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Research Paper

Impact of Stress, Anxiety, and Psychological Well Being on Procrastination among Adults: A Correlational Study

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ABSTRACT

Procrastination is a major force that acts as a hindrance to the completion of a task. Anxiety, stress, and psychological well-being are significant indicators of the mental health of individuals. The present study focuses on examining the impact of stress, anxiety, and psychological well-being on procrastination tendencies among the adult Indian population. The sample comprised of 224 participants (18-35yrs) and the instruments used encompassed of a demographic data sheet, Depression Anxiety Stress Scale-21(DASS-21), Psychological Well-Being (PWB) Scale (18 items), and Pure Procrastination Scale (PPS). The analysis of the obtained data was done using descriptive statistics, correlation, regression, and t-test. The results revealed that procrastination was significantly positively associated with anxiety and stress, and significantly negatively associated with psychological well-being. It was also seen that psychological well-being was a significant negative predictor of procrastination. Henceforth, it is suggested that difficulty in completing the tasks on time is an indicator of declined mental health and decreased life satisfaction in an individual.

Keywords: *Stress, Anxiety, Psychological Well Being, Procrastination*

Procrastination is the practice of delaying important tasks and keep them lingering on till the last date of their completion. The word 'Procrastination' has its roots in Latin (*pro crastinus*) meaning 'putting off tasks until tomorrow. Researchers have defined it as a failure of self-regulation where the crucial tasks are avoided despite knowing the serious consequences of the same. Procrastinators may fritter away for hours, days, and sometimes weeks to avoid major task completion. They may indulge in distractions like social media, chatting with others, and going out shopping to escape the work required from their side.

Klingsieck (2013) defined procrastination as, "voluntarily delaying an intended course of action despite its negative consequences". Procrastination involves a) voluntary delay b) intention, c) near pathological.

Procrastination is not only about delaying, ignoring, or avoiding a task but it also includes irrational, counterproductive, and unnecessary aspects to its character. It has several aversive

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physical and psychological consequences associated with it and it is also can be a reason for the poor quality of work provided by an individual.

Stress

Stress can be defined as any change that causes significant physical, psychological, and emotional strain on the individual. It is the response of our body to any change occurring that requires a substantive amount of attention. It has quite serious effects on our physical, psychological, and social well-being. Stress is viewed as a process in which a person recognizes and reacts to the situations that he/she evaluate as threatening or overwhelming to his/her well-being (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Although, some amount of stress is required at optimum levels for better performance and this optimum stress is labeled as Eustress. But if the level of stress experienced increases this optimum level, it becomes distressed that is known to disrupt our functioning to a larger extent.

Anxiety

Anxiety can be defined as an emotion marked by worrying thoughts, tensed feelings, nervousness, fear, and apprehension accompanied by changes occurring in the body like increased heart rate, sweating, dizziness, trembling, and other physical and psychological changes.

David Barlow (2000) gave the definition of anxiety as "a future-oriented mood state in which one is not ready or prepared to attempt to cope with upcoming negative events." Feeling anxious can be adaptive for human development that ensures safety as a self-protective action. But being in a state of constant fear, worry and apprehension may prevent this adaptive behavior and this is when anxiety may become symptomatic and the individual may be diagnosed with suffering from an anxiety disorder.

Psychological well-being

Psychological well-being refers to the condition of an individual while he is a fully functioning person with overall positive mental health. It includes feelings of happiness, positive emotions, and a sense of contentment with life. It inculcates terms like creating purpose in life, experiencing positive emotions, engaging in kind actions, recalling positive events, expressing gratitude, and fostering relationships.

Bradburn (1969) defined psychological well-being as a depiction of an individual's mental health contingent on positive psychological functioning. It is held by life satisfaction and happiness (Ryff, 1989). It is one of the important goals in human life which requires an individual to feel psychologically better, along with their physical well-being. Thus, it is a combination of several positive affective states of an individual such as joy (hedonic perspective), contentment and optimal functioning in life.

Studies have suggested that less degrees of psychological well-being, reduced mental health, and higher levels of stress are associated with procrastination as it is a 'self-sabotaging behavior'.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Liesel Van Wyk (2006) in their study to explore the connection between stress and procrastination among high school teachers revealed that higher degrees of procrastination were associated with higher degrees of stress and vice-versa, depicting that procrastination was positively associated with stress among the high school teachers.

Complementary findings were revealed by Verešová (2013) wherein it was reported that stress and procrastination were positively related to each other. A negative association of procrastination was also evident with instrumental support seeking, proactive coping, emotional support seeking, and reflective coping. Kamran and Fatima (2013) found a significant positive association between procrastination and trait anxiety. However, emotional intelligence didn't show any significant relationship with anxiety and procrastination. Trait anxiety was a significant predictor of procrastination considering into account the state anxiety as well as emotional intelligence.

