

Correlates of Academic Procastination and Academic Achievement of Undergraduate Students

RADHAKANTA GARTIA*, SUSHAMA SHARMA** AND RAMANA SOOD***

Abstract

Procrastination is now a common phenomenon among students particularly those at the higher level and this is doing more harm to their academic achievement than good. Therefore, the present study was conducted to examine the relationship between academic procrastination and academic achievement of undergraduate students. The study was conducted on a total sample of 90 undergraduate students of Sambalpur, University of Odisha. The adapted version of Tuckman Procrastination Scale (adapted by the investigators) was used for the collection of data. Findings indicated that; a significant correlation was found between academic procrastination and academic achievement of undergraduate students, significant difference also exists in the academic achievement of students having low, moderate and high academic procrastination. Students with low procrastination performed better than the students having moderate and high procrastination. Results further revealed that the subjects procrastinate in the same way irrespective of their gender. Implications of procrastination on academic achievement of students were suggested.

Students are said to be the future of a nation upon which the destiny depends to a large extent. Being the most important factor of a nation's development this section of young and educated population constitutes the crux of human resource. Hence their development holds immense significance in effecting overall development of any nation. One of the commonest problems

worrying to this particular segment of population is the tendency to put things off until the last moment- or to beyond the last moment. However university students are particularly vulnerable to this problem. This problem is called procrastination. Some persons just like to put off taking actions. They never do today what can be put off until tomorrow. Postponement of activities

* Senior Research Fellow (UGC) in the Department of Education, Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra, Haryana.

** Professor, Department of Education, Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra, Haryana.

*** Professor, Department of Education, Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra, Haryana.

is an important hinder in the way of effective time management (Arora, 2002) This behaviour is common among students in the school and college levels (Wolters, 2003). Estimates indicate that 80 per cent to 90 per cent college students engage in procrastination (O'Brien, 2002). Academic procrastination is a form of procrastination peculiar to education (Behnke and Sawyer, 2005). It is regarded as a behaviour pattern that can have particularly serious consequences for students whose academic lives are characterised by frequent deadlines. Obviously, when it turns to our students' lives, procrastination can also cause delay in studying behaviours (Tice and Baumeister, 1997), in drafting works or reports, missing deadlines to hand in papers, and putting of administrative tasks related to academic life, such as returning library books, registering for an exam, and so forth (Scher and Ferrari, 2000). Skipping classes or delaying in handling in works is also consequences of academic procrastination (Scher and Osterman, 2000).

Despite the fact procrastination occurs in all kinds of daily tasks (Alexander and Onwuegbuzie, 2007), academic procrastination is highly frequent in students and is regarded as detrimental to academic progress and success. It is estimated that academic procrastination in tasks related to academic life is a common phenomenon for about 70 per cent of university students (Ferrari et al., 2005). The most frequent consequence of procrastination is poor individual performance (Dewitte and Schouwenburg, 2002).

While much has been studied about procrastination in adults and graduates across academic and non-academic contexts and across individuals in the United States, United Kingdom, and Australia (Ferrari et al., 2005; Ferrari and Scher, 2000; Lee, 2005), there is surprisingly little research exploring this subject in an Asian context (Ang, Klassen, Yeo, Wong, Husan and Chong, 2008). Taking this fact into consideration the investigator made an attempt to study the relationship between academic procrastination and academic achievement of under-graduate students in Indian context.

Objectives of the Study

1. To investigate the academic procrastination of undergraduate students.
2. To investigate the relationship between academic procrastination and academic achievement of undergraduate students.
3. To compare the academic procrastination of male and female under-graduate students.
4. To compare academic achievement of the undergraduate students based on their level of procrastination (low, moderate and high).

Hypotheses of the Study

1. There exists no significant relationship between academic procrastination and academic achievement of undergraduate students.
2. There exists no significant difference in academic procrastination of male and female undergraduate students.

3. There exists no significant difference in academic achievement of the undergraduate students based on their level of procrastination (low, moderate and high).

Method

Participants

A random sample of 90 under-graduate students from three different colleges affiliated to Sambalpur University of Odisha was selected for the present study. The sample consisted of 52 male students and 38 female students.

Measures

In this study Tuckman Procrastination Scale and Personal Information Sheet were used to gather data.

