

Academic Procrastination among Male and Female University and College Students

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The present research is aimed to investigate the academic procrastination among male and female university and college students. Effect of some demographic variables like gender, age and education were also explored. Sample consisted of 200 students (100 college students and 100 university students) from different colleges and universities of Islamabad. Their age ranged between 16 to 27 years. Tuckman Procrastination Scale (TPS) (Tuckman, 1991) was used to collect data. Results indicate significant difference on demographic variables of age, gender and education. Specifically, a significant difference is found among males and females on academic procrastination. The results further show that college students tend to procrastinate more than university students. Moreover, there is a significant difference found on academic procrastination between students of age below and above 20 years.

Key words: Academic procrastination, college students, university students

Every single human being either working or non working has to complete numerous tasks during a day for an effective performance, but for certain reasons completion of these required tasks is often delayed. This general tendency of delaying or postponing different task is referred as procrastination. Although procrastination is a phenomenon which is globally seen but equally likely unfavorable around the globe, it affects the individuals daily routine in negative way (Letham, 2004; Hoover, 2005; Morelli, 2008; Schmitt, 2008). Milgram (1991) proposed that procrastination is initially defined as a series of delay or postpone one task because of the involvement of another task perceived as more important or satisfying which results in the imperfect behavioral product; which further leads to emotional upset.

Procrastination dominates all areas of behavior and action but the most general form is academic procrastination which occurs in the academic settings. It is about having the knowledge that a student has to complete one or more tasks or administer any activity, for example solving a term paper, preparing for exams, completing a class project or concluding a reading assignment, but lacking in motivation to do in a specified time period (Ackerman & Gross, 2005).

Academic procrastination can lead to the failure of achievement of academic goals on destined time which results in the development of psychological distress in individuals (Ellis & Knaus, 1977; Ferrari, Johnson, & McCown, 1995). It also leads to inefficient behavioral outcomes and individual may feel problem in dealing with environment productively (Milgram, Mey-Tal, & Levison, 1998).

According to Firouzeh and Jalil, (2011) procrastination is a weak point of personality and leads to low self-confidence. Perception of university students of themselves as procrastinator varies according to different researcher as it is 95% reported by Ellis and Knaus (1977), 46% by Solomon and Rothblum (1984) and 75% reported by Potts (1987). Furthermore, studies also concluded that the most of the students demonstrate unrelenting and consistent procrastination in daily study activities (Day, Mensink, & O' Sullivan, 2000; Onwuegbuzie, 2000). It is seen among university students that they use to bunk classes (Rothblum, Solomon, & Murakami, 1986), have low academic performance (Fritzsche, Rapp, & Hickson, 2003), and tardiness (Lay, 1986; Rothblum, Solomon, & Murakami, 1986).

Studies depict that procrastination has an influence on the personality factors of the individual as well as his academic achievement and psychological well being among students. Literature provides evidence of this fact as procrastination is directly linked with low self esteem, low capacity (Ferrari, 1994; Milgram, Marshevsky, & Sadeh, 1995), low motivation level, high anxiety (Ferrari, 1991; Senecal, Koestner, & Vallerand, 1995; Milgram & Toubiana, 1999), and low consciousness level (Johnson & Bloom, 1995; Schouwenburg & Lay, 1995; Lay & Brokenshire, 1997).

Gender based studies on procrastination demonstrated that female students procrastinate more frequently (Washington, 2004; Rodarte-Luna & Sherry, 2008) while some studies proved a different attitude depicting that procrastination is common among male students (Prohaska, Morrill, Atilas & Perez, 2000). Findings of Balkis and Duru (2009) on a sample comprising 580 students (329 girls, 251 boys) of Pamukkale University showed that men are more intended to procrastinate than women. On the other hand,

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another group of studies reported that gender has no effect on the procrastination behavior. Ozer and Ferrari (2011) found non-significant difference between male and female students on academic procrastination.

Wolter (2003) found a correlation between procrastination and self efficacy and work avoidant goal orientation of students. Studies also exposed a relationship between procrastination and low grades, high anxiety, postponed writing behavior (Fritzsche et al., 2003), high boredom (Blunt & Pychyl, 2000), goal avoidance, greater ineffectiveness and lower extent of using problem solving strategies, and poor class performance (Howell & Watson, 2007). O'Donoghue and Rabin (1999) studied that procrastination behavior decreases as the age increases.

