

Influence of Procrastination on Academic Achievement

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Abstract:

A large body of research comprising the influence of procrastination and its effects on academic performance suggests that, there is relationship between procrastination and academic achievement. The main aim of the study was to examine the procrastination among school students and its influence on academic achievement. A procrastination scale comprising of 20 questions was considered for the present study, in addition to the demographic information, was administered on a sample comprising of class 8th and 9th students. A total of 139 students with a mean age of 14.01 (\pm .97) years participated in the study. The major findings of the study indicate lower maternal educational level significantly influenced student's procrastination i.e., students showed more procrastination behaviors. The results have shown that procrastination exerts a significant impact on academic performance, consistent to the findings of previous research on academic procrastination.

Keywords: Procrastination, Academic achievement, Academic procrastination, Task delay

I. INTRODUCTION

Soloman and Rothblum (1984) defined procrastination to be unnecessary act of postponing tasks that lead to negative consequences. The term was further refined by Lay (1986) under the definition "the act of needlessly delaying tasks to the point of experiencing subjective discomfort or putting off that which is necessary to reach some goal". Research on procrastination and its influences have spread across on multiple fields like academics, health care, organizational and even to financial management. Though it has been associated with negative outcomes, there is considerable literature stating that people prefer to postpone tasks to avoid negative emotions. Studies on procrastination increasing the probability of success are fewer when compared with negative outcomes associated to it. Functional procrastination is the term associated for the positive outcomes due to postponement. It represents an acceptable behaviour that increases success at work towards a pre-designed goal. It similar to the belief that one works best under pressure provides an additional incentive to the postponement of tasks (Pychyl, 2012). Considering the objectives, the present study focused on non-functional procrastination as it is more associated to the negative outcomes especially with regard to academic procrastination.

There is considerable research stating that negative outcomes like anxiety, low self-efficacy, distractibility and poor academic performance believed to interfere with task performance and further drive individuals to postpone. Continuous or habitual procrastination leads to concerning problems like stress, loss of personal productivity, social disapproval and a sense of guilt (Nagesh, Shrudha and Siddana, 2012). Though research suggests that procrastination is just one of several ways that people may deal with deadlines, as with the case of most abnormal behaviors procrastination becomes problematic when it holds

back normal functioning. Watkins has stated that "chronic procrastination may be a sign of an underlying psychological disorder."

Academic procrastination could be stated as postponing academic duties like delaying assignments leading academic unhappiness and stress. On the other hand, according to Ferrari, Johnson and McCown (1995), academic procrastination behavior is the behavior of avoiding academic duties which cause students have academic failure. Studies have shown that students relenting to academic procrastination behaviors face with various negative results of this behavior such as academic failure (Burka and Yuen, 1983; Ferrari, Johnson and McCown, 1995; Knaus, 1998), having poor performance and falling behind in the class (Rothblum, Solomon and Murakami, 1986). These tendencies would further influence unwarranted behaviors like not attending the school and dropping out the school (Knaus, 1998).

Substantial studies have identified significant variables that lead to procrastinating behaviors, variables like academic self-efficacy beliefs, self regulation and low self esteem do add as an additive factor. A review of studies has shown various strategies being preferred to tackle academic procrastination. According to Pintrich and De Groot (1990), cognitive strategies such as controlling and managing the effort given in order to cope with academic duties, repeating what is used for learning and understanding, interpreting and organizing are self-regulation. According to the related literature, it is seen that students who use these strategies make less academic procrastination (Faber and Vohs, 2004).

It has been observed that studies on procrastination on academic performance are increasing worldwide rapidly. However there are very few or no documented studies in

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India especially with specific reference to Andhra Pradesh state. About procrastination influences on students overall performance has to be dealt with in depth studies bearing in mind the cultural aspects of the region. So this study has been carried out to examine how procrastination impedes academic achievement of the students. Therefore, it is important to assess procrastination before evaluating the impact on student’s academics. Keeping this objective in view the study used Lay’s (1986) Procrastination Scale. Furthermore, the absence of information on procrastination among students in many developing nations often make clinicians task more challenging. Researchers would understand the needs of the students at this juncture at the same time help them to be aware of their problems and its causes for their adaptive and social functioning. The study enables professionals from many backgrounds to quickly and effectively assess procrastination and how it is impacting the psychological aspects of the student that would invariably have an impact on their academics. This would further enhance the researchers and counselors and health care providers to recognize and understand the needs of students better at this stage of life and to provide appropriate intervention techniques for problems manifesting from procrastination.

