

Examining the Differences in Procrastination Tendencies among University Students

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Abstract

The study explored the differences in procrastination behaviors among the students in terms of gender, academic courses, level of performance and level of academic self-efficacy. Responses were gathered from the 200 college students of Bulacan State University, Philippines. The hypothesized difference in procrastination scores were analyzed using independent samples t-test. Results revealed gender differences in procrastination where male students procrastinate more than the female students. Students with low perceived academic self-efficacy showed significantly higher procrastination scores than those with high self-efficacy. No significant difference in procrastination score was found when students were grouped according to type of academic course and level of performance.

Key words: academic course, academic self-efficacy, gender, performance, procrastination

1. Introduction

Procrastination is very common in the university where students face a multitude of academic requirements such as examinations, assignments and research works. Individuals may procrastinate for various reasons. Some are observed to experience problems in time management, lack of motivation to accomplish a task and inability to concentrate in one's work. For most college students, the challenge is how to be able to balance and manage their studies in spite of the various activities inside and outside the academe. These actions often hinder themselves from achieving their desired academic goals.

Academic procrastination can be regarded as behavioral, affective and cognitive phenomenon which results from an individual's fear of failure and task aversiveness (Solomon & Rothblum, 1984). Fear of failure is somewhat related to low self-confidence where individuals delay tasks because of fear or belief that they will not succeed. Students with high confidence can somehow respond positively to the academic challenges despite the difficulty of work. Task aversiveness, on the other hand, is characterized by dislike of activities and anxiety which leads to procrastination.

Several studies have shown that procrastination also relates to various personality factors and psychological constructs. Gender based studies revealed differences in procrastination behaviors of male and female students. Male students were found to procrastinate more than the female students (Khan, Arif, Noor & Muneer, 2014 and Ferrari, Ozer & Demir, 2009). Causal factor

of procrastination also differs in both gender. Females demonstrated higher scores on fear of failure factor as found in the studies of Ferrari, et al. (2009) and Sharma & Kaur (2011).

Self-motivation is also identified as one of the important correlates of academic procrastination. Klassen, et al. (2010) found a significant link between academic procrastination and motivation variables consisted of the students' self-efficacy, self-regulation and self-esteem. This explains that students who are motivated to pursue success will be more active and willing to engage in their academic tasks. In support, several studies also showed that self-regulation (Park & Sperling, 2012), self-efficacy (Klassen, Krawchuck & Rajani, 2008; Chow, 2011) and self-esteem (Saleem & Rafique, 2012) were likewise significantly related to academic procrastination. This suggests that students with higher self-efficacy and self-esteem are more confident with their skills and abilities and can respond positively despite the difficulty of their work.

While there is a growing body of literature indicating the inverse relationship between academic achievement and procrastination, Chu and Choi (2005) identified a positive type of procrastinator known as the active procrastinator. Active procrastinators intentionally procrastinate, worked best under pressure and are more likely to accomplish tasks with satisfactory outcomes. Interestingly, the findings revealed that active procrastinators possessed attitudes, coping styles and performance similar to those of non-procrastinator individuals.

Over the years, there has been a remarkable development in explaining procrastination in the academic setting. The present study recognizes the need to continue address the students' struggles which are not directly observed in the classroom. Currently, there are a limited number of published studies regarding the procrastination habits of the Filipino students. This research attempts to explore procrastination levels among university students and further aims to examine differences in procrastination behaviors of the students when they are grouped according to gender, academic courses, level of performance and level of academic self-efficacy.

2. Methods

Responses were gathered from the 200 college students of Bulacan State University, Philippines which were randomly chosen from various courses during the academic year of 2015. The academic courses were classified as quantitative and non-quantitative courses.

The Tuckman Procrastination Scale (1991) was utilized to measure the students' procrastination tendencies on academic-related tasks. Responses are based on a 4-point Likert scale and were summed across all 16 items where higher scores indicate greater tendencies to procrastinate. On the other hand, the students' academic self-efficacy was assessed using the Academic Self-Efficacy Scale (Muris, 2001) designed for young adults. Responses for the 8 items are based on a 5-point Likert scale where higher scores indicate a more favorable academic self-efficacy.

The academic performance of the students was measured using their final grades in the current semester. Students with very satisfactory performance (above 85) were classified as high performers while those with unsatisfactory achievement scores (lower than 85) were classified as low performers.

For the analysis of data, independent samples t-test was utilized to compare the procrastination behaviors of the students when they were grouped according to gender, academic courses, level of performance and level of academic self-efficacy.

