



Academic Procrastination among College Students of Jorhat- An Explorative Study

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

Academic procrastination is a behavior that is very common among students. It involves knowing that an individual needs to finish the academic task before the assigned time but for one or another reason respondents fail to accomplish the task within the expected time frame. It is the practice of doing more pleasurable or less urgent tasks instead of more urgent ones. Individuals often promise themselves not to delay things until the last minute but it happens again. Such procrastination behaviors affect the student's actual performances in the learning process and lead to feelings of guilt, inadequacy, depression, and self-doubt. The present study is exploratory research carried out to assess the area and gender difference in academic procrastination among College students in the year 2020. A sample of 199 undergraduate students was selected by using Solvin's formula ($N/1+Ne^2$), where 'N' is the total population and 'e' is the margin of error. A standard tool named "Procrastination Assessment Scale for Students (PASS)" was used to assess the academic procrastination of the students. The findings revealed that in areas of procrastination majority 61.3 percent of the respondents had an average level of academic procrastination, as most of the respondents (63.81%) sometimes procrastinate in school activities in general also 65.32 percent of respondents sometimes face a problem when they procrastinate in school activities in general. Findings also depict that 49.74 percent definitely want to decrease the tendency to procrastinate in

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keeping up with weekly reading assignments. It was also revealed from the findings that there was no gender difference in academic procrastination among College students.

Keywords: *Procrastination; academic procrastination; college students.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Every individual has different tasks to complete but often these tasks are delayed for one or another reason. The act of avoiding the task and believing that the task can be accomplished later, then making excuses is called procrastination. The term procrastination is derived from the Latin word "*procrastinatus*" which means pro "forward" and *crastinus* meaning "of tomorrow". Sometimes willpower is considered as a reason leading towards procrastination but individuals' intrinsic motivation helps them to overcome such daily habit of delaying the task to an indefinite time. Procrastination is usually compared with laziness but both are very opposite. It is habitually or intentionally not completing the work that is needed to be finished, but laziness is an unwillingness to act. Procrastination is the immediate urgency of coping with negative moods and challenging emotions like anxiety, boredom, insecurity, frustration rather than focusing on a given task [1,2]. It is a behavior where students intentionally put off their task for an indefinite time despite knowing it is associated with negative effects [3]. Due to lack of conscientiousness, time management, change in their environments, lack of motivation, lack of self-regulation, task characteristics influence students to deliberately put off their assigned task [4,5,6,7,8,9]. This behavior is found in every aspect like academics, financial and health management. A procrastinator is an individual who delays or puts an important task off that is needed to be done on time. According to Chu et al. [10], there are two different types of procrastination such as active procrastination which means intentionally postponing the task as an individual knows they can complete the task till the deadline and work better under some stressful environment [11]. Whereas passive procrastination is unintentionally delaying the task due to inability, lack of motivation, and time management issues.

In the field of academics, students have many tasks to complete. According to Solomon & Rothblum, [12], academic tasks include writing a term paper, studying for exams, keeping up with weekly reading assignments, academic administrative tasks, attendance tasks, and

school activities in general. However, a student delaying these important tasks into another indefinite time is called academic procrastination. Research shows that academic procrastination arises in all levels of education. It is very much common among students but freshmen students tend to delay more due to fear of failure, dependency, and decision-making issues compared to senior students [13]. Studies show there is some relationship between gender and academic procrastination [14]. Male students tend to procrastinate more in their academic tasks than female students [15,16] and female students show satisfaction in their academic performance due to less postponing behavior [17]. Students mostly face failure in their academic achievements due to academic procrastination [18,19].

1.1 Objectives of the Study

1. To assess the areas of academic procrastination among college students.
2. To find out the gender difference in areas of academic procrastination among college students.

1.2 Hypothesis Set for the Study

Null hypothesis (H_0) and alternative hypothesis (H_A) were framed:

H_0 =There is no difference between male and female college students in terms of areas of academic procrastination.

H_A = There is difference between male and female college students in terms of areas of academic procrastination.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was conducted in the Jorhat district of Assam, India. For conducting the study, a multi-stage sampling design was adopted. Out of all the Colleges, College of Agriculture and the College of Community Science was selected purposively (non-probability sampling) for personal convenience and acquaintance. A total 199 numbers of undergraduate students were selected using Solvin's formula ($N/1+Ne^2$), where

'N' is total population and 'e' is the margin of error. After getting the sample size an equal number of boys and girls were drawn from Ist year, IInd year, IIIrd year and IVth year by using proportionate allocation.