In a study conducted by Beutel et al. (2016), the tendency to procrastinate was seen highest among the younger proportion of the sample (14–29 years). Further, in this younger proportion of the sample, men were found to be more indulged in procrastination than women. It was also found that procrastination was significantly associated with greater anxiety, stress, depression, fatigue, and decreased satisfaction in life, especially in income and work domains. Unemployment and the absence of a partner were also related to procrastination. The findings suggested that age, sex, unemployment, stress, depression, fatigue, and absence of a partner were significant predictors of procrastination.

Maryam, Kiani, and Dahar (2016) conducted their research on university students to determine the effects of procrastination on their life satisfaction. It was seen that around half of the students at university indulged in procrastination. In terms of procrastination, no significant difference could be perceived among males and females. Most importantly, procrastination was negatively associated with life satisfaction among students such that higher degrees of procrastination were related to reduced degrees of life satisfaction among students. These results were supported by a recent study conducted by Maria-Ioanna and Patra (2020) where it was indicated that students indulging in procrastination had more anxiety, less emotional bonds, less psychological well-being, less positive affect, more psychological distress, greater loss of emotional and behavioral control, less satisfaction in life and more depressive symptoms.

After a thorough review of the literature, it has been found quite reasonable to study the relationship between stress, anxiety, psychological well-being, and procrastination in an individual. Past studies have shown that higher degrees of stress and anxiety were associated with high degree of procrastination. Procrastination and psychological well-being shared a negative relation such that low levels of psychological well-being indicated high levels of procrastination. A further review revealed that anxiety and stress were negatively related to psychological well-being. In terms of demographic factors, sex, age, marital status, and employment status were found to have an impact on procrastination tendencies. What is not known is the influence of all these factors operating together on an individual.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

The sample of the study consisted of 224 participants from all over India who were aged 18-30yrs. There were 119 males (53.1%) and 105 females (46.9%) included in the sample. The majority of the participants were young adults, unmarried, either graduated or having a degree and non-working.

Measures

Depression Anxiety Stress Scale 21 (DASS-21)

It is a 21-item self-report inventory which is a short version of DASS-42 introduced by Lovibond and Lovibond (1995). The present study uses the 7 items from the stress scale and 7 items from the anxiety scale, excluding the depression scale. The reliability was found to be good for both the stress and anxiety scale (Cronbach's Alpha = .805 and .825 respectively).

Psychological Well-Being (PWB) Scale (18 items)

It is an 18-item self-report inventory which is a short version of the 42-item Psychological Well-Being (PWB) Scale introduced by Ryff and Keyes (1995). It comprises of six sub-scales – environmental mastery, self-acceptance, autonomy, personal growth, purpose in life, and positive relationships. The reliability of the scale was found to be acceptable (Cronbach's Alpha = .73).

Pure Procrastination Scale (PPS)

It was designed by Steel (2010) wherein the items in the scale are divided as – items 1 to 3 and 9 to 12 focus on unable to meet deadlines, missed appointments, and delay in making decisions, and items 4 to 8 focus on time wastage, lagging to complete tasks and starting late on a task. The reliability of the scale was found to be excellent (Cronbach's Alpha = .92).

Procedure

For the collection of data for the research, online questionnaires were made in Google forms and sent to participants who qualified for the inclusion criterion of the research via Email, WhatsApp, and Facebook. Informed consent was asked from the participants as well as the purpose and the implications of the research were stated to the participants. The questionnaires included – demographic data sheet, Depression Anxiety Stress Scale 21 (DASS 21)**,** Psychological well-being (PWB) Scale (18 items), and Pure Procrastination Scale (PPS). Data collection lasted from February 2021 to March 2021. The participants belonged to the age group of 18-35 year of age.

After responses were obtained from the participants, the data was exported from Google forms to an MS Excel sheet where coding and scoring of questionnaires were done. After scoring, the data was entered into IBM SPSS 16.0 software. After entering the data, various statistical applications like descriptive statistics, t-test, correlation, and multiple regression were run to analyze the data and draw results and conclusions from it.

RESULTS

Table 1 The descriptive statistics of stress, anxiety, psychological well-being, and procrastination

Variables	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Error	Std. Deviation
Stress	.00	20.00	8.2902	.29456	4.40858
Anxiety	.00	20.00	6.3214	.30323	4.53826
Psychological well-being	45.00	113.00	83.7768	.91627	13.71341
Procrastination	12.00	82.00	48.4196	1.11614	16.70484

The overall minimum, maximum, mean, standard error and standard deviation scores of stress, anxiety, psychological well-being, and procrastination among the adult Indian population (N=224) are presented in Table-1.

Table 2 The gender difference between males and females on procrastination

Variable	Gