

A Cross Sectional Study on Procrastination: Who Procrastinate More?

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Abstract. In the present research was to investigate the levels and the prevalence of academic procrastination on high school, undergraduate and graduate students. In this respect, Procrastination Assessment Scale-Student (PASS) was administered to a total of 448 students who were 149 (83 female; 66 male) high-school, 150 (80 female; 70 male) undergraduate and 148 (84 female; 64 male) graduate students. The average age was 15.5 years old ($SD = .56$) for High-school, 20.4 years old ($SD = 1.71$) for Undergraduate, and 25.5 years old ($SD = 2.32$) for Graduate students. Results showed a significant difference among the academic levels of the students. Specifically, undergraduate students claimed to procrastinate more than graduate and high school students. High school and undergraduate students claimed to be nearly always or always procrastinator on studying for exams, while graduate students procrastinate more on writing term papers.

Keywords: Academic Procrastination, Prevalence, High-School Students, Undergraduate Students, Graduate Students

1. Introduction

Every person has task to perform, but for one reason or another, completion of these task is often postponed. The general propensity to engage in such dilatory behavior is called procrastination. In their academic settings, students have such tasks as writing term papers, studying for exams, reading weekly assignments, academic administrative tasks, attending tasks and/or school activities in general. However, they needlessly delay or put these priority tasks off to the next time in a temporal dimension [1]. Being postponed of an academic task to another indefinite time is called academic procrastination. Research has consistently demonstrated that procrastination is one of the biggest threats to academic performance of the students in each academic level. Nevertheless, most of the existing literature has focused on procrastination on college students. It has been estimated that 70% of college students procrastinated on academic tasks at least occasionally [2] and 50% reported as procrastinate about half of the time or more [3]. It is seen one of the common barriers which have been increasing especially in academic domain. In their study Solomon and Rothblum [3] reported that college students procrastinated more often when writing term papers (46%) than when reading weekly assignments (30%) and when studying for examinations (28%). Similar to college population, academic procrastination appears to be a significant problem among graduate [4, 5] and high school students [6, 7]. Onwuegbuzie [4], for instance, reported that it is a significant problem on graduate students' academic performance, too. Different from college students, they procrastinate more on keeping up weekly reading assignments (60%) than on writing a term paper (42%) and studying for examinations (39%).

As seen, there has been intense body of literature on procrastination and its reasons in different age groups [8, 4, 9]. Surprisingly, however, directly comparison of different academic grade levels on procrastination prevalence has drawn less attention in the literature. Hence, the present research attempts to expand the earlier focus by looking at the levels and the prevalence of academic procrastination on high school, undergraduate and graduate students.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

The present research was carried out with a total of 447 students (247 female, 200 male) enrolled in public high school and university in the capital of Turkey. The average age of all participants was 20.4 ($SD = 4.5$) with an age range between 15 and 32. The participants consisted of students who were from high school, undergraduate and graduate levels. The average age of 149 (83 female; 66 male) high-school students was 15.5 years old ($SD = .56$) ranging between 15 and 17. The average age of 150 (80 female; 70 male) undergraduate students was 20.4 years old ($SD = 1.71$) ranging from 17 to 26. The sample also consisted of 148 (84 female; 64 male) graduate students whose mean age was 25.5 years old ($SD = 2.32$) with an age range between 22 and 32.

2.2. Instruments

Procrastination Assessment Scale-Students (PASS) [3] was used to collect data. The PASS is a 5-point Likert type, self-report measure including 44 items divided in two parts. The first part which was used merely for the present study has 18 items, assessing the *prevalence of procrastination* in six areas of academic functioning including: writing a term paper, studying for an exam, keeping up weekly reading assignments, performing administrative tasks, attending meetings, and performing academic tasks in general. Each of these six areas contained three items, rated on 5-point Likert scales, to ascertain the *frequency of procrastination* on tasks; the degree to which procrastination on the task is *causing a problem* for them, and the extent to which they have *tendency to decrease* their procrastination behavior. In the present study, only first three items (writing a term paper, studying for an exam, keeping up weekly reading assignments) were used to assess procrastination level.

There are a number of studies indicating that PASS scores possessed adequate reliability and validity. Onwuegbuzie [4], for example, found 0.82 for the first part of the scale. Ferrari [10] also found adequate levels of coefficient alpha with test-retest reliability over a six-week interval yielded 0.74 for prevalence.

3. Results

Frequency of Procrastination: The overall academic procrastination means for the high school, undergraduate and graduate participants were calculated. The median split of the first part of the PASS was used to determine the procrastinators and non-procrastinators. In other words, the students who have scoring under median were treated as non-procrastinators and students scored above the median were called as procrastinators. Moreover, a series of independent-sample t-test was performed to examine the gender difference in frequency of procrastination for each academic level. Results were presented in the Table 1.