2.1 Tools Used

For collecting the data a standardized tool namely "Procrastination Assessment Scale for Students (PASS) developed by Solomon and Rothblum, (1984)" [12] was used to assess academic procrastination among students. In addition to that, an interview schedule was prepared for collecting the background information of the students. The PASS is a self-report scale where areas of procrastination consist of 6 areas that are writing a term paper, studying for exams, keeping up with weekly reading assignments, academic administrative tasks like filling out forms, registering for the class, getting an ID card, attendance tasks like meeting with the advisor, making an appointment with a professor, school activities in general. Each area consists of 3 questions, where the first question measures the degree of procrastination on a task (1= never procrastinate; 2=almost never; 3= sometimes; 4= nearly always; 5= always procrastinate), the second question measures the degree to which procrastination on the task was a problem for the students (1= not at all a problem; 2=almost never; 3= sometimes; 4= nearly always; 5= always a problem), the third question measures respondents extent to decrease the tendency to procrastinate on the task (1=do not want to decrease; 2=almost, 3=somewhat; 4= nearly; 5= definitely want to decrease). Respondents were asked to rate each activity on a five-point Likert scale.

2.2 Scoring

In areas of procrastination, respondents had to select out of five options that were scored as 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5. As per tools researcher summed the first two questions of each of the 6 procrastination areas like question number (1+2+4+5+7+8+10+11+13+14+16+17). Responses to question 3, 6, 9, 12, 15, 18 are not included in the total sum as it measures the extent to which students wants to decrease their tendency to procrastinate on a task. A higher score indicates more self-reported academic procrastination.

2.3 Pre-testing

A pilot study was undertaken to check the reliability of the scale on 30 non-sample

respondents of college students of Jorhat. The raw data were then coded, tabulated and scoring was done with the help of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

The reliability of the PASS tool i.e. areas was estimated using Cronbach's alpha formula in SPSS. The test reliability coefficient for the areas is .997 which is excellent according to the Cronbach's α (alpha) reliability test.

2.4 Assessment of Variation in Tool

The variation between activities of PASS tool i.e. areas of procrastination is checked by using quartile deviation and coefficient of quartile deviation, which ensure whether all activities will help to assess academic procrastination among college students.

2.4.1 Quartile deviation for areas of procrastination

Quartile deviation (Q.D) was calculated by using the formula as given below:

$$Q.D = \frac{Q_3 - Q_1}{2}$$

$$= \frac{38 - 31}{2}$$

$$= 3.5$$

Where,

$$Q_1 = \text{First quartile or lower quartile or } 25^{\text{th}} \text{ percentile} = (N+1) \times \frac{1}{4}$$

$$= 31$$

$$Q_3 = \text{Third quartile or upper quartile or } 75^{\text{th}} \text{ percentile} = (N+1) \times \frac{3}{4}$$

$$= 38$$

After calculating quartile deviation, Coefficient of quartile deviation was calculated by:

Coefficient of Quartile Deviation

$$= \frac{Q_3 - Q_1}{Q_3 + Q_1} \times 100$$

$$= \frac{38 - 31}{38 + 31} \times 100$$

$$= 10$$

From the above equation, it was found that activities in areas of procrastination have

deviated more from each other i.e. coefficient of quartile deviation is 10, which proves that variation in areas for procrastination is more. As a result, it was revealed that all activities present in areas of procrastination will help in achieving the research objectives.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section deals with the areas of academic procrastination among students.

3.1 Degree of Procrastination on the Tasks

In recent years, the growing access to unlimited distractions through high-speed internet and social media programs such as Facebook and Instagram have made it even easier to waste away hours while avoiding important tasks like writing a term paper. From Table 1, it was found that 55.27 percent sometimes procrastinate in writing a term paper. This may be because while writing term paper individuals must understand the topic well and for that, they must give time for self-study. But most of the students spend their valuable time on social media, as a result, they failed to collect material for self-study, and they choose to procrastinate in writing a term paper. The finding can be supported by the study of Ozer *et al.* (2009) who found that Turkish students mostly procrastinate in important tasks like writing term papers rather than other tasks like academic administrative tasks, and attendance tasks [20]. Yeboah and Ewur (2014) revealed that social media take away the

precious time of students and lead to procrastination in academic work [21].

Data revealed that the majority (53.76 %) sometimes procrastinate during studying for exams. This may be because due to a lack of proper guidance, and time management respondents failed to prioritize their tasks properly. As most of the time, they engage themselves in an assignment, practical work, and hostel activities and set incorrect goals so they are unable to utilize their time to study for exams. Respondents believe in scoring good marks instead of understanding the concept. They select some important topics and think of covering only those topics one day before exams, as a result they procrastinate on the other days.

As depicted in Table 1, it was found that 56.78 percent sometimes procrastinate in keeping up with weekly reading assignments because now-a-days students are very much dependent on online surfing than the use of the library. As using the internet to search for information is very much convenient and less time consuming for students, where they can easily cut paste the material needed for assignment just before the day of submission from various sources like e-book, journal articles, newspapers, etc so they keep on postponing the weekly reading assignments to the last minute. The findings can be supported by the study of Yebowaah (2017) which revealed that students mostly use internet resources for academic work than library facilities [22].

Table 1. Distribution of respondent's procrastination on the tasks

Areas	Total respondents (N=199)									
	Never procrastinate		Almost never		Sometimes		Nearly always		Always procrastinate	
	F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P
1. Writing a term paper	25	12.56	28	14.07	110	55.27	30	15.07	6	3
2. Studying for exams	7	3.51	32	16.08	107	53.76	43	21.60	10	5.02
3. Keeping up with weekly reading assignments	23	11.55	29	14.57	113	56.78	32	6.08	2	1
4. Academic administrative tasks	41	20.60	28	14.07	83	41.70	40	20.1	7	3.5
5. Attendance tasks	33	16.58	37	18.59	91	45.72	24	12.06	14	7.03
6. School activities in general	17	8.54	31	15.57	127	63.81	20	10.05	4	2.01

F= Frequency, P= Percentage

It was clear from the results that 41.70 percent sometimes procrastinate in academic administrative tasks. This may be because due to lack of confidence and habit of copying from others, students mostly wait till a classmate did his/her task so that they can get some references to perform the tasks without any mistake. They commonly overestimate the amount of time they have left to complete the task and underestimate the amount of time they will need to complete the task. Consequently, the students fail to give enough time to complete their academic work.

From Table 1, it was revealed that 45.72 percent sometimes procrastinate in attendance tasks. This may be because students feel afraid of meeting their advisor as they have not completed the task that is assigned earlier, or is unable to understand what is expected from them so, they often put off in the hope that they will understand it later but when they look at it the night before meeting they usually realize that nothing is done and no time is left to ask their advisor for clarification. The finding can be supported by the study of Garzonand Gil-Flores (2017) among nontraditional students, where it was found that 27.65 percent of students postponed the attendance task more compared to other tasks [23].

It can be observed from the results that the majority (63.81%) sometimes procrastinate in school activities in general. It may be because sometimes students leave their work until the last minute and they genuinely forget and have no idea that there's any work to be done until a friend reminds them a few days ago or the day before.

3.2 Degree to Which Procrastination on the Tasks was a Problem

Table 2, depicts that students sometimes find it problematic in tasks associated with school activities in general by 65.32 percent followed by keeping up with weekly reading assignments (57.28%), writing a term paper (54.27%), studying for exams (50.75%), attendance tasks and academic administrative tasks by 50.25 percent and 49.24 percent respectively. It may be because of procrastination behavior, the time for working on different task decreases, and the condition for succeeding at the task become difficult. As a result, when respondents try to complete it, they are unable to meet the desired goal. Furthermore, it is associated with depression, stress, mental and physical health.

3.3 Extent Respondents Want to Decrease the Tendency to Procrastinate on the Tasks

Data revealed that 44.22 percent in writing a term paper, 40.20 percent in studying for exams, 49.74 percent keeping up with weekly reading assignments, 40.20 percent in academic administrative tasks, 46.23 percent in attendance tasks, and 38.19 percent in school activities in general, definitely want to decrease the tendency to procrastinate on these tasks. It may be because earlier they were not much conscious about their procrastinating behavior and its negative consequences on their academic performance, but gradually when they were clear with the term procrastination and became aware of their postponing habit, during the data collection, most of them wanted to overcome such behaviors by breaking their large tasks into smaller ones, rewarding themselves, minimizing distractions, etc so that they can feel more accomplished than earlier.

3.4 Level of Academic Procrastination among Students

This section deals with the level of academic procrastination among students. The first two activities from all the six areas of procrastination were scored i.e. the degree of procrastination on a task and degree to which procrastination on a task was a problem for respondents were added, mean of all scores and the standard deviation was calculated to categorize the level of academic procrastination among the students.

It can be inferred from Table 4, that a higher (61.3%) number of respondents fall in the average level. It may be because respondents like to work within a controlled environment which led to more concentration level and fewer distractions (Schraw et al. 2007) also they are active procrastinator, so intentionally postponing the task as the individual know they can complete it before the time limit [24].