Tuckman Procrastination Scale: The adapted version (adapted by the investigators) of Tuckman Procrastination Scale (2001) was used for collection of the data. The scale has a total of 56 statements. The statements are rated on a 5 point Likert scale with response options of Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Undecided, Agree and Strongly Agree. The adapted scale has a reliability of 0.74.

Demographic Information Sheet: The demographic data of the participants were gathered through Demographic Information Sheet (DIS). DIS includes participants' name, gender, class, streams (Arts/Science/Commerce), date of birth and academic achievement. The participants' performance in last two examinations (1st year and 2nd year of Graduation) was taken from their academic record. This represents the participants' academic achievement scores.

Procedure

First of all permission was taken from the head of the institutions for the collection of data. The purpose of the study was explained to the participants and consent to participate in the study was obtained from all the participants involved. All the participants were administered the adapted version of Tuckman Procrastination Scale and the short demographic measure in an organised classroom setting. The completion lasted approximately 45-50 minutes.

Different statistical techniques were used for the analysis of data. Mean and Standard Deviation were employed to analyse the academic procrastination of under-graduate students. Coefficient of Pearson correlation was utilised to investigate the relationship between academic procrastination and academic achievement. t-test was used to differentiate the academic procrastination of male and female under-graduate students. Difference in the academic achievement of low, moderate, and high academic procrastinators was investigated using t-test.

Results

TABLE 1
Academic Procrastination of
under-graduate students N = 90

| <i>Academic Procrastination Scores</i> | <i>No. of students</i> | <i>Classification</i> |
|--|------------------------|--------------------------|
| Above 173 | 22 | High procrastinators |
| Between 129-173 | 46 | Moderate procrastinators |
| Below 129 | 22 | Low procrastinators |

Table 1 depicts that out of the total 90 under-graduate students 22 students i.e. 24.5 per cent have high level of academic procrastination, 46 students i.e. 51 per cent have moderate level of academic procrastination and the remaining 22 students i.e. 24.5 per cent have low level of academic procrastination.

TABLE 2
Correlation between Academic Procrastination (AP) and Academic Achievement (AA)

| Variables | N | df | r | Level of significance |
|-----------|----|----|------|---------------------------|
| A. P. | 90 | 88 | 0.23 | Significant at 0.05 level |
| A. A. | 90 | | | |

The results of the correlation analysis (Table 2) reveals that there is a negative and significant correlation (0.23) between academic procrastination and academic achievement of under-graduate students. It means as academic procrastination increases, academic achievement decreases.

TABLE 3
Gender difference and Academic Procrastination (AP)

| Variables | N | M | SD | t | Level of significance |
|-----------|----|--------|------|------|------------------------|
| Male | 52 | 151.5 | 25.2 | 1.11 | Not sig. at 0.05 level |
| Female | 38 | 157.26 | 23.4 | | |

Table 3 shows that no gender difference exists in the academic procrastination of male and female under-graduate students. This is shown with t observation (1.11) is less than t-critical at 0.05 level and 88 degree of freedom. Though Female students

were found to have more AP (M=157.26) than Male students, the difference is statistically not significant. This implies that both male and female participants exhibit the same level of academic procrastination.

TABLE 4
Academic achievement of subjects and their levels of Academic Procrastination (AP)

| Levels of AP | N | M | SD | t |
|--------------|----|-------|-------|--------|
| Low AP | 22 | 66.32 | 9.75 | 2.62** |
| Moderate AP | 46 | 59.50 | 10.65 | |
| Low AP | 22 | 66.32 | 9.75 | 3.27** |
| High AP | 22 | 58.59 | 5.32 | |
| Moderate AP | 46 | 59.50 | 10.65 | 0.47** |
| High AP | 22 | 58.59 | 5.32 | |

** Significant at 0.01 level of significance,

NS Not Significant

From the Table 4 above, low procrastinators had a mean academic achievement of 66.32 and a standard deviation of 9.75, while moderate procrastinators had a mean academic achievement of 59.50 and a standard deviation of 10.65. The difference between mean values of two groups (2.62) is statistically significant at 0.01 levels. This indicates that a significant difference exists between the academic achievement of low and moderate procrastinators with low procrastinators performing better than the moderate procrastinators. Furthermore data on the mean academic achievement of low procrastinators (M=66.32, SD=9.75) were compared with those of high procrastinators (M=58.59, SD=5.32). This analysis showed a mean difference of 3.27 which is significant at 0.01 levels. This indicates that the academic achievement of low procrastinators were better than those of high procrastinators.