Some Pakistani literature is also available as, Mohsin and Ayub (2014) studied the relationship between procrastination, postponement of gratification, and job satisfaction among teachers in Karachi-Pakistan. Results showed a negative relationship between procrastination and job satisfaction, and a positive association between delay of gratification and job satisfaction. When the teachers are not procrastinating on their job and score high on delay of gratification they will be more satisfied with their job and feel less worried. Hussain and Sultan (2010) analyzed the relationship between procrastination and learning of university students. Results indicated that procrastination has an impact on the academic performance, student's learning, contribution in activities, preparation of assignments and examinations. Procrastination is caused by work load and inappropriate time management.

Aziz and Tariq (2013) performed a web-based survey to measure procrastination and its impact on Pakistani students. Study-I of this research was aimed to develop a website to assess procrastination and some other factors like life satisfaction and stress. Study-II was to determine the psychometric properties of the instruments. It was concluded that there is a positive relationship between procrastination and stress. But on the other hand, negative relationship was found between procrastination and life satisfaction. Saleem and Rafique (2012) studied the relationship between procrastination and self-esteem. A negative relationship was found between procrastination and self esteem. On the basis of these findings it was proposed that any psychological treatment plan can be introduced to improve the self esteem of students.

The objective of this study is to investigate academic procrastination among male and female university and college students. Effect of some demographic variables such as gender, age and education is also planned to be examined.

Method

Objectives

The objectives of the study are:

- To examine the gender differences in academic procrastination.
- To explore the differences among college and university students on procrastination.
- To study the academic procrastination among different age groups.

Hypotheses

The hypotheses of the study are:

1. Procrastination will be higher in male students as compared to female students.
2. Procrastination will be higher in college students as compared to university students.
3. Procrastination will be higher in students of age less than 20 years than above 20 years.

Instrument

Tuckman Procrastination Scale (TPS)

The Tuckman Procrastination Scale (Tuckman, 1991) is 16 items measure concerning academic behavior. Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient of TPS is .90. It is a four point Likert rating scale. Responses ranged from "That's me for sure" to "That's not me for sure". Twelve items are positively and four items i.e., 6, 12, 14 and 16 are negatively worded. Low scores indicate high academic procrastination and vice versa.

Sample

The sample consists of 200 students (100 university students, 100 college students, 100= males, 100= females), taken purposively from different colleges and universities of Islamabad i.e., International Islamic University Islamabad, FAST National University Islamabad, NUST Islamabad and Punjab Colleges. Students were with the age range of 16 to 27 years.

Procedure

During the administration process data was taken by getting the questionnaires filled after taking the informed consent from the participants. After getting the data, scoring and analysis were done.

Results

Aim of the present study is to examine academic procrastination among male and female university students. Tuckman Procrastination Scale (TPS) was used to measure academic procrastination. Alpha coefficient reliability of Tuckman Procrastination Scale (TPS) is 0.76. t-test analysis is used to investigate the gender, age and education differences among students.

Table 1
Mean, Standard Deviation and t-value of male and female students on Tuckman Procrastination Scale (TPS) (N=200)

| | N | M (SD) | t | p | 95% C.I | | Cohen's d |
|-----------------|-----|-------------|------|------|---------|------|-----------|
| | | | | | LL | UL | |
| Male students | 100 | 38.64(9.68) | .041 | .001 | -2.35 | 2.45 | 0.60 |
| Female students | 100 | 36.69(7.38) | | | | | |

Note: C.I= Confidence Interval, LL= Lower Limit and UL= Upper Limit.

Table 1 indicates the significant difference between male and female students on procrastination. Male students procrastinate more (M=38.64, SD= 9.68) than female students (M=36.69, SD= 7.38).

Table 2
Mean, Standard Deviation and t-value of college and university students on Tuckman Procrastination Scale (TPS) (N=200)

| | N | M (SD) | t | P | 95% C.I | | Cohen's d |
|---------------------|-----|-------------|------|------|---------|-----|-----------|
| | | | | | LL | UL | |
| College students | 100 | 39.58(8.58) | 1.76 | .000 | -4.51 | .26 | 0.50 |
| University students | 100 | 32.71(8.51) | | | | | |

Note: C.I= Confidence Interval, LL= Lower Limit and UL= Upper Limit.

Table 2 indicates the significant difference between college and university students on procrastination. College students procrastinate more (M=39.58, SD=8.58) as compared to university students (M=32.71, SD=8.51).

