

## **Academic Procrastination: An Exploration for the Cause at University Level**

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### **Abstract**

Academic Procrastination is an attitude of delaying academic tasks without having any logical and conscious cause. It is a universal phenomenon that exists among the general population. The present study is an attempt to identify the academic areas in which students procrastinate at university level along with finding out the cause of Academic Procrastination. For sampling, two-stage Cluster Random Sampling Technique was used. Mainly, four departments from the Faculty of Social Sciences (Education, Psychology, Sociology, and Political Science) at University of the Punjab were randomly selected. These four sampled departments were considered as cluster for the study and all the enrolled students studying at MS/M.Phil. level were contacted for data collection. Total sample size included 78 students. PASS was adopted for data collection. Findings of the study revealed that the students at University level have moderate level of Procrastination. The major causes of Academic Procrastination are Dependency, Poor Self Confidence, Idleness, Denial, Fear to Success, Poor Time Management and Lack of Risk-Taking. Study recommended that students must be aware of the negative impacts of the phenomenon of academic procrastination.

**Keywords:** *Academic Procrastination, University Level, Research, Education, Assignment*

### **1. Introduction**

Scholars and researchers have classified/defined procrastination in multiple perspectives. According to Steel (2007) procrastination is one of the less explored phenomenon and most of the work done on this phenomenon is hypothetical/theoretical rather than practical findings or work. Studies (Andreou, 2007; Simpson & Pychyl, 2009; Steel, 2007) showed that procrastination is unjustified delay in work and the consequences will be not in favor. Abbasi and Alghamdi (2015); Steel (2007) supports the findings that when deadline of

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certain work approaches students give lame excuses and most of the times unable to complete task in provided time. Stead, Shanahan and Neufeld (2010) defined procrastination as a mind-set or mental disorder which is most of the times unavoidable. Schouwenburg (2004) explained procrastination as that the activity performed is different from the activity planned which has no link with laziness. Shafran and Mansell (2001) said that perfectionism is a phenomenon which is most of the time unachievable that is why a task which is planned is delayed or remain incomplete. (Ferrari & Tice, 2000; Knaus, 2000) were of the view that procrastination is a phenomenon which results in delaying, postponing or holding up a task. Moreover, procrastination is avoidable and of constant phenomenon experienced by many students. Academic procrastination is avoiding a task which is mandatory to be performed (Andreou, 2007; Steel, 2007) academic procrastination is one of the habit to protect one's self-respect (Lee, 2005).

### **1.1 Rationale of the Study**

As the phenomenon of Academic Procrastination is connected and associated with the Academic Achievement of the students and in its extreme consequences this act of delaying the academic task may ruin the career of a student, the current study was an attempt to explore the Academic Tasks for which students procrastinate the most, at university level with an effort to identify the causes of Academic procrastination.

### **1.2 Objectives of the Study**

Followings were the objectives of the study;

1. To find out the level of students' Academic Procrastination
2. To identify causes of Academic Procrastination

## **2. Review of Literature**

A bulk of researches has been done to find out the relationship between academic Procrastination and Academic Achievement. It is evident from relevant literature that an inverse relationship exists between them. Researchers in the field of education have consensus on the debate by concluding that Academic Procrastination is simply the wastage of time as it can be classified as self-handicapping behaviour, leading the students towards amplified level of stress and poor performance in academics (Ozer, 2011; Solomon & Rothblum, 1984; Tice & Baumeister, 1997; Wang & Englander, 2010).

Anxiety, stress and phobia related to examination are negatively correlated with the students' performance and academics. It is interpreted by Onwuegbuzie and Wilson (2003) that approximately 80% of university level students perform badly in exams because of examination phobia. This examination phobia is closely linked with the attitude of delay or procrastination. Noran (2000)

concluded that Procrastinators continuously plan and do projecting rather than achieving their objectives and always feel evaluation anxiety.

According to another discussion perfectionists are the people who set high expectations with their work (Burns, 1980; Flett & Hewitt 2002; Frost, Marten, Lahart & Rosenblate, 1990). Linkage between procrastination and Perfectionism remained an interest of the researcher for a long time as Burka and Yuen (1983) observed that tendency to wish constant success in career and always try to be the best are the factors that may cause delay in the working of an intellectual. Procrastination makes individuals irresponsible regarding their duties, set plans and decisions. Procrastinators avoid implementation of their decisions, break already objectives and postpone the plans up to the maximum limit (Beheshtifar & Nasab, 2012; Dilmac, 2009).

Many other causes have been identified by the researchers that may cause delaying attitude among graduates and under-graduate students. Fear of failure (Burns et al., 2000; Ferrari, 2001; Solomon & Rothblum, 1984), High Frustration Level (Chang & Zurilla, 2007; Harrington, 2006; Hoffrogge, 2001; McDermut, Haaga, & Bilek, 2002; Stankovic & Gvozden, 2011), Idleness (Grunschel, Patrzek, & Fries, 2013; Neil, 2007; Steel, 2010), Poor Time Management (Noran, 2000; Vodanovich & Seib, 1997), Peer Influence (Ammermueller & Pischke, 2009; Graham, 2008; Hoxby & Weingarth, 2006; Hoxby 2000; McEwan, 2003; Sacerdot, 2001; Zimmerman, 2003), Poor Self-Confidence (Hermann, Leonardelli & Arkin, 2002; Plessis, 2006).

