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## Academic Procrastination: Origins, Categories, and Varied Approaches to Addressing Procrastinatory Actions

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### Abstract:

*Procrastination is a widely explored concept, extensively discussed in literature, denoting the act of delaying intended tasks to a later point in time. Within the realm of procrastination, there exists a significant concern known as academic procrastination, which exerts detrimental effects on both academic achievements and interpersonal relationships. Studies reveal that academic procrastination often stems from unrealistic apprehensions of failure and is compounded by factors such as stress, perfectionism, and poor time management. Furthermore, it can serve as an indicator of various psychological disorders. This study seeks to delve into various aspects, including definitions and theoretical viewpoints regarding procrastination, the facets of procrastination, the cyclical nature of procrastination, the underlying causes, and the consequences of academic procrastination behaviours. Additionally, it explores diverse approaches to understanding procrastinatory behaviour, such as psychoanalytical, psychodynamic, cognitive, and behavioural perspectives. Identifying the causes and effects of academic procrastination behaviour is an integral focus of this research.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Procrastination behaviour, Academic procrastination, Types of procrastination, Cycle of procrastination, Dimensions of procrastination.*

## **INTRODUCTION:**

In today's fast-paced modern era, where information spreads rapidly, and technological progress occurs at an accelerated rate, several challenges emerge, making it challenging for individuals to keep up with this swift pace. The capacity to efficiently access and disseminate information is crucial for personal productivity and achieving success. Procrastination behaviour stands out as a significant obstacle that impedes individuals from maintaining the necessary momentum in both their academic and personal lives. It is a rarity to encounter an individual, regardless of their social role, age, or gender, who does not engage in procrastination when it comes to their tasks and responsibilities. While some individuals may display procrastination behaviour in specific areas of their lives, others consistently procrastinate across all aspects. Although temporarily postponing tasks might offer a fleeting sense of ease, these deferred responsibilities eventually resurface, accompanied by feelings of anxiety, inadequacy, and regret. Given the extensive scope of procrastination, numerous explanations have emerged from various theoretical perspectives and research findings.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS:**

In September 2018, we conducted a systematic review using the Google Scholar and Türk Psikiyatri Dizini databases with the filter for systematic review methods. The search query employed was "(literature search\* [Title/Abstract]) and academic procrastination erteleme," yielding a total of 37 results. All pertinent papers from this search were included in our analysis.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS:**

- ❖ **DIMENSIONS OF PROCRASTINATION:** The term "procrastination" has its roots in the Latin word "procrastinat-," which means "deferred until tomorrow." This term is derived from the verb "procrastinare," which combines "pro-" (forward) and "crastinus" (belonging to tomorrow). In essence, procrastination refers to the act of delaying or postponing something (Knaus, 2010). When we delve into the literature on procrastination, it becomes evident that procrastination behaviour is a multifaceted concept encompassing cognitive, emotional, and behavioural processes in both its causes and

consequences (Rothbolum, Solomon, Murakami, 1986; Uzun Özer et al., 2014).

Some researchers define procrastination as the failure to complete an intended task or taking longer than planned to finish it (Rothbolum, Solomon, Murakami, 1986). These definitions primarily emphasize the behavioural aspect of procrastination. Engaging in such behaviour can impede progress in academic and non-academic realms and result in missed opportunities. Individuals displaying procrastination tendencies often divert their attention to other tasks instead of focusing on the primary task at hand, frequently opting for more appealing activities to avoid the planned work (Balkis, 2010). Another facet of procrastination is its cognitive dimension, highlighting the inconsistency between an individual's goals, thoughts, and behaviours (Blunt and Pychyl, 2000). A review of the literature reveals that cognitive factors such as rational beliefs and perfectionism are discussed in relation to procrastination to elucidate the influence of cognitive processes on procrastination behaviour (Balkis, 2013). Several studies have indicated that procrastination behaviour involves a cognitive dimension and that it can be considered deliberate only when someone intentionally postpones a task (Steel, 2016).