Table 3
Mean, Standard Deviation and t-value of students of age below and above 20years on Tuckman Procrastination Scale (TPS)

| | N | M (SD) | t | P | 95% C.I | | Cohen's d |
|-------------------|-----|-------------|------|------|---------|------|-----------|
| | | | | | LL | UL | |
| Below 20 years | 118 | 47.72(8.48) | 1.88 | .000 | -4.73 | .115 | -0.265 |
| 20years and above | 82 | 40.02(8.61) | | | | | |

Note: C.I= Confidence Interval, LL= Lower Limit and UL= Upper Limit.

Table 3 indicates the significant difference between students of age below and above 20years on procrastination. Students of age below 20 years procrastinate more (M=47.72, SD=8.48) than students of age 20 years and above (M=40.02, SD=8.61).

Discussion

The rationale of the current research is to gain understanding of academic procrastination among students and explore the role of some demographic variables like

gender, age and education. Sample consists of 200 university and college students. Tuckman Procrastination Scale (TPS) was administered to collect data.

According to first hypothesis, procrastination will be higher in male students as compared to female students. Results show that male students procrastinate more than female students. Many studies result in the same direction, concluded that procrastination behaviour is more commonly found in male students than females. Balkis and Duru (2009) studied a sample of 580 individuals (329 female students and 251 male students). They have observed that male students intend to procrastinate more than female students. Motivational level is considered as the main cause of procrastination which is further influenced by those behavioural and emotional processes which are related with task averting situation. Other studies also claim that procrastination behavior is seen more in male students than female students (Balkis, 2006; Prohaska et al., 2000; Senecal et al., 1995).

Considering the second hypothesis, procrastination behavior will be higher in the students of college as compared to university. Results of the present study demonstrate a significant difference between both groups. The reason might be the high competition in academic career at university level which demands more hard work. So higher education level forces the students to work hard to develop a better career. Another reason is the semester system which demands continual effort to get good grades. Existing literature is consistent with results of Solomon and Rothblum's study conducted in 1984 that college students procrastinate more writing term paper as compared to preparing for examination or reading weekly assignments (Solomon & Rothblum, 1984). Onwuegbuzie (2004) demonstrated that procrastination is higher when studying for exams among high school and undergraduate students.

According to third hypothesis, procrastination will be higher in students of age less than 20 years than above 20 years. Taking age factor in academic procrastination reveals significant differences between age groups. Younger individuals tend to procrastinate more than the older individuals. Available literature shows different causes of procrastination among individuals of different age groups (Ozer, Demir, & Ferrari, 2009). Findings of present study predict that undergraduates showed more proneness to procrastinate in comparison to graduates or university students. These results are in accordance with the previous researches which showed that procrastination behaviour gets its highest level or peak from the middle to late twenties and then declines gradually by reaching the age of sixty (Ferrari et al., 1995). The decline in procrastination behaviour with increasing age can be justified by getting experience and being mature with increasing age (Jiao, DaRos-Voseles, Collins, & Onwuegbuzie, 2011; Ozer et al., 2009; Steel, 2007; Schouwenburg, 2004).

Limitations and Suggestions

Following limitations can be considered in the present research.

- The data is only based on the universities and colleges of the Islamabad city. Thus we cannot generalize the results to other universities and colleges of the country. Therefore, to strengthen the scope of the findings, a thorough study based on large and diverse population is needed and selection of sample should be random.
- Regarding the results of the research, it is suggested that in future studies other variables such as personality characteristics and stress should be investigated along with academic procrastination.

Conclusion

Procrastinating behavior is a common and prevalent phenomenon which is interestingly survived itself throughout the history and even today it casts its shadow on mankind. The target population of this study was university and college students who are planning to enter into professional life and career development, therefore factors discussed above are highly influential for such people. But still there is a need to explore such areas of procrastination behavior which influences the academic settings. As procrastination is found to be a common and serious trend which is not only overlooked but poorly understood as well so further studies should consider various areas more deeply. In addition, research studies should focus on different reasons of procrastinating including fear of failure and task aversion.

Implications

Results of the study depict some Practical implications. It is worthy to note that the negative outcomes of procrastination in life of students have been apparent and also a lot of students have encountered lots of problems because of their thoughts and behaviors about procrastination. Many students were found to be conscious of their procrastination and reported that they want to decrease its frequency in their daily routine during exams and making assignments as well as writing a term paper, so researches should find some practical ways to help students to reduce their frequency of such behavior. It is suggested that some programs should be devised and executed to teach task-oriented coping strategies to students.

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