II. METHOD

Though studies carried out extensively that emphasized the importance of identifying procrastination and its influence on student’s academic performance, there is little documented empirical evidence in the state of Andhra Pradesh. Therefore in the present study an attempt has been made to explore procrastination among school students. Further it is hypothesized that there will be significant influence demographic variables on procrastination and there will be significant influence of procrastination on academic achievement. This is a quantitative study utilizing survey research method.

Sample

A total of 139 students were selected using stratified random sample technique, between 13 and 16 years with a mean age of 14.01 (±.97) years participated in the study. The study examined the procrastination among students and to determine whether procrastination of the students influenced academic achievement scores.

Measures

Procrastination was assessed as the score on the measure of Procrastination scale authored by (Lay, 1986). It is self-reported five point Likert scale (Extremely uncharacteristic= 1, moderately uncharacteristic= 2, Neutral=3, Moderately uncharacteristic =4 and Extremely uncharacteristic= 5). It comprises of 20 statements. 10 items are reversed-keyed items: (3, 4,6,8,11,13,14,15,18, and 20). Total score on this measure ranges between 20-100. The scale had high reliability. Cronbach's alpha for the local study sample was reported to be α .85. Score was computed by summing the ratings allocated to all the items, after reverse coding of the 10 items that were positively worded. Higher score revealed greater use of procrastination by the students.

Academic Achievement:

The study considered the marks obtained by the students on various subjects (Mathematics, Languages, Sciences and Social) and categorized them as Good, Average and Poor basing on the percentages they achieved in the academic tests.

Biographical Information

The Biographical Data Sheet, developed by the researchers, was used to collect information regarding the demographic features of the sample such as Age, Gender, class, parent’s occupation, education etc.

Data obtained from the samples was analyzed using various statistical techniques that are deemed appropriate in view of the objectives of the study and as dictated by the nature of the data.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the present study on procrastination and academic achievement among school students are presented in two sections. Results include the influence of demographic variables on procrastination along with the sample profile. Further they provide the influence of procrastination on academic achievement.

The influence of demographic variables on the sample of students was examined by estimating the occurrence of such problems in various subgroups of the sample. Subgroups were formed on the basis of the type of gender, class, parent’s education and occupation and number of friends. Parent’s occupation was not considered for further analysis due to the subgroups predominance over others, like almost all the mothers of the students in the sample taken were house wives. This section presents profile of the sample and the results regarding the influence of demographic variables on cognitive test anxiety among students.

Table- 1: Profile of the sample

		N=139	%
Gender	Male	73	53
	Female	66	47
Class	9 th Class	91	65
	8 th Class	48	35
Father Education	Up to 7 th	75	54
	Above 7 th Class	64	46
Mother Education	Up to 7 th	55	60
	Above 7 th Class	35	40
No. of Friends	More than 5 friends	90	65
	Less than 5 friends	49	35

Table 1 provides profile of the sample consisting of 139 subjects that include 73 males (53%) and 66 females (47%) with males consisting more than half of the sample. The sample has representation of two groups on class of study,

where students studying 9th class consist 65%, and the remaining is represented by class 8th students (35%). It has to be noted here that Parent's occupation was not considered for further analysis due to predominant representation of one particular group. Number of friends are sub divided into two groups where subjects having more than 5 friends (65%) and less than 5 friends (35). Finally parent's occupation is divided into two groups with those having up to class 7th education and those having above class 7th education.

Though it was stated that there will be significant influence of demographic variables on procrastination no such results were observed in the present study. However one demographic variable i.e., mother's educational level had significant influence on procrastination. The results regarding the influence of mother's educational level on procrastination are presented in table 2. A significant influence of ($t = 2.514$; $p < .05$) maternal educational levels on procrastination.

