on academic attendance was not related to the total score of four degree subjects.

Lastly, the relationship between procrastination for school activities in general and the total score of four degree subjects was investigated using a Pearson correlation. There was no significant relationship between procrastination for school activities in general and the total score of four degree subjects,  $r(118) = -.036$ ,  $p = .70$ . In conclusion, individual procrastination for school activities in general was not related to the total score of four degree subjects.

In essence, despite a few subscales that indicated a significant relationship with the total score of the four degree subjects, overall, procrastination had no significant relationship with the individual's academic achievement.

## Table 2

### Correlation between Procrastination and Academic Achievement

#### Measures

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

1. Total Score of 4 Degree subjects

—

2. Total Procrastination Score

-0.092

—

3. Writing a Term Paper

-0.205\*

.636\*\*

—

4. Studying for Examinations

-0.189\*

.542\*\*

.473\*\*



—

### 5. Weekly Reading Assignments

-0.065

.591\*\*

.430\*\*

.325\*\*

—

### 6. Academic Tasks

0.102

.511\*\*

-.083

-.066

.185\*

—

### 7. Academic Attendance

0.017

.675\*\*

.281\*\*

. 016

. 266\*\*

. 433\*\*

—

## 8. School Activities in General

-0. 036

. 658\*\*

. 341\*\*

. 323\*\*

0. 047

0. 204\*

. 401\*\*

\*  $p < . 05$ . \*\*  $p < . 001$ **Hypothesis 2**

The second hypothesis in this study investigated if gender affected individual procrastination whereby males was predicted to procrastinate more than females. Gender consists of one variable with two levels (male and female) whereas the procrastination subscales measured are continuous variable. Therefore, an independent t-test was the appropriate test used to determine

the difference between gender and the six subscales of procrastination. The means and standard deviations of each subscale were also calculated and tabulated to make comparisons between male and female procrastination (see Table 3).

In order to determine if gender affected individual procrastination based on the six subscales, an independent t-test was used. In general, there is a significant difference between gender and procrastination,  $t(118) = 2.57$ ,  $p = .011$ . Hence, males this study found that males procrastinate more than females.

In terms of procrastination on writing a term paper, there was no significant difference in gender and the procrastination on writing a term paper,  $t(118) = 0.17$ ,  $p = .86$ . Both male and female equally procrastinated on writing a term paper.

Besides that, there was no significant difference between gender and studying for examinations,  $t(118) = -1.28$ ,  $p = .21$ . Both genders procrasti