### **3. Research Methodology**

#### **3.1 Population and Sampling**

For sampling, Two-stage Cluster Random Sampling Technique was used. Mainly, four departments from the Faculty of Social Sciences (Education, Psychology, Sociology, and Political Science) at University of the Punjab were randomly selected keeping in view the available financial and time resources. These four sampled departments were considered as cluster for the study and all the enrolled students studying at MS/M.Phil. level were contacted for data collection. Total sample size for the current study was 78 students.

#### **3.2 Tools of the Study**

PASS (Procrastination Assessment Scale for Students) was adapted as a tool for data collection. PASS part-I helped to determine the students' level of academic procrastination. PASS part-II helped to explore the causes of students' Academic Procrastination. PASS (Procrastination Assessment Scale for Students) was developed by Solomon and Rothblum in 1984 having 66 statements in its

three section. First two sections of PASS were adapted as per need of the present study.

### 3.3 Validity & Reliability

Experts were contacted to ensure the validity of the tool. And reliability of the amended tool was scored on SPSS by applying Cronbach Alpha formula. The overall value of reliability was 0.88 and was considered as an acceptable value according to the interpretation of Landau and Everit (2004). They suggested that a reliable tool has above .70 value of reliability. The degree of reliability of the sub-scales was also measured. The value of reliability for part-1 of PASS was .79 and for part-II of PASS was .81, which were considered as acceptable values in the light of interpretation provided by De Vellis (1991), who suggested that a reliable tool has an above 0.50 reliability value for sub-scales.

### 4. Data Analysis

Table 1: Level of Academic Procrastination in Five Tasks

Tasks		Level of Academic Procrastination			
		Low	Moderate	High	Total
Research Oriented Tasks	F	2	49	27	78
	P	2.56	62.82	34.62	100
Preparation for Exams	F	4	64	10	78
	P	5.13	82.05	12.82	100
Assignments during Course	F	2	58	18	78
	P	2.56	74.36	23.08	100
Administrative Tasks related to Academics	F	1	51	26	78
	P	1.28	65.38	33.33	100
Course Attendance	F	1	43	34	78
	P	1.28	55.13	43.59	100

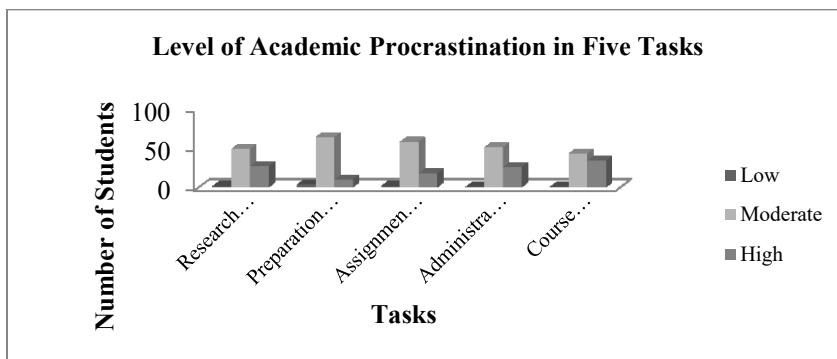


Figure 1: Level of Academic Procrastination in Five Tasks

Table 1 and Figure 1 showed the f (frequency) and p (percentage) values regarding level of Academic Procrastination in five identified tasks. Data showed that majority of the students are Moderate Procrastinators, 62.82% in Research Oriented Tasks; 82.05% in Preparation for Exams; 74.36 % in Assignments during Course; 65.38 in Administrative Tasks related to Academics; 55.13% in Course Attendance.

Table 2: Causes of Academic Procrastination

Factors of Academic Procrastination	r	Sig. (2-tailed)	B	Sig. (2-tailed)
Exam Phobia	.729	.000***	.312	.905
Perfectionism	.762	.000***	.185	.155
Poor Decision Making Ability	.128	.000***	.006	.871
Dependency	.551	.000***	.606	.030*
High Frustration Level	.522	.000***	.056	.444
Poor Self-Confidence	.781	.000***	.175	.012*
Idleness	.786	.000***	.219	.003**
Denial	.786	.000***	.206	.002**
Fear of Success	.808	.000***	.354	.000***
Poor Time Management	.600	.000***	.010	.029*
Rebel for Control	.700	.000***	.110	.078
Lack of Risk-Taking	.312	.000***	.130	.039*
Peer Influence	.305	.000***	.014	.814
Multiple Correlation R	.751	.000***		
R <sup>2</sup>	.702			

