

# Academic procrastination essay



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With the latest Facebook or iPhone app, the ease of contacting friends, and the newest YouTube video, it has become easier and more tempting to NOT do work- procrastination, progresses natural assassin. Solomon and Rothblum (1984) defined procrastination as the “act of needlessly delaying tasks to the point of experiencing subjective discomfort” (503). However procrastination strikes deep into every aspect of daily life and spans far wider than this paper can cover, so a focus will be brought on to procrastination in an academic setting.

Academic procrastination is the intentional delay of starting, doing, or completing their important academic work in a timely fashion (Rabin, Fogel, & Upham, 2011). Ellis and Knaus (1977) estimated 95% of American college students procrastinate. Solomon and Rothblum (1984) through self reports discovered 46% of students admit to procrastinating, and 50% of those people reported it as a mild to severe problem. The prevalence of academic procrastination is varied from study to study, but it is unanimous that academic procrastination is a problem that must be addressed. Some of the consequences of academic procrastination are external, decreased progress/learning (Rabin et al. , 2011), and increased health risk (Tice & Baumeister, 1997).

Some of the consequences are internal such as depression, irrational cognitions, lower self esteem, and anxiety (Solomon & Rothblum, 1984). There are many negative aspects of academic procrastination. As stated earlier procrastination strikes deep into every aspect of daily life, it is a problem that cannot be solved by just looking at the individual. In Van Eerde’s (2003) meta-analysis on the networks of procrastination he stressed

the importance of examining the social influences on the students. Academic procrastination is a well sought out field of study due to the many factors that produce and maintain it, this paper will look at two; Self-regulation and the socio-personal variables that surround the individual. One of the more prominent and better researched theories in approaching academic procrastination is seeing it as a failure in self regulation.

Self regulation is the system in which individuals use to construe internal and external cues in deciding when to start, maintain, and finish a goal-directed behavior. Senecal, Koestner, and Vallerand (1995) adapted from Deci and Ryan's self determination theory ( as cited from Senecal et al. , 1995, p. 605) which differentiates motivations for doing school work out of choice and interest (self-determined) as pposed to internal/external pressures such as guilt and deadlines(non-self-determined), and found a strong correlation between self regulation style and academic procrastination. The theory proposes there are five types of self regulation that can be arranged on a scale ranging in degree of autonomy; from most autonomous to least autonomous, intrinsic regulation, identified regulation, introjected regulation, external regulation, and amotivation (Senecal et al. , 1995).

Intrinsic regulation being the most autonomous because it refers to behavior that are engaged in due to their own interest, pleasure, and satisfaction; and on the other side of the scale amotivated behavior are the least autonomous because it refers to behavior with no sense of purpose, no expected reward, and no opportunity for change. The two sides of the scale can be separated in three distinct ways; autonomous self regulation leads to greater initiative & persistence, greater amount of positive emotions, and more consistent

behavior. They discovered the more autonomous the self regulation style such as intrinsic motivation and identified regulation, the more enjoyment and feeling of competence is elicited from doing the task as well as increased higher concentration, grades, and time spent on the activity. They concluded that self regulation is a strong predictor academic procrastination, and the more autonomous the motivation to work, the less likely the individual will procrastinate.

Further research from Klassen, Krawchuck, and Rajani (2007) further supported this claim as well as expanded on it. Their findings were similar to Senecal et al. 's (1995), as well as introducing a new variable, self efficacy- belief in one's capability to carry out the necessary actions to succeed. High self efficacy also seemed to be a significant predictor of resisting procrastination.

However the biggest predictor they found was self efficacy for self regulation- belief in one's self regulatory power and ability to internalize regulation . Individuals need not only an autonomous style of self regulation, but a belief in their own ability to self regulate. Self regulation is obviously a very essential component of academic procrastination as it delves into what motivates individuals to work. In another study Senecal, Julien, and Guay (2003) developed a role conflict model of academic procrastination, suggesting that one's non-self determined motivations of school activities and interpersonal relationships create a role conflict which contributes to academic procrastination. Role conflict is defined as the amount of conflict that arises from these two roles. Their result was that students who are motivated through self-determined motivations (choice and interest) toward <https://assignbuster.com/academic-procrastination-essay/>

their education and interpersonal relationships are less conflicted by the conflict created by their two separate roles and therefore less prone to academic procrastination.

These students have integrated their roles effectively to feel minimal tension, their behavior is consistent with their core beliefs and values, and are less likely to act according to what other people want. On the other hand students who are motivated through non-self-determined motivations will experience negative feelings, be more conflicted after not having integrated the two roles, and be more prone to academic procrastination. The findings of this study are significant in explaining academic procrastination, and the implications of the results are just as big. When examining academic procrastination one must look beyond the individual and his/her motivations, and look at the social life that he/she is a part of.

A socio-family study was conducted in hopes of ascertaining certain social factors effect on academic procrastination. A positive correlation was found between procrastination and number of siblings and grade level, while a negative correlation was found between procrastination and parent's level of education (Costa, Gonzalaz-Pienda, Nunez, Rosario, Solano, Valle, 2009). It is important to note that this study was conducted on middle school students, as they are more dependent on their family than high school and college students. High school and College is an awkward time as it is when students start to become more independent and hold more responsibilities and this may have an impact on procrastination, thought more research needs to be put into this transitional period.