As seen in the Table 1, the overall academic procrastination means of the *high school* ($M = 17.3$, $SD = 4.5$, $R = 6-30$) participants and *graduate* participants ($M = 18.5$, $SD = 4.2$, $R = 6-30$) were found close to each other. In both group, the same median score, 18.0, showed the procrastinators and non-procrastinators. However, levels of procrastination between these two groups were found different. In other words, results of the descriptive statistics showed that 53% (79) of the high school students and 61% (90) of graduates reported to be frequent procrastinator. As for the *undergraduates* whose mean score was 20.2 ($SD = 3.8$, $R = 6-30$), the median score, 20.0, results showed that 53% (79) was nearly always or always procrastinated. Results of the independent-sample t-test performed to examine the difference between female and male participants' procrastination level revealed no significant gender difference on any academic level.

Prevalence of Procrastination: As recommended by the PASS's authors [4], the items pertaining to (a) the frequency with which respondent procrastination on a task (1 = never procrastinate; 5 = always procrastinate), and (b) whether their procrastination on that task is a problem (1 = Not at all a problem; 5 = Always a problem) were summed to provide a score for each task and ranging from 2 to 10. Students who reported on the PASS that they *nearly always* or *always* procrastinate on each task and that such procrastination *nearly always* or *always* create a problem were considered as high self-reported procrastination on each task. That is, students who were defined as high procrastinators had a total score ranging from 8 to 10 on these academic areas. All of the other subjects (with scores ranging from 2 to 7) were considered as low procrastinators. Thus, low procrastinators were considered that they were *infrequent*

and *occasional* procrastinators [11]. In this regards, in the present study, the prevalence of procrastination was calculated independently for each academic level. Results were presented in Table 1.

As seen in the Table 1, results demonstrated that while *high school* and *undergraduate* participants reported that they procrastinate more when studying for an exam (HS = 38%, UG = 56%) then reading weekly assignments (HS = 30%, UG = 52%) and writing a term paper (HS = 27%, UG = 47%); *graduates* endorsed that they procrastinated more on writing a term paper (40%) then studying for an exam (39%) and reading weekly assignments (32%).

Table 1 Frequency, Prevalence and Reasons of Procrastination for High School, Undergraduate and Graduate Students

	HS			UG			Gr		
	N = 149			n = 150			n = 148		
	<i>M</i>	<i>Sd</i>	<i>Md</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Md</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>Sd</i>	<i>Md</i>
Frequency	17.2	4.3	18	20.2	3.8	20	18.5	4.5	18
Procrastinator	53%			53%			39%		
Non-procrastinator	47%			47%			61%		
Gender Difference	No Difference			No difference			No difference		
Prevalence									
Writing Term Paper	27%			38%			30%		
Studying for Exams	47%			56%			52%		
Reading Assignments	40%			39%			32%		

Comparison of Academic Grade Levels in Procrastination: Results of the one way analysis of variance (ANOVA) revealed a significant difference among the academic levels of the students, $F(2.444) = 18.4, p = 000$. Follow-up tests conducted to evaluate pairwise differences among the means indicated that overall procrastination scores of the undergraduate students ($M = 20.2; SD = 3.8$), which constituted the highest scoring group, was significantly higher than the procrastination score of graduate ($M = 18.5; SD = 4.1$), and high school ($M = 17.2; SD = 4.5$), which constituted the lowest scoring group.

4. Discussion

The purpose of the present research was to assess the difference among high school, undergraduate and graduate students on their procrastination frequency and prevalence. In this regards, Turkish version of Procrastination Assessment Scale-Student was administered to high school, undergraduate and graduate students.

The results of the descriptive statistics performed on each group showed that the undergraduates are the highest procrastinating group. Results also revealed that graduates are the second procrastinator group and the high school participants procrastinate less than the other two groups of students.

The present finding revealed no gender difference on procrastination levels which validated the some of other findings in that procrastination did not differ in females or males [12, 13, 14, 15, 11].

In this study, moreover, prevalence of procrastination among three groups was assessed on three areas of academic functioning namely; writing term paper, studying for examinations and reading weekly assignments. Results demonstrated that while high school and undergraduate participants procrastinated more when studying for an exam graduates procrastinated writing term paper. The present finding validated the view suggested by [16]. They suggested that students procrastinates the tasks that might have greatest impact on their academic performance. Hence, the present findings supported that the more frequency of procrastination on studying for an exam indicated that “this task is likely to be viewed as most important by students” [3] (p. 505) and it is probably the tasks that have a greatest effect on their academic life and academic success.

In the light of this study, possible limitations should be considered. First, the scope of the study is limited to the data collected from students enrolled in high school, undergraduate and graduate levels enrolled in selected schools convenient for the researcher. Hence, further research with larger and more demographically diverse populations with random selection would strengthen the findings of the study. Second, as in the present study, reasons of academic procrastination were assessed by using the second part of the PASS; the results might not provide the clear-cut factors. Hence further research involving diverse samples within demographical and psychological variables might provide the actual results.

5. References

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