Table 2: Influence of Mother's education on Procrastination

	Mean /SD	Up to 7 th (n=50)	Above 7 th (n=91)	T
Procrastination	Mean	52.38	48.89	2.514*
	SD	7.60	7.45	

Note: * = $p < .05$

Results regarding influence of procrastination on academic achievement are presented below. As stated earlier academic achievement of the students is considered by taking 4 main subjects (maths, science, social and languages), and each individual subject is further divided into three groups (good, average and poor). It was assumed that procrastination would have an influence on academic performance and findings have supported this hypothesis.

Table-3: Influence of Procrastination on Academic performance

Subjects	Procrastination			F
	Performance	Mean	SD	
Mathematics	Good	48.29	7.91	4.188**
	Average	52.55	6.78	
	Poor	52.46	7.79	
Social Studies	Good	44.22	5.47	5.083**
	Average	49.79	7.88	
	Poor	52.49	6.52	
Languages	Good	48.36	7.64	4.916**
	Average	50.33	6.02	
	Poor	54.00	7.25	
Sciences	Good	50.30	7.78	1.191
	Average	49.40	6.54	
	Poor	52.05	6.89	

Note: ** = $p < .01$

The results regarding the influence of procrastination on academic performance are presented in table 3. A significant influence of procrastination on academic performance was observed across all the subjects. From table 3 we could see that students who performed poor on subjects Mathematics ($F = 4.188$; $p < .01$), Social studies ($F = 5.083$; $p < .01$) and Languages ($F = 4.916$; $p < .01$) reported higher procrastination mean scores than the other two groups.

A significant influence of maternal educational levels on procrastination was observed from the results, we could observe that students having mothers with lower educational level reported higher procrastination behaviors. Studies have shown that mother's educational level had significant influence on student's academic performance. This could be due to the fact that mothers play a crucial role on an adolescents overall development and educated mothers have an edge over their counter parts in the sense that they can monitor their child's academic progress better. In fact, research suggests that parental education is indeed an important and significant unique predictor of child achievement. For example, in an analysis of data from several large-scale developmental studies, Duncan and Brooks-Gunn (1997) concluded that maternal education was linked significantly to children's intellectual outcomes even after controlling for a variety of other SES indicators such as household income. Similarly studies have shown that there is clear influence of procrastination on academic achievement. By considering the above findings we could state that mothers play a pivotal role on child's overall performance, educated mothers can better monitor the child's progress in terms of checking their general and academic procrastination habits.

From the table we can observe that there is significant influence procrastination on mathematics performance, social performance and language performance. Studies have shown that academic procrastination behavior is the behavior of avoiding academic duties which cause students have academic failure. Similarly, it can be said that, procrastination behavior in a way causes failure, academic unhappiness and stress. There are many studies showing that students who make academic procrastination face with various negative results of this behavior (Burka and Yuen, 1983; Kandemir, 2010). Academic procrastination behavior have negative results such as academic failure (Burka and Yuen, 1983; Ferrari, Johnson and McCown, 1995; Knaus, 1998), falling behind in the class (Rothblum, Solomon and Murakami, 1986), not attending the school and dropping out the school (Knaus, 1998). Besides the studies in the literature about the extensity and results of academic procrastination, there are various significant studies in the literature about the causality of academic procrastination (Farran, 2004; Fritzsche, Young and Hickson, 2003; Kandemir, 2010). According to these researches, the tendency to postpone decreases when students belief about that they will solve difficult problems increases.

IV. CONCLUSION

A large body of research comprising the procrastination and its effects on academic performance suggests that, there is relationship between procrastination and academic achievement. The main aim of the study was to examine the procrastination and academic performance and a number of distinct demographic variables on procrastination. A Procrastination scale consisting of 20 items was selected, in addition to demographic information was administered on a sample comprising of class 9th and 8th. Student's academic marks were considered as a parameter for academic achievement. Though studies carried out extensively that

emphasized the importance of identifying procrastination and its influence on student's academic performance, there is little documented empirical evidence in the state of Andhra Pradesh. The results of the study were consistent with the findings of the previous literature that students low in academic performance reported higher levels of procrastination. It interesting to note here that the study identified that mother's low educational level would have significant impact on the student's procrastination levels. A limitation of this study is that it only explored a direct influence of demographic variables on procrastination. It is possible that other psychosocial variables, such as social support, SES etc., may influence these parameters.

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