

A Study on the Reasons of Academic Procrastination among College Students

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ABSTRACT: Academic procrastination is often seen among college students at each academic level. It includes underestimating the time needed to complete an academic task, excuses for poor performance in a task, missing deadlines to important tasks like submission of assignments, projects, preparation for exams, etc. Most students were not aware of their postponing behavior and unintentionally delay the task. Since the college students are packed with different academic tasks that are needed to be accomplished within the designated time frame, but students fail to complete their tasks on time due to many reasons such as the influence of technology, use of social media, peer pressure, and overload of work, etc. The present study was an attempt to study the academic procrastination among College students of Jorhat, Assam, India in the year 2020. The study was conducted on 199 numbers of undergraduate students from Ist year, IInd year, IIIrd year and IVth year selected with the help of Solvin's formula and proportionate allocation. In this study apart from the standard tool i.e. Procrastination Assessment Scale for Students (PASS)", an interview schedule was used to check the background information of the respondents and other reasons leading towards academic procrastination among students. According to the results, it was found that respondents were high and low procrastinators due to various reasons such as 68.9 percent were high procrastinators as they waited until a classmate did his or hers so that he or she could give some advice (dependency). On the other hand, 72.8 percent were found to be low procrastinators in the task look forward to the excitement of doing the task at the last minute (risk-taking). Therefore understanding and determining the reasons that are leading towards academic procrastination will help the students in decreasing their delaying behavior.

Keywords: Academic procrastination, Reasons, College students.

INTRODUCTION

Academic procrastination is voluntarily or needlessly delaying an academic task to an indefinite time, which is needed to be completed at an assigned time. Studies show that most university students procrastinate in their academic situations because they believe it is a characteristic of their academic activities (Karmen *et al.*, 2015) also Argiropoulou & Ferrari, (2014) revealed that 75% of students postponed their tasks frequently due to academic difficulties. College students need to devote most of their time to completing different academic-related tasks like submitting assignments, projects, writing papers, note-making, participating in extracurricular activities, etc so they intentionally or unintentionally engage in delaying behavior as they need to complete all the tasks within a short period. Khan *et al.*, (2015) also find that these behaviors are very common among university students as they have a

multitude of academic requirements like research work, engaging in group discussion, etc. Students generally procrastinate for various reasons such as lack of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, communication gap, illness, too much work, lack of guidance, home environments, lack of coordination, work inability, unseen problem, teacher's attitude, perfectionism, negative comment, task aversiveness, dependence on technology and others. Abdi Zarrin and Gracia (2020) revealed that due to fear of failure female students procrastinate more compared to male students in their academic tasks. Too much use of the internet, laziness, task aversiveness, personal and situational anxiety, forgetting about the task, life satisfaction, low self-esteem, lack of sincerity, depression also influences the student to put off their task into indefinite time (Bashir, 2019; Wirajaya, 2020; He, 2017; Afzal and Jami, 2018; Ojo, 2019; Aziz, & Tariq, 2013; Uzun Ozer *et al.*,

2014; Rothblum *et al.* (1986). Whereas Zacks & Hen (2018) stated that due to deficits in self-regulation respondents are often unable to complete their assigned task within deadline.

Behavioral psychologists revealed that time inconsistency is also one of the reasons why individuals procrastinate more, as it influences the human mind to value more in instant gratification than future rewards. Procrastinators may delay in deciding to start the task but meanwhile, individuals gather the information that is needed to finish the task, it also makes the individual more creative, helps in re-evaluating the unnecessary tasks leads to better apologies.

In respect to academic procrastination and academic performance, there are four different types of academic procrastinators on academic-related tasks those are inconspicuous, successful pressure seeker, worried, and discontent with studies (Grunschel *et al.*, 2013). The inconspicuous and successful pressure seeker types of procrastinators were not negatively affected due to academic delay and show less academic procrastination. These types of procrastinators don't face any psychological pressure like depression, frustration as they were purposeful procrastinators and they were aware of their study activities and believe in their strength to complete the task before the deadline (Visser *et al.* 2018). On the other hand, worried and discontent with studies types of procrastinators shows a high amount of academic procrastination and they mostly face some psychological pressure (Grunschel *et al.* 2013). Hen, & Goroshit, (2020) revealed that some students delay in their tasks for immediate emotional relief which is followed by negative outcomes leading them to change their postponing behavior.