On the other hand another comparison of mean academic achievement of moderate procrastinators ($M=59.50$, $SD=10.65$) and high procrastinators ($M=58.59$, $SD=5.32$) showed a mean difference of 0.47 which is not significant at 0.05 level. This suggests that the academic achievement of moderate and high procrastinators is not different.

Discussion

The present research examined a) the academic procrastination of undergraduate students, b) the relationship of academic procrastination with academic achievement, c) the difference in academic procrastination of male and female students, d) the difference in academic achievement of low, moderate, and high procrastinators. As a result of the research it is stated that 25 per cent and 51 per cent of the undergraduate students have high and moderate levels of procrastination behaviour respectively. These results reveal that 76 per cent of undergraduate students have academic procrastination behaviour. This result of the present study is consistent with the result of Potts (1987).

Another finding of the present study indicates that academic procrastination is negatively related to academic achievement which is in congruence with the findings of the studies conducted by Balkis and Duru (2009) who found a negative and meaningful correlation between academic procrastination and academic achievement, Tice and Baumeister (1997) and Senecal and Vallerand (1995) also reported that students who have strong tendencies to procrastinate tend to have low examination grades than

non-procrastinators, Popoola (2005), Akinsola and Tella (2007) reported that academic procrastination is associated with poor academic achievement.

The next finding of the present study is that academic procrastination does not differ in respect of gender. The gender differences concerning procrastination behaviour is considerably difficult to envisage (Steel, 2004). By going through the literature on this issue it can be stated that the findings of the studies on the procrastination behaviour-gender relation are inconsistent with each other, while some of the studies reveal that procrastination behaviour does not differ according to gender (Watson, 2001; Hess, Sherman, and Goodman, 2000; Konovalona, 2007; Klassen and Kuzucu, 2009), other studies state procrastination behaviour is seen more in female students (Dolye and Paludi, 1998; Washington, 2004); and other studies claim procrastination behaviour is found more in male students (Balkis and Duru, 2009; Steel, 2007; Hampton, 2005; Prohaska, Morrill, Atilas and Perez, 2000).

The result of the study also indicated that there is a significant difference in the academic achievement of high, low and moderate procrastinators. Students with low procrastination have higher academic achievement than students with moderate and high levels of procrastination.

Educational Implications

The present results, supported by the results of Balkis and Duru (2009), Akinsola and Tella (2007), Popoola (2005) suggested that procrastination should be considered as detrimental to

the academic performance of students. The findings of the present investigation have implications for time management among the undergraduate students. It also suggests some preliminary implications for educational practice.

For a student to be able to confront and control his or her procrastinating behaviour the first stage is to look at self-critically and determine the distractive and incompetence attributes that negates his positive behaviours towards his academic activities. Procrastination as a form of incompetence has to be eliminated in order to cure it (Akinsola and Tella, 2007). Since incompetence is the opposite or lack of competence, the only way to eliminate it is to be replaced with competence (Wikibooks, 2006). Personal competence comprised of five elements: emotional strength, well directed thought, time management skills, control over habits and task completion abilities (Wikibooks, 2006). Improvement on these personal competences is a surest way of overcoming procrastination. Students may be given frequent tests instead of home works. Tuckman (1997) found that when given frequent tests rather than homework assignments, the academic performance of procrastinators improved dramatically, so much so as to move them from the bottom to the top of their class. Also a procrastinator may need to start with the easiest task and proceed from there to a more rigorous and demanding tasks. Success in the easier task is likely to motivate and ginger him to more difficult task and hence building up confidence in his ability to tackle academic matters (Akinsola and Tella, 2007). One of the major reasons

why people avoid the very tasks that free them from mediocrity is their lack of self confidence (Plessis, 2006). For adolescent procrastinators both boys and girls- lack of confidence in ability to perform is a key factor related to high level of task delay (Klassen and Kuzuku, 2009). So measures should be taken to enhance the self confidence of students. Both parents and teachers can play equal role in this case.