Procrastination behaviour often leads to feelings of anxiety, remorse, and depression (Burka and Yuen, 2008). These emotional dimensions stem from the emotional reactions resulting from procrastination. Roth Blum, Solomon, and Muraki (1986) highlighted the emotional dimension of procrastination by noting that academic procrastination is accompanied by anxiety. It is also suggested that there is a significant correlation between anxiety related to making mistakes and sub-dimensions of anxiety, procrastination, and perfectionism.

#### ❖ **THEORETICAL APPROACHES REGARDING PROCRASTINATION BEHAVIOUR:**

- **PSYCHOANALYTICAL THEORY:** The initial explanations for academic procrastination behaviour originated from psychoanalytic theories, which are commonly explored in various fields of psychology. Freud and subsequent researchers specifically delved into academic procrastination behaviour in

relation to specific tasks. Freud, emphasizing the importance of managing anxiety in human existence, introduced defence mechanisms as specific behaviours that individuals employ to avoid anxiety (Ferrari et al., 1995). According to Freud, anxiety arises from unconscious material that disrupts the ego, prompting the ego to defend itself and employ various defence mechanisms. Freud proposed that unfinished tasks disturb the ego, leading it to exhibit procrastination behaviour as a means of alleviating anxious situations (Goroshit, 2018). In essence, procrastination behaviour serves as a defence mechanism utilized by the ego to protect itself. However, defence mechanisms are not entirely effective in eliminating anxiety. When confronted with the same problem again, defence mechanisms alone may prove insufficient in reducing anxiety (Ferrari et al., 1995). The emotions and thoughts aimed at avoidance ultimately hinder individuals from addressing their feelings of inadequacy

- **PSYCHODYNAMIC THEORY:** Psychodynamic theorists depart from Freud's inflexible and unyielding principles; nevertheless, they share Freud's viewpoint regarding the dynamic nature of human beings. These theorists argue that childhood experiences profoundly shape personality development and cognitive processes during adulthood (Ferrari et al., 1995). When examining child development from a psychodynamic perspective, Burka and Yuen (2008) characterize this behaviour as the "procrastination syndrome," which arises from inadequate parenting. Primary contributors to procrastination behaviour include unrealistic parental expectations placed upon children and the establishment of high achievement standards linked to parental love and approval. Individuals raised under these parental attitudes often experience anxiety and feelings of inadequacy when confronted with failure, leading to the manifestation of procrastination behaviour. Children who grew up with exceedingly high expectations for achievement or those whose parents held no expectations regarding achievement are more inclined to exhibit procrastination behaviour.
- **BEHAVIOURAL THEORY:** Behaviourism is primarily rooted in the concept of reinforced behaviours. Reinforcement theories, which form the cornerstone of behaviourism, propose a straightforward notion: behaviours persist because



they receive reinforcement. Classical conditioning theory underscores the importance of both rewards and punishments. Based on the principles of learning theory, individuals tend to engage in procrastination behaviour when they receive reinforcement or face a lack of punishment for it (Ainslie, 1975). Self-efficacy, a key concept in social learning, wields influence over human behaviour by shaping decisions about which activities to pursue, the quality of performance, and the determination to tackle challenging tasks. People tend to be drawn to tasks they believe they can successfully complete while avoiding activities they perceive as beyond their capabilities (Bandura, 1986).

In a study conducted by Berber Çelik and Odacı (2015), it was revealed that there exists a negative correlation between academic procrastination behaviour and the self-efficacy of college students. The study aimed to investigate the extent to which procrastination behaviour can explain students' fear of negative evaluation, self-perception, self-efficacy, and distorted beliefs.

- **COGNITIVE BEHAVIOURAL THEORY:** The cognitive behavioural theory, pioneered by Ellis and Knaus in 1977, addresses procrastination behaviour by scrutinizing the cognitive and behavioural dimensions of individuals. According to this theory, human behaviour is shaped by thoughts, emotions, and the environment, recognizing the substantial influence of these factors on behaviour (Burka and Yuen, 2008; Ellis and Knaus, 1977). The assumptions and beliefs individuals develop through their family, immediate surroundings, and early life experiences establish the "codes" of procrastination behaviour that will manifest in their future actions (Burka and Yuen, 2008).