Although academic procrastination is not always a problem, but when students needlessly delay learning activities it may create undesirable stress, anxiety, frustration, and prevent them from achieving their developmental tasks. Studies show that it creates negative consequences such as low academic performance, academic life satisfaction, and withdrawal from courses. Visser *et al.*, (2015) revealed that students who repeatedly delay in their tasks received lower grades in their exams (Steel, 2007). By using some strategies like motivational regulation will help in reducing the behavior, but for that students have to be aware of their postponing behavior (Grunschel *et al.*, 2016). So, understanding the reasons causing academic procrastination will be beneficial for the students to overcome their procrastinating behavior. The present study was conducted to assess the reasons that are contributing to academic procrastination among College students.

Justification. Now a day's academic procrastination is very common among students. Most students were unaware of their procrastination behavior and unintentionally they make excuses for delaying the task. These affect their real performance in learning

processes. Understanding and determining the reasons that are leading towards academic procrastination can help the students in decreasing this behavior. The main aim of this research is to determine the reasons where students mostly procrastinate, as the researcher observed that there is a frequent occurrence of postponing the task amongst students in assignments, group work, presentation, participation in activities, as the researcher even found doing the same. Therefore, identifying the reasons will help the individual to overcome such behavior and face the reality. Although various researches had been carried out in India and abroad on academic procrastination, but very few studies have been conducted in Assam. Therefore the present study has been undertaken at Jorhat district to see the prevalence of academic procrastination among students.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was carried out in the Jorhat district of Assam. The sampling procedure used in the study was probability sampling where 199 students (as sample) were selected from the College of Agriculture and College of Community Science, Jorhat by using Solvin's formula and proportionate allocation.

Tools used: A standardized tool namely "Procrastination Assessment Scale for Students (PASS)" developed by Solomon & Rothblum, (1984) was used to assess the reasons leading towards academic procrastination among students, and an interview schedule was prepared for collecting background information of the respondents and checking their awareness about the term academic procrastination.

Scoring: Mean and standard deviation was used to measure the reasons for procrastination. The score above Mean + Standard deviation was grouped as high procrastinator and the scores below Mean - Standard deviation was grouped as a low procrastinator. There is no middle range in reasons for procrastination. Mean and Standard deviation was calculated by using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section deals with the reasons due to which respondents failed to complete their task at an assigned time. The findings (Table 1) demonstrated that the majority (52.3%) of the respondents have no evaluation anxiety as respondents were not concerned that the professor wouldn't like the work. It may be because respondents were more concerned about completing the task at an assigned time so they are not worrying about other aspects like whether the professor would like their work or not on the other hand 52.2 percent were high procrastinators in the task that, they would get a bad grade.

Table 1: Distribution of respondent according to Reasons for procrastination.