Instil in students the skills of self arrangement and time management may serve to decrease procrastination. Therefore, it is thought that organising group work which aims to equip students with the skills and habits of effective time management, planned study, and sensible expectations for academic work and problem solving will be beneficial in decreasing the level of procrastination tendency in students (Balkis and Duru, 2009). Proper time management can be done through the preparation of realistic schedules and keeping to them, prompt execution and submission of assignments, avoidance of working under pressure and persistent study for examinations. Furthermore, the students should use various methods of time management in order to reduce their high level of procrastination. Such methods include defining objectives before activities; detecting and avoiding time wasters; determining to focus on major priorities; developing the habit of do it now rather than postponing every task that needs urgent attention and avoiding being workaholic (Ajayi and Osiki, 2008). Parents could help to prevent procrastination by developing study skills in their children that would allow them to avoid distractions (e.g.,

studying in comfortable, quiet settings, keeping their desk neat, fulfilling a work plan at home, turning off the TV and the cellular phone etc). These aspects could help to increase students' commitment to the tasks and to teach them to postpone gratification, essential dimensions in the promotion of will power competences and prevention of academic procrastination (Rosario, Costa, Nunez, & Pienda 2005). At the same time, achievement expectations can be induced in procrastinators, for example, by performing work plans that include intermediate goals, an adequate work setting, and assigning enough time

to task performance (Rosario et al. 2007). Bill Gates advocating fast tract strategy of life and work in his book "Business at the Speed of Thought" states that, "The 21st century will be an age of fierce competition, therefore one must be just in time for everything- a reform, an experiment, a product, a program, an innovation or a challenge. The education manager must do time management. He must also do crisis management as well as trouble management. He must do it, and should not get sidelined for delay, procrastination, drift indecision, waverliness, a dogmatic attitude, inflexibility and non compromisingness."

REFERENCES

- AJAYI, A. I. & OSIKI, P. M. 2008. Procrastination among the undergraduates in a Nigerian university: Implications for time management. *International Business Management*, 2 (4), 126-131.
- AKINSOLA, M. K. & TELLA, A. 2007. Correlates of academic procrastination and mathematics achievement of university graduate students. *Eurasia Journal of Mathematics, Science and Technology*, 3 (4), 363-370.
- ALEXANDER, E. S. & ONWUEGBUZIE, A. J. 2007. Academic procrastination and the role of hope as a coping strategy. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 42, 1301-1310.
- ANG, P., KLASSEN, M., YEO, L. S., WONG, Y. F., HUSAN, V. S., & CHONG, W. H. 2008. Correlates of academic procrastination and students' grade goals. *Curr Psycho*, 27, 135-144.
- ARORA, RANJANA April-June. 2002. " School Teacher and Practices for better time management", *Educational Herald*, Vol 33 (2): 24-31.
- BALKIS, M. & DURU, E. 2009. Prevalence of academic procrastination behaviour among pre-service teachers, and its relationship with demographics and individual preferences. *Journal of Theory and Practice in Education*. 5 (1), 15-32.
- BESWICK, G., ROTHBLUM, E. D., & MANN, L. 1988. Psychological antecedents of student procrastination. *Australian Psychologist*, 23, 207-217.
- DEWITTE, S., & SCHOUWENBURG, H. 2002. Procrastination, temptation and incentives: The struggle between the present and the future in procrastination and the punctual. *European Journal of Personality*, 16, 469-489.
- FERRARI, J. R., & SCHER, S. J. 2000. Toward an understanding of academic and non-academic tasks procrastinated by students: The use of daily logs. *Psychology in the Schools*, 37, 359-366.
- FERRARI, J.R., O'CALLAGHAN, J., & NEWBEGIN, I. 2005. Prevalence of procrastination in the United States, United Kingdom, and Australia: Arousal and avoidance delays among