3.5 Gender Difference in Academic Procrastination among College Students

Results revealed that the calculated values of Z scores are negative, which is lesser than that of the table value 1.959. Hence null hypothesis was accepted as there was no significant gender difference in writing a term paper in all three activities.

It was seen (Table 6) that the calculated values of Z scores in all three activities are negative, which is lesser than that of the table value 1.959. Hence there was no significant gender difference in studying for exams so the null hypothesis was accepted.

Table 7 outlines the gender differences in keeping up with weekly reading assignments. It was found that the calculated values of Z scores are negative in all three activities, which is lesser than that of the table value 1.959. Hence there

was no significant gender difference in keeping up with the weekly reading assignment so accepted the null hypothesis and rejected the alternative hypothesis.

It can be inferred from Table 8 that the calculated values of Z scores are negative which is lesser than that of the table value 1.959. Hence null hypothesis was accepted as there was no significant difference between male and female college students in academic administrative tasks.

Table 2. Distribution of respondents according to what degree procrastination on this task was a problem

Areas	Total respondents (N=199)									
	Not at all a problem		Almost never		Sometimes		Nearly always		Always a problem	
	F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P
1. Writing a term paper	26	13.06	29	14.57	108	54.27	3	16.58	3	1.5
2. Studying for exam	15	7.53	2	16.08	101	50.75	45	22.61	15	7.58
3. Keeping up with weekly reading assignments	22	11.05	8	4.02	114	57.28	51	25.61	4	2.01
4. Academic administrative tasks	24	12.06	34	17.08	98	49.24	3	16.58	10	5.02
5. Attendance tasks	17	8.54	36	18.09	100	50.25	0	15.07	16	8.04
6. School activities in general	11	5.52	32	16.08	130	65.32	19	9.54	7	3.51

F= Frequency, P= Percentage

Table 3. Distribution of respondents according to the extent they want to decrease the tendency to procrastinate on the tasks

Areas	Total respondents (N=199)									
	Do not want to decrease		Almost		Somewhat		Nearly		Definitely want to decrease	
	F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P
1. Writing a term paper	19	9.54	4	2	55	27.63	33	16.58	88	44.22
2. Studying for exam	4	2	17	8.54	38	19.09	60	30.15	80	40.20
3. Keeping up with weekly reading assignments	12	6.03	4	2	48	24.12	36	18.09	99	49.74
4. Academic administrative tasks	26	13.06	30	15.07	34	17.08	29	14.57	80	40.20
5. Attendance tasks	7	3.51	25	12.56	26	13.06	49	24.62	92	46.23
6. School activities in general	4	2	14	7.03	37	18.59	68	34.17	76	38.19

F= Frequency, P= Percentage

Mean	SD	Mean± SD	Range	Level of academic procrastination
34.48	5.01	34.48±5.01	39-44 30-38 20-29	High Average Low

Table 4. Academic procrastination among College students

Level of academic procrastination	Total samples (N=199)	
	Frequency	Percentage
High	47	23.6
Average	122	61.3
Low	30	15.07

Table 5. Gender difference in writing a term paper

Writing a term paper	Sex	Mean	S.D	Z value	Table value
Degree of procrastination on this task	Male	2.788	0.856	-20.322	1.959
	Female	2.835	0.986		
Degree to which procrastination on this task was a problem	Male	2.915	0.731	-20.127	1.959
	Female	2.718	1.011		
Respondents extent to decrease the tendency to procrastinate on this task	Male	3.591	1.358	-23.559	1.959
	Female	3.976	1.219		

Significant at 0.01 probability level

Table 6. Gender difference in studying for exams

Studying for exams	Sex	Mean	S.D	Z value	Table value
Degree of procrastination on this task	Male	3.098	0.679	-23.806	1.959
	Female	3.078	0.927		
Degree to which procrastination on this task was a problem	Male	2.957	0.764	-24.272	1.959
	Female	3.195	1.057		
Respondents extent to decrease the tendency to procrastinate on this task	Male	3.887	0.979	-27.777	1.959
	Female	4.031	1.1007		

Significant at 0.01 probability level

Results from Table 9 revealed that the calculated values of Z scores are negative in all three activities, which is lesser than that of the table value 1.959. Hence there was no significant gender difference in attendance tasks so the null hypothesis was accepted.