Ellis and Knaus (1977) outlined eleven steps that individuals with procrastination tendencies typically follow:

1. Individuals with procrastination tendencies feel the desire to complete a task.
2. They make a definitive decision to embark on the task.
3. They needlessly postpone the commencement of the task.
4. They fail to recognize that procrastination is not advantageous.
5. They persist in delaying the task further.
6. They experience self-directed anger for their inclination to procrastinate.

7. They continue to engage in procrastinatory behaviour.
8. They may either attempt to complete their tasks when there is very little time left until the deadline or potentially not complete them at all.
9. They become frustrated and irritated as a result of their procrastination tendencies.
10. They make personal commitments to themselves to refrain from procrastinating in the future

❖ **PROCRASTINATION CYCLE:** The experience of individuals grappling with procrastination is characterized by distinct feelings and behaviours, forming what is known as the "procrastination cycle" according to Burka and Yuen (2008). This cycle can vary in duration from person to person, spanning weeks, months, or even years for some, while for others, it unfolds within a matter of hours. Burka and Yuen have outlined this procrastination cycle as comprising seven distinct stages.

In the initial stage, individuals exhibiting procrastination tendencies harbour a sense of optimism, thinking, "I will begin earlier this time." They hold the assumption of adopting a more systematic approach when faced with a task. Despite feelings of inadequacy and a lack of motivation, they believe that the task's initiation will somehow occur effortlessly. However, as time passes, these initial hopes gradually give way to anxiety as it becomes evident that the situation mirrors previous instances.

During the second stage of the cycle, the hope of finding the perfect moment to start wanes, as the opportunity for an early start has already passed. The notion of "I need to start studying as soon as possible" triggers anxiety in individuals with procrastination tendencies, compelling them to sense the urgency for action. While faith in a spontaneous beginning diminishes, hope may still linger since the deadline has not yet approached.

In the third stage of the cycle, individuals with procrastination behaviour find themselves still unable to initiate the task despite the passage of time. At this point, the earlier optimistic thoughts yield to intuitive notions about the potential consequences of failing to commence the task. They begin to fear that their failure to start will lead to enduring adverse outcomes. Obsessive and repetitive thoughts take hold, and individuals realize they cannot reverse

time, punishing themselves with regretful thoughts of "I should have started earlier."

It is a common pattern for people with procrastination tendencies to engage in alternative activities as a means to evade the pending task. They distract themselves by socializing with friends, taking leisurely strolls on weekends, or indulging in movies, finding temporary solace in the illusion of productivity. However, the pleasure derived from these activities soon gives way to guilt and anxiety when they confront their uncompleted work.

In the subsequent stage, procrastinators experience a sense of shame as time continues to slip away. They endeavour to conceal the truth, acting as if they are occupied and deliberately avoiding situations that could reveal their secret. The more they conceal this reality, the deeper they find themselves entangled in a web of fabricated lies, eventually assuming the role of impostors.

In the fourth stage of the cycle, despite feelings of shame and impostor ship, procrastinators still cling to the hope that they have ample time to finish their work. They maintain a sense of optimism, believing that something will miraculously come to their rescue.

The ensuing stage is marked by a prevailing sense of hopelessness and fear in procrastinators. The initial optimism about starting earlier, along with the accompanying shame, suffering, guilt, and the belief in an impending "miracle" to alleviate their burden, proves futile. At this juncture, individuals begin to question themselves, perceiving others as possessing more self-discipline, courage, and luck, while they perceive themselves as lacking these qualities.

In the sixth stage of procrastination, individuals either completely abandon their deferred tasks or decide to complete them. Procrastinators who opt to forgo their work entirely may feel unable to endure the mounting tension, deeming it impossible to finish the task within the remaining time, or they rationalize that not completing the task is not catastrophic. Conversely, procrastinators who choose to complete their work within the remaining time initiate their tasks, realizing that the challenge is not as daunting as they had initially envisioned.

Finally, the seventh stage, signifying the culmination of the cycle, finds procrastinators feeling fatigued yet relieved, having either finished their tasks or relinquished them. It is a taxing process.