Sr. No.	Reasons for procrastination	Items	Mean	S.D	Range	Total samples (N= 199)	
						High procrastinator	Low Procrastinator
1.	Evaluation anxiety	Concerned that professor wouldn't like the work.	2.32	1.14	3-5 (High) 2-1 (Low)	47.7%	52.3%
		Worried about getting a bad grade.	2.55	1.03	3-5 (High) 2-1 (Low)	52.2%	47.8%
2.	Dependency	Waited until a classmate did his/hers, so that he/she could give some advice.	2.64	1.02	3-5 (High) 2-1 (Low)	68.9%	31.1%
		Waited to see if the professor would give some more information about the paper.	2.85	1.30	4-5 (High) 3-1 (Low)	29.2%	70.8%
3.	Difficulty making decisions	Hard time knowing what to include and what not to include in paper.	2.90	.94	3-5 (High) 2-1 (Low)	68.8%	31.2%
		Couldn't choose among all the topics.	2.60	1.01	3-5 (High) 2-1 (Low)	52.7%	47.3%
4.	Time management	Had too many other things to do.	2.74	1.19	3-5 (High) 2-1 (Low)	59.7%	40.3%
		Felt overwhelmed by the task.	2.82	1.11	3-5 (High) 2-1 (Low)	63.9%	36.1%
5.	Lack of assertion	There's some information needed to ask professor, but felt uncomfortable approaching him/her.	2.79	1.07	3-5 (High) 2-1 (Low)	66.4%	33.6%
		Had difficulty requesting information from other people.	3.02	2.36	3-5 (High) 2-1 (Low)	65.3 %	34.7%
6.	Rebellion against control	Resented having to do things assigned by others.	2.27	1.20	3-5 (High) 2-1 (Low)	47.8%	52.2%
		Resented people setting deadlines.	2.40	1.02	3-5 (High) 2-1 (Low)	49.8%	50.2%
7.	Low self esteem	Didn't think know enough to write the paper.	2.70	1.11	3-5 (High) 2-1 (Low)	55.8%	44.2%
		Didn't trust oneself can do a good job.	2.42	1.16	3-5 (High) 2-1 (Low)	47.8%	52.2%
8.	Aversiveness of task	Really disliked writing term papers.	2.62	1.26	3-5 (High) 2-1 (Low)	52.7%	47.3%
		Felt it just takes too long to write a term paper.	2.64	1.26	3-5 (High) 2-1 (Low)	50.8%	49.2%
9.	Risk taking	Looked forward to the excitement of doing this task at the last minute.	2.91	1.20	4-5 (High) 3-1 (Low)	27.2%	72.8%
		Liked the challenge of waiting until the deadline.	2.52	1.32	3-5 (High) 2-1 (Low)	50.26%	49.7%
10.	Fear of success	Concerned that if did well, classmates would resent.	2.39	1.09	3-5 (High) 2-1 (Low)	58.3%	41.7%
		Were concerned that if got a good grade, people would have higher expectations in the future.	2.41	1.29	3-5 (High) 2-1 (Low)	50.2%	49.8%
11.	Laziness	Didn't have enough energy to begin the task.	2.35	1.14	3-5 (High) 2-1 (Low)	45.8%	54.2%
		Just felt too lazy to write a term paper.	2.58	1.11	3-5 (High) 2-1 (Low)	60.8%	39.2%
12.	Peer pressure	Knew that classmates hadn't started the paper either.	2.62	.98	3-5 (High) 2-1 (Low)	56.3%	43.7%
		Friends were pressuring to do other thing.	2.32	1.13	3-5 (High) 2-1 (Low)	51.8%	48.2%
13.	Perfectionism	Were concerned wouldn't meet own expectations.	2.51	1.02	3-5 (High) 2-1 (Low)	56.7%	43.3%
		Set very high standards and worried that wouldn't be able to meet those standards.	2.32	1.26	3-5 (High) 2-1 (Low)	44.7%	55.3%

It can be assumed that due to a high level of evaluation anxiety some respondents spend more time worrying about the task rather than starting the task and the evaluation anxiety is often associated with high expectations of others as well as from their own. These findings can also be supported by the study of

Saplavska and Jerkunkova (2018) who revealed that there is a positive correlation between academic procrastination and anxiety among students. Also, procrastination is related to either anxiety or poor efficacy expectations which influence the individual to constantly delay in the implementation and starting the

plan accomplish the tasks at the very last minute when the deadline is approaching and one should understand that it is useless, to try to cope up with the already wasted time.

It can be inferred from the results that due to the reason dependency 68.9 percent were high procrastinators as they have waited until a classmate did his/hers so they could get some advice. It may be attributed to the fact that now-a-days students were more dependent on friends, teachers or on the internet so that without doing much self-study and giving less effort they can easily copy from others and use their time on other activities. As a result, they keep on waiting for classmates or professors to get important notes or advice to complete the assigned task. Tezer *et al.*, (2020) also revealed that usage of internet leads towards academic procrastination among students and significantly GPA of the students decrease. But 70.8 percent were low procrastinators as respondents reported they didn't procrastinate due to the task that waited to see if the professor would give some more information about the paper. This may be because the respondents knew that they have to submit before the deadline, therefore, they do not wait for additional support from the professor. This can be supported by the study of Klassen *et al.* (2008) which shows that self-efficiency acted as a motivating factor for self-regulation which helps the respondents to get rid of distractions, develop realistic and interesting strategies that improve learning and help in completion of the task within the allocated time.

In the present study Table 1 it was found that 68.8 percent showed high procrastination as respondents had a hard time knowing what to include and what not to include in their paper while 52.7 percent were also high procrastinators as they couldn't choose among all the topics. This may be due to the difficulty in making a decision, which is associated with anxiety and fear. Students worry about making a mistake and many times feel confused about how to complete the task. Sometimes due to an overload of a task, they failed to select the important task and keep on delaying the assigned task till the last minute. This can be supported by the study of Santosa (2017) which shows that higher scores in decisions making lead to lower scores on academic procrastination.