In the discussion the Costa et al. (2009) reasoned the relationship between procrastination and parent's education is that parent's education is correlated with their involvement in their children's studies and the emphasis placed on studies. They try harder to instill a strong working ethic into their children which would make them less prone to procrastination. A student placed in demanding socio-educational environment will start to internalize their parents' emphasis on education and academic success, and this becomes an intrinsic motivation for studying, thus leading to less risk of procrastination. The study also showed, though only modestly, that as number of siblings increase, this means more distractions and a noisier environment. Also the parents have to divide their attention so each child gets less attention and time as opposed to single child families.

As the child's grade increased, so did the level of academic procrastination, but only to a certain age. The results fell in line with Van Eerde's (2003) study, where there was a negative correlation between age and procrastination but only above the age of 16. Obviously there are variable changes between the relationship between age and procrastination. Costal attribute the change they observed to the fact that a student becomes familiar with his/her school setting. As they become more adjusted, their level of commitment decreases, and become more prone to academic procrastination.

Numerous studies have been conducted to ascertain the factors that make an individual more prone to academic procrastination for the purpose of finding a way to reduce it. Many studies have been put geared towards interventions, tactics, and strategies that will help diminish the amount of

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academic procrastination engaged in by students because it is a serious problem with serious consequences. There are a few factors that contribute to procrastination that do not depend on the individual in question, but their instructor. In Ackerman and Gross's study (2005), they researched task characteristics of procrastination in respect to the instructor giving out the task. They found a significant decrease in procrastination when the task was perceived by students to be interesting or require a variety of skills. Instructors can provide an assorted option of tasks and students can choose what interests them.

This allowed students to be more intrinsically motivated to start and continue the task. Requiring a variety of skills relates to students perceiving the task as more interesting, the more variety of skill required the more interesting the task will seem. Also contrary to common sense the difficulty of the task, how time consuming it is, and other deadlines had little to no effect on procrastination. To ensure students start their assignment in a timely fashion, instructors can reward or provide an incentive for starting the task early.

Even though Koestner and McClelland (1990) found that providing extrinsic rewards for a task has shown to decrease intrinsic rewards for that task (as cited in Senecal et al. , 1995), providing something just for starting can help the initial starting phase. Clear instructions on the instructor's part will reduce ambiguity and confusion which in turn reduces a fear about starting a task. The study also found that making large semester/year long tasks constitute of smaller interdependent ones will help decrease procrastination, and help with time management. By doing all these things it also helps

create a social norm in class about procrastination. Students use other students to set standards for themselves on promptness and quality.

By calling these out the instructor sets certain standards that he/she expects of the students and this will influence the student to procrastinate to a lesser degree. A recent paper by Steele (2007) summarized the past eight decades of research on procrastination, and categorized 4 types of interventions: Expectancy related, value related, sensitivity to delay, and delay related interventions. Expectancy related interventions are based on the premise that increasing one's expectancy of success, they will be less likely to procrastinate. This is closely tied to the concept of self efficacy, increasing one's belief that one can succeed. Value related interventions are geared towards task aversiveness.

This can be helped through means of the instructor by making the task interesting or requiring a variety of skills to accomplish. Another interesting finding is one can change the value of a task through classical conditioning. First found by Eisenberg (as cited in Steele, 2007, p. 82), where the efforts geared towards the goal is reinforced by intermittent success, thus letting the effort to be perceived as a reinforcer for behavioral effort put in initially. Sensitive to delay interventions are made for procrastinators that are easily prone to distractions, such as children in a household of many siblings.

One such intervention is stimulus control, surrounding the individual with cues that confirm their goals and reduces temptation. Delay intervention has proven to be most effective. One such intervention is the use of proximal goals that accumulate to a final task. This can be seen as splitting a big



project into smaller interdependent projects, or writing daily goals to accomplish and keep on schedule. Another big intervention technique that falls under this category is implementation intention (Owens, Bowman, & Dill, 2008).

The goal of this is to turn intention into behavior, and this is done by augmenting goals with specifics such as where, when, how the goal is to be done. Studies have shown “ forming implementation intentions helped college students to complete academic-related tasks, such as sending weekly emails to instructors and keeping a weekly journal” (Owens et al. , 2008, p. 367). Clearly no effort has been spared when it comes to finding methods to reduce academic procrastination. There are many factors that lead to academic procrastination, however in return that creates just as many angles to attack it from.

It is essential to first admit one engages in academic procrastination be it starting a project late, putting off completing it, or not sticking to a pre-arranged schedule, all these are just some of the signs of academic procrastination. Then implement an intervention strategy. There are numerous intervention strategies each specializing in addressing different sides of academic procrastination. However interventions are just behavioral, they are implemented to resist that initial phase of not working and not persisting. Hopefully it will slowly adjust the emotional and cognitive aspect of the individual.

Changing self regulation styles to become more autonomous and self determined, this will not only reduce procrastination but elicit more positive

responses in engaging the task. The prevalence of academic procrastination is slowly growing and its consequences do not get any less dire, many methods have been created and proven to be effective, now people just have to use them. Academic procrastination represents a huge loss in society, where time is not effectively spent. 6% of the college population admit to academically procrastinating, and half of those students see it as a mild to severe problem that interferes with their life. There are probably even more students who do procrastinate but just do not even recognize it as a problem. Some of the factors are directly related to the individual such as self regulatory styles, other factors indirectly affect the individual such as number of siblings and parents' education.

Minor things such as time spent at school and major things such as a low self-efficacy accumulate to create this problem. However the goal is not finding the infinite reasons to academic procrastination, but knowing that it is a changeable behavior, and stopping it. There is an incredible amount of research on academic procrastination, and it will continue to grow as the prevalence of it grows. The amount of research is not small, but it is our choice in how we use it.

Procrastination dates back to the first person to put off their work, and it has plagued or society ever since, and unless something is changed it will continue to plague our future.