**TYPES OF PROCRASTINATION:** When delving into the existing literature on procrastination, a consensus remains elusive, much like a universally accepted definition. One classification approach for procrastination hinges on whether it serves a functional or non-functional purpose. Numerous researchers have linked procrastination behaviour to negative outcomes, but it can also be seen as a response to an individual's self-interest and potentially result in self-defeat (Ferrari et al., 1995). In light of this perspective, Ferrari proposed a bifurcation of procrastination into two distinct categories.

Ferrari (2000) suggested that occasional procrastination in situations requiring additional information or urgent tasks could be considered functional procrastination. Functional procrastination, as defined by Ferrari, is a deliberate strategy where individuals motivate themselves within a constrained time frame. It is often viewed as a form of procrastination that can actually enhance task success and bring individual benefits. On the other hand, Ferrari (2000) delineated non-functional procrastination as a tendency to delay initiating or completing tasks, resulting in suboptimal performance. Non-functional procrastination can be further subdivided into two types: postponing decisions that require making choices and deferring tasks that need to be accomplished. Chronic procrastination, characterized by persistent delays and inefficiency, is considered an ineffective long-term strategy for success and may be indicative of a non-adaptive personality trait.

Another classification approach revolves around procrastination as a personality trait and situational procrastination (Goroshit, 2018). Situational procrastination pertains to procrastination exhibited in specific areas of one's life and contrasts with procrastination as a general personality trait. A notable manifestation of situational procrastination is academic procrastination, which has been extensively studied (Ferrari and Pyhcy, 2000). Rothbulum et al. (1986) described academic procrastination as the consistent postponement of academic tasks, often accompanied by high levels of anxiety.



In summary, the classification and comprehension of procrastination vary among researchers, with distinct perspectives highlighting the functional or non-functional nature of the behaviour, its association with personality traits, and its manifestation in specific situations such as academic contexts.

### **ACADEMIC PROCRASTINATION BEHAVIOUR: CAUSES AND EFFECTS:**

Within the realm of academic life, there exists a multitude of tasks and responsibilities, and research demonstrates that individuals frequently delay these academic obligations, such as assignments, exams, and projects, for a variety of reasons. The prevalence of academic procrastination has been well-documented in studies (Ellis and Knaus, 1977). For instance, Uzun Özer's (2009) research involving Turkish college students reveals that 52.5% of students engage in academic procrastination, often citing reasons such as laziness and fear of failure. On the other hand, Ellis suggests that approximately 95% of American students grapple with academic procrastination when it comes to their academic duties.

Burka identified a set of beliefs referred to as the "codes of procrastination," rooted in non-functional attitudes, assumptions, and rules that individuals adopt to rationalize their distorted beliefs. These include statements such as "I must achieve perfection in everything," "I should effortlessly complete tasks," "inaction is safer than taking risks and facing failure," "revealing my true self will result in rejection," "if I am currently performing well, I must always excel," and "I cannot tolerate any form of loss." These unrealistic and non-functional evaluations can lead to consequences such as academic underachievement, avoidance of intimate relationships, and a fear of isolation. For example, an individual holding the non-functional belief that they must always be flawless may view procrastination as a safer approach.

The cognitive factor of self-esteem has been shown in numerous studies to influence academic procrastination behaviour (Balkıs, 2010). According to Aydoğan and Özbay (2012), individuals may resort to procrastination as a means to shield their self-esteem when they are apprehensive about potential failure. Multiple research studies have also indicated that academic procrastination, influenced by various factors, can result in emotional

outcomes such as depression, regret, anxiety, and even manifest as health-related complaints (Glick et al., 2015; Burka and Yuen, 2008).

**CONCLUSION:** These findings make it clear that academic procrastination has multiple underlying causes, encompassing factors like the fear of failure, laziness, reduced sense of responsibility, and ineffective time management. The presence of perfectionism, anxiety, and a propensity for avoidance also substantially contribute to the emergence of this behaviour. Additionally, individuals' unrealistic expectations of their own abilities and performance, coupled with distorted beliefs, significantly amplify the occurrence of academic procrastination.

On the flip side, to ascertain whether a delay in action qualifies as procrastination, it is essential to examine the frequency of such delays and assess whether they are accompanied by feelings of anxiety

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