Results indicated that 59.7 percent were high procrastinators as they had too many other things to do and 63.9 percent also highly procrastinated because they felt overwhelmed by the task. This may be due to poor time management skills where respondents face difficulties in managing their time wisely which affects their goal and objectives to determine which task is more important than others, therefore respondents postpone doing academic tasks to a later date. These findings can be supported by conflict theory, which revealed procrastination includes severe decisional conflict coupled with pessimism about finding a satisfactory solution to the problem. So, procrastination is a means of dealing with conflict and the difficulty of

decision-making. Also Roshanisefat *et al.*, (2021) revealed that improper time management skills and test anxiety of the individuals are positively associated to academic procrastination.

Findings revealed that 66.4 percent were high procrastinators as respondents need to ask for some information from the professor but felt uncomfortable approaching them also 65.3 percent revealed they were high procrastinators as they face difficulty requesting information from other people. It may be due to lack of assertion and shyness students kept on hesitating to ask their doubts to others and choose to put off the task till the deadline.

Data revealed that 52.2 percent were low procrastinators as the respondents revealed that they didn't procrastinate due to the task resented having to do things assigned by others and 50.2 percent were also low procrastinators as respondents reported they didn't delay in the academic task due to people setting deadlines for them. This may be because respondents did not think of it as an obligation and they did not feel bad when people assigned some task and set a deadline for any submission and hence they try to be more focused on completing the task and submit timely rather, which helps in increasing their performance level.

Results indicated that 55.8 percent of the students reported a high level of procrastination as they felt that they did not have enough knowledge to write a term paper. This may be because students may delay in completing a task because of self-doubt. They assume themselves to be incapable to complete the assigned task by others; a few of them are not confident about their knowledge on the topic and hence keep on procrastinating. This can be supported by the study of William *et al.*, (2008) which showed that procrastination is caused by a negative self-view where the individual is not confident about their abilities. But 52.2 percent were found low procrastinators as the respondents revealed that they didn't procrastinate due to the task that they didn't trust themselves that they can do a good job. It is because Individuals with high self-efficacy were found to have higher self-esteem which helps in increasing the confidence level in confronting the challenges associated with the task. Also, Wolters and Benzion, (2013) revealed that persons with self-regulation abilities tend to have a high desire for goal mastery, adaptive motivational attitudes, and beliefs towards achieving desire, so there is a low chance of delaying a task.

As shown in Table 1, respondents were highly procrastinated in writing term papers (52.7%) as they really dislike writing term papers while 50.8 percent were also high procrastinators as it took too long to write a term paper. Aversiveness of the task is the reason for their procrastination, which is related to the behavioral delay due to the feeling of dislikeness or unpleasantness towards the activity. This finding can be supported by the study of Huang and Golman (2019)

who found that students are more likely to postpone the tasks than when they find less enjoyable. Also Bytamar *et al.*, (2020) revealed that procrastinator who find that task aversive tends to regulate negative emotions to the assigned task.

According to the results, 72.8 percent were low procrastinators as the respondent revealed that they didn't procrastinate due to the task looking forward to the excitement of doing the task at the last minute. It can be attributed to the fact that individuals who have mastered the Temporal Motivation Theory were intrinsically motivated and try to complete their tasks on time for greater self-satisfaction and they try to achieve short terms rewards for good academic results (Howell and Watson, 2007). However, 50.26 percent with high procrastinators tend to like the challenge of waiting until the deadline. It may be because respondents believe they perform better under immense pressure when anxiety is at its peak, as thrill enhances the flavor to the task so they habitually delayed the task.

Table 1 revealed that 58.3 percent were high procrastinators as respondents were concerned if they did well their classmates would resent them and 50.2 percent were also high procrastinators because they were concerned that if they got a good grade other people would have higher expectations in the future. It may be because respondents were worried about what their friends will think if they do good in their task and were afraid of receiving negative comments from them. Also due to fear of success, which is associated with anxiety about meeting others' expectations as well as their own standards, people often lose their self-confidence and start to avoid the task. This can be supported by the study of Fatimah *et al.*, (2011) who found that students tend to procrastinate or delay the starting or finishing the tasks and even lose the ability to even perform up to their potential when the known evaluation will be done.