3. Findings of the Study

Table 1. Differences between the procrastination scores of Male and Female Students (n=200)

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	df	p-value
Male	85	41.36	5.85	2.415	198	0.017
Female	115	39.39	5.61			

Table 1 indicates significant differences in the procrastination scores of male and female students ($t=2.172$, $p<0.05$). Male students procrastinate more ($M=41.36$, $SD=5.85$) than the female students ($M=39.39$, $SD=5.61$).

Table 2. Differences between the Procrastination Scores of students from Quantitative and non-quantitative courses (n=200)

Course Type	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	df	p-value
Quantitative	106	39.58	5.74	1.708	198	0.089
Non-quantitative	94	40.96	5.77			

The respondents were grouped according to their degree courses which were classified as quantitative and non-quantitative. Table 2 depicts that no significant differences were observed in the procrastination scores of the two groups ($t=1.708$, $p>0.05$).

Table 3. Differences between the Procrastination Scores of low and high performing students (n=200)

Type of Performer	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	df	p-value
High	84	39.95	5.75	-0.577	198	0.565
Low	116	40.43	5.82			

Based on the students' final grades, 84 students were identified as high performers while 116 were low performers as shown in Table 3. The table further reveals that no significant difference exist in the procrastination scores of the two groups ($t=-0.577$, $p>0.05$).

Table 4. Differences between the Procrastination Scores of students with low and high academic self-efficacy (n=200)

Level of Self-Efficacy	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	df	p-value
High	159	39.72	5.55	-2.504	198	0.013
Low	41	42.22	6.28			

Survey results show that majority of the respondents registered high academic self-efficacy as shown in Table 4. The table also reveals that there exist a significant difference in the procrastination scores of the students when they were grouped according to their level of self-efficacy ($t=-2.504$, $p<0.05$). Students with low perceived academic self-efficacy procrastinate more ($M=42.22$, $SD=6.28$) than those with high academic self-efficacy ($M=39.72$, $SD=5.55$).

4. Discussion of Results

The present study investigated the differences in the procrastination behaviors of the university students in terms of gender, academic courses, levels of performance and academic self-efficacy. In terms of gender, the study found a significant difference on the level of procrastination of male and female students. Result is similar to the findings of Khan, et al. (2014) and Ferrari, et al. (2009) which reported that procrastination is mostly observed in male students. Moreover, based on the responses on the items of the procrastination scale, male students showed higher procrastination scores because of dislike of activities and perceived difficulty of accomplishing a task.

Findings of the study also revealed that no significant difference was observed in the procrastination scores when students were grouped according to type of academic course and level of performance. On average, both groups of students procrastinate to a moderate extent. Though it may be viewed that students coming from different courses are engaged in various levels of work difficulty, findings indicate that both groups of students respond to their academic tasks on the same degree. Interestingly, both low and high performing students also showed the same level of procrastination. Results of the study implies that procrastination may not be significant factor in explaining the educational outcomes opposite to other studies where procrastination was relevant to students' achievement (Akinsola, Tella and Tella, 2007; Popoola, 2005; and Balkis, Duru & Bulus, 2013).

In terms of academic self-efficacy, results of the study show that students with low perceived academic self-efficacy were found to procrastinate more than those with high academic self-efficacy. This is consistent with the findings of other studies which indicated that self-efficacy was a significant behavioral construct in explaining procrastination behaviors of the students (Klassen, Krawchuck & Rajani, 2008; Chow, 2011; Hajloo, 2014 & AlQudah, Alsubhien, & AL Heilat, 2014). The self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1997) explains that self-beliefs or judgment of one's ability influences individuals' achievement goals, task choices and level of persistence. Self-efficacy is also a motivating drive for self-regulation to avoid distractions and develop strategies to facilitate completion of tasks (Klassen, et al., 2008). Students with higher self-efficacy are more confident with their skills and were able transform this motivation into actions and respond positively to various academic challenges. Conversely, those who lacks of competency beliefs may exhibit dislike of academic activities which can lead to task avoidance or hinder completion of tasks.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. Male students procrastinate more than the female students.
2. Students with low academic self-efficacy were found to procrastinate more than those with high academic self-efficacy.
3. Students from different academic courses demonstrated the same degree of procrastination.
4. Low and high performing students do not differ in their level of procrastination.

While intervention for gender based studies seems difficult enough, further research can be conducted to explore causal factors of procrastination among men and women. Other behavioral constructs can be explored to understand other attributes of procrastination among Filipino students.

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