Table 7. Gender difference in keeping up with weekly reading assignment

Keeping up with weekly reading assignments	Sex	Mean	S.D	Z value	Table value
Degree of procrastination on this task	Male	2.788	0.876	-20.416	1.959
	Female	2.812	0.885		
Degree to which procrastination on this task was a problem	Male	3.225	0.778	-21.488	1.959
	Female	2.929	0.957		
Respondents extent to decrease the tendency to procrastinate on this task	Male	3.774	1.185	-28.240	1.959
	Female	4.179	1.139		

*Significant at 0.01 probability level***Table 8. Gender difference in academic administrative tasks: Filling out forms, registering for classes, getting ID card**

Academic Administrative tasks	Sex	Mean	S.D	Z value	Table value
Degree of procrastination on this task	Male	2.901	0.928	-17.534	1.959
	Female	2.617	1.191		
Degree to which procrastination on this task was a problem	Male	3.070	0.850	-19.210	1.959
	Female	2.734	1.061		
Respondents extent to decrease the tendency to procrastinate on this task	Male	3.830	1.309	-19.247	1.959
	Female	3.375	1.526		

*Significant at 0.01 probability level***Table 9. Gender difference in attendance tasks: meeting with advisor, making an appointment with a professor**

Attendance tasks	Sex	Mean	S.D	Z value	Table value
Degree of procrastination on this task	Male	3.070	0.990	-16.600	1.959
	Female	2.562	1.106		
Degree to which procrastination on this task was a problem	Male	3.084	0.890	-20.041	1.959
	Female	2.890	1.051		
Respondents extent to decrease the tendency to procrastinate on this task	Male	4.098	1.071	-24.732	1.959
	Female	3.906	1.251		

Significant at 0.01 probability level

Table 10. Gender difference in school activities in general

School activities in general	Sex	Mean	S.D	Z value	Table value
Degree of procrastination on this task	Male	3.070	0.661	-21.213	1.959
	Female	2.671	0.842		
Degree to which procrastination on this task was a problem	Male	3.028	0.533	-23.483	1.959
	Female	2.820	0.882		
Respondents extent to decrease the tendency to procrastinate on this task	Male	4.140	0.899	-27.071	1.959
	Female	3.914	1.072		

Significant at 0.01 probability level

From the results, it was found that the calculated values of Z scores are negative in all the activities of academic procrastination, which is lesser than that of the table value 1.959. Hence accepted the null hypothesis as there was no significant difference between male and female college students in school activities in general and all the other areas of academic procrastination.

It may be because of the present education system i.e. semester system in colleges. Since examinations are conducted within an interval of 4 to 5 months every student tries to complete their assigned tasks before the deadline. Also, in Colleges minimum attendance required for each semester is 75 % and above otherwise students are not allowed to sit for examinations. Hence these may be the reasons behind the result that there is no gender difference in procrastination on these tasks. This can be supported by the study of Mohammed et al. which shows that there were no significant sex differences in any area of academic procrastination [25] also Gohil revealed that there is no significant difference between males and females on procrastination across gender [26].

4. CONCLUSION

Academic procrastination is mostly seen among college students as they mostly underestimate the time that will be needed to complete an assigned time. And mostly they were unaware of their postponing behavior and unintentionally make excuses. From the results, it was found that the majority of the respondents sometimes

procrastinate in the areas of academic procrastination like writing a term paper, studying for exams, keeping up with weekly reading assignments, academic administrative tasks, attendance tasks, school activities in general and they sometimes face problems when they procrastinate in these tasks so definitely want to decrease the procrastination for tasks. Overcoming academic procrastination is not difficult. The key steps to overcome procrastination are awareness. When individuals are aware of their procrastination behavior then they can use strategies like setting a simple and achievable goal, breaking large tasks into smaller ones, getting rid of distraction, and avoiding the use of social networking sites like just checking facebook or what app as it kills more time than individuals want to spend. Using strategies will help the individual to stay motivated and break the chain of procrastination.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The study can be done with a greater number of respondents from different colleges covering more districts.
2. A similar study can be undertaken with Postgraduate students.
3. A seminar or workshop can be arranged so that more students can be made aware of the term academic procrastination and how to deal with and get rid of it.
4. A comparative study can be undertaken between the different types of

procrastination like academic procrastination with work-related procrastination.

5. Research projects and action research can be carried out in all Education Institution (such as schools, colleges, and universities) to study the impact and effect of Academic procrastination and to analyze the various ways to reduce the habit of academic procrastination.

CONSENT

Before proceeding to data collection, due permission was taken by the researcher from the concerned authority to conduct the present study. The purpose was very well explained to the students and the repo was established and then the questionnaire was distributed to the students and a clear instruction was given to the students before filling up the questionnaire. They were asked to input their sincere response to the options and requested not to leave any questions unanswered. The researcher gave assurance about the confidentiality of the respondent's response.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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