Results highlighted that 54.2 percent were low procrastinators as the respondents revealed that they didn't procrastinate due to the task didn't have enough energy to begin the task. This may be because respondents know that feeling lethargic is a sign of procrastination and it may lead to depression when they will fail to complete the task before the deadline, so they don't allow themselves to fall into the trap of procrastination. But 60.8 percent were found high procrastinators as they felt too lazy to write a term paper. It may be because to write a term paper individuals need some time for self-learning but after completing all the classes, extra circular activities students feel lazy to start a new task so they postpone their academic tasks for the next day, and when the day comes, they again can't do as they are assigned with another new task and thus the list of tasks gets accumulated. This may be supported by the study of Dautov (2020) which shows that procrastination makes students feel lazy and due to capability deficiency

individuals tends to develop delaying tendencies which leads to low academic performance.

It was clear from the results that 56.3 percent were high procrastinators as they knew that their classmates hadn't started the paper either. It may be because respondents know that if they complete the paper first their other classmate will ask for it as a reference and many of them would try to copy it and if the respondent refuses to give, they will become unpopular among their friends and many a time conflict also arises so they put off the task. On the other hand, 51.8 percent were also high procrastinators as respondents' friends were pressuring them to do other things. Due to peer pressure, respondents get distracted from their goals and lose motivation to start their important tasks which influences them to utilize their valuable time in non-productive work. Also, peer pressure is considered as a mediator between self-esteem and procrastination habits of individuals. In order to be accepted by their peers, students with low self-esteem may be more likely to be influenced by their peers to satisfy their needs. As a result, respondents stop their work which they were supposed to complete before the deadline This can be supported by the study of Bukowski *et al.*, (2008) which revealed that a lower level of self-esteem is associated with higher susceptibility to peer pressure. Also Ocansey *et al.*, (2020) revealed that delaying behavior is associated that openness, consciousness and agreeableness of the individual as students know that their peer is much more important than that of the assigned task so without giving second thought they put-off their task to the later.

Results in Table 1 show that the majority (56.7%) were high procrastinators as they were concerned if they wouldn't meet their own expectations. It may be because of unrealistic expectations or a sense of perfectionism which is occurred in three forms: first is self-oriented perfectionism where people places high standard for themselves, second is other-oriented perfectionism where people place a high standard for other people and third is socially direct perfectionism occurs when people allow others to place high standards on them. In the present study also, students pre-assumed to make their tasks "perfect", nervous about making mistakes or messing them up, which leads towards irrational behavior of avoiding the task even more as the deadline approaches. This can be supported by the study of Jadidi *et al.*, (2011) which shows that there is a positive correlation between academic procrastination and perfectionism. But 55.3 percent were found low procrastinators as respondents revealed that they didn't procrastinate due to the task setting very high standards for themselves and worried that wouldn't be able to meet those standards. This may be because of self-control, which reflects the respondent's ability to regulate their own behavior so that they can follow through with their intentions, and take necessary action which will help in completing the task.

CONCLUSION

Identifying the reasons leading towards academic procrastination will help the individual to overcome such behavior and complete their work within the stipulated time frame. Using strategy and interventions will help the individual to break the never-ending delay of the task. Some of the interventions are activity scheduling, training in mindfulness, etc which will help to alleviate the negative consequences and make individuals believe in themselves, avoid distractions and get desirable success.

Limitations and challenges of the study

1. The study was undertaken only in two colleges i.e College of Community Science and College of Agriculture.
2. The study was confined to undergraduates only.
3. Individual observations for data collection were not possible.
4. Respondents were not willing to give sufficient time to collect information.

Recommendations for further study

1. A similar study can be performed with higher-level students.
2. The workshop can be arranged so that students were made aware of the reasons behind their postponing behavior.
3. The study can be done with more number so respondents from different schools, colleges, universities covering other districts.
4. In the future academic procrastination can be measured with other variables like stress, personality characteristics, etc.

Implications: During the data, collection the researcher found that most of the respondents were not aware of the term academic procrastination and students encountered lots of trouble due to their delaying behavior.

So researcher organized some workshops emphasizing overcoming procrastination so that more students were made aware of their procrastination behavior, its negative impact, and how they can overcome such habits. As a result more students definitely want to decrease their delaying behavior.

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