- adults. *North American Journal of Psychology*, 7, 1-6.
- FRITZSCHE, B. A., YOUNG, B. R., & HICKSON, K. C. 2003. Individual differences in academic procrastination tendency and writing success. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 35, 1549-1557.
- HAMPTON, A. E. 2005. Locus of control and procrastination. Online at: <http://www.capital.edu/68/Arts-and-Sciences/23608/>
- HAYCOCK, L., MCCARTHY, P., & SKAY, C. 1998. Procrastination in college students: The role of self-efficacy and anxiety. *Journal of Counselling and Development*, 76, 317-324.
- HESS, B., SHERMAN, M. F., & GOODMAN, M. 2000. Eveningness predicts academic procrastination: The mediating role of neuroticism. *Journal of Social Behaviour and Personality*, 15(5), 61-74.
- KLASSEN, R. M., & KUZUKU, E. 2009. Academic procrastination and motivation of adolescents in Turkey. *Educational Psychology*, 29 (1), 69-81.
- KONOVALOVA, L. 2007. Gender and age differences in academic procrastination, task aversiveness and fear of failure. Presented at the 87th annual Western Psychological Association Convention, May 3-6, 2007, Vancouver, Canada.
- LAY, C.H., & SCHOUWENBURG, H.C. 1993. Trait procrastination, time management, and academic behaviour. *Journal of Social Behaviour and Personality*, 8, 647-662.
- LEE, E. 2005. The relationship of motivation and flow experience to academic procrastination in university students. *The Journal of Genetic Psychology*, 166, 5-14.
- O'BRIEN, W. K. 2002. Applying the trans-theoretical model to academic procrastination. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Houston.
- PLESSIS, D. 2006. Self confidence, fear and the inevitable procrastination. Retrieved at <http://www.self-improvement-gym.com> on 11th November 2006.
- POPOOLA, B.I. 2005. A study of the relationship between procrastinatory behaviour and academic performance of graduate students in a Nigerian University. *African Symposium: An Online Journal of Educational Research Network*. Available at <http://www2.ncsu.edu/ncsu/aern/TAS5.1.htm>
- PROHASKA, V., MORRILL, P., ATILES, I., & PEREZ, A. 2000. Academic procrastination by non-traditional students. *Journal of Social Behaviour and Personality*, 15, 125-134.
- POTTS, T. J. 1987. Predicting Procrastination on Academic Tasks with Self report Personality Measures. Unpublished PhD Dissertation, Hofstra University, New York.
- ROSARIO, P., COSTA, M., NUNEZ, J. C., & PIENDA, J. G. 2009. Academic procrastination: Association with personal, school and family variables. *The Spanish Journal of Psychology*, 12 (1), 118-127.
- SCHER, S., & FERRARI, J. 2000. The recall of completed and non-completed tasks through daily logs to measure procrastination. *Journal of Social Behaviour and Personality*, 15, 255-265.
- SCHER, S., & OSTERMAN, N. 2002. Procrastination, conscientiousness, anxiety, and goals: Exploring the measurement and correlates of procrastination among school-aged children. *Psychology in the Schools*, 39, 385-398.
- SENECAL, C., KOESTNER, R., & VALERAND, R. J. 1995. Self-regulation and academic procrastination. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 135 (5), 607-619.
- SOLOMON, L. J., & ROTHBLUM, E. D. 1984. Academic procrastination: Frequency and cognitive-behavioral correlates. *Journal of Counselling Psychology*, 31, 503-509.
- STEEL, P. 2004. The nature of procrastination: A meta analytic study. Retrieved from http://www.ucalgary.ca/mg/research/media/2003_07.pdf

- STEEL, P. 2007. The nature of procrastination: A meta-analytic and theoretical review of quintessential self-regulatory failure. *Psychological Bulletin*, 133, 65–94.
- TICE, D., & BAUMEISTER, R. 1997. Longitudinal study of procrastination, performance, stress, and health: The costs and benefits of dawdling. *Psychological Science*, 8, 454-458.
- TUCKMAN, B.W. 1991. The development and concurrent validity of the Procrastination Scale. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 51, 473–480.
- TUCKMAN, B. W. 1997 Using tests as an incentive to motivate procrastinators to study. *Journal of Experimental Education*, 66, 141-147.
- TUCKMAN, B.W. 2002. Academic procrastinator: Their rationalisations and web-course performance. APA Symposium Paper, Chicago, IL.
- WASHINGTON, J.A. 2004. The Relationship between Procrastination and Depression among Graduate and Professional Students across Academic Programs: Implications for Counselling. Unpublished Ph.D Dissertation, Texas Southern University. Texas.
- WATSON, D. C. 2001. Procrastination and the five-factor model: A facet level analysis. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 30, 149–158.
- WIKIBOOKS. 2006. Overcoming Procrastination/Causes. Retrieved from: http://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Overcoming_Procrastination
- WOLTERS, C. A. 2003. Understanding procrastination from a self-regulated learning perspective. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 95 (1), 179-187.