In table 2, Values of Pearson Correlation illustrated that identified causes have significant positive correlation with Academic Procrastination, Examination Phobia ( $r = .729$ ,  $p\text{-value} = .000 < .001$ ), Perfectionism ( $r = .762$ ,  $p\text{-value} = .000 < .001$ ), Poor Decision Making Ability ( $r = .128$ ,  $p\text{-value} = .000 < .001$ ), Dependency ( $r = .551$ ,  $p\text{-value} = .000 < .001$ ), High Frustration Level ( $r = .522$ ,  $p\text{-value} = .000 < .001$ ), Poor Self Confidence ( $r = .781$ ,  $p\text{-value} = .000 < .001$ ), Idleness ( $r = .786$ ,  $p\text{-value} = .000 < .001$ ), Denial ( $r = .786$ ,  $p\text{-value} = .000 < .001$ ), Fear of Success ( $r = .808$ ,  $p\text{-value} = .000 < .001$ ), Poor Time Management ( $r = .600$ ,  $p\text{-value} = .000 < .001$ ), Rebel for Control ( $r = .700$ ,  $p\text{-value} = .000 < .001$ ), Lack of Risk Taking ( $r = .312$ ,  $p\text{-value} = .000 < .001$ ) and Peer Influence ( $r = .305$ ,  $p\text{-value} = .000 < .001$ ). Moreover, this positive calculated correlation predicts that increase in any of these causes may increase the overall level of Academic Procrastination among students at university level; likewise decrease in any of these identified causes may minimize the level of Academic Procrastination among students at university level. These values of correlation are significant at 95% level of confidence.

The standardized regression weights indicate that seven causes Dependency ( $\beta .606$ ,  $p = .030 < 0.05$ ), Poor Self Confidence ( $\beta .175$ ,  $p = .012 < 0.05$ ), Idleness

( $\beta$  .219,  $p = .003 < 0.01$ ), Denial ( $\beta$  .206,  $p = .002 < 0.01$ ), Fear to Success ( $\beta$  .354,  $p = 0.000 < 0.01$ ), Poor Time Management ( $\beta$  .010,  $p = .029 < 0.05$ ) and Lack of Risk-Taking ( $\beta$  .130,  $p = 0.039 < 0.015$ ) are statistically significant while the other six identified reasons Examination Phobia ( $\beta$  .312,  $p = .905$ ), Perfectionism ( $\beta$  .185,  $p = .155$ ), Poor Decision Making Ability ( $\beta$  .006,  $p = .871$ ), High Frustration Level ( $\beta$  .056,  $p = .444$ ), Poor Time Management ( $\beta$  .110,  $p = .078$ ), Peer Influence ( $\beta$  .014,  $p = .814$ ) are insignificant. The Multiple Correlation value ( $R = .751$ ) was significant (with 95% significance level) and  $R^2$  value (.702) advocated that thirteen identified causes are contributing 70% towards students' Academic Procrastination tendency.

### **5. Conclusions**

The findings of the study revealed that majority of the students at university level are Moderate Procrastinators. It is concluded that 62.82% students at university level procrastinate their Research Oriented Tasks, 82.05% procrastinate Preparation for Exams, 74.36 % did not submit their Assignments during Course on due dates, 65.38 % unenthusiastic to perform their Academic Administrative Tasks on scheduled time, and 55.13% were reluctant for Course Attendance. They have concluded that majority (67 %) of undergraduates have a medium level of procrastination.

The study revealed seven causes as significant predictor of Academic Procrastination. These included Dependency, Poor Self Confidence, Idleness, Denial, Fear to Success, Poor Time Management and Lack of Risk-Taking.

### **6. Discussion**

The present study was an attempt to study the phenomenon of Academic Procrastination with the exploration of its causes. The study has highlighted that majority of the students procrastinate their research oriented tasks. These findings are in line with Mahasneh, Bataineh and Al-Zoubi (2017). Students are dependent in research oriented tasks. Dependency was assessed as one of the powerful predictor of Academic Procrastination (also studied by Steel (2007). Poor Self-Confidence (also identified by Plessis in 2006), Idleness (also studied by Van Eerde in 2003), Denial (also identified by Grunschel, Patrzek, & Fries in 2013), Fear to Success (also studied by Cox, Clara & Enns in 2009), Poor Time Management (also identified by Dusselier et al., in 2005) and Risk-Taking were explored as the causes of Academic Procrastination in present study.

### **7. Recommendations**

The conclusions of the study highly recommend that student have a tendency to delay and prolong their Academic Tasks at university level. They procrastinate their Research Oriented Tasks at large or with great tendency. Teacher may focus

the research areas specifically and all the academic areas in general to guide the students so that they will be able to reduce the tendency of delay. Student most of the times feel that they cannot do their work independently, they are unable to manage their time properly. They feel lack of confidence. All these areas are in fact the causes of Academic Procrastination. Both teachers and students have to pay attention toward these highlighted areas to minimize the trend of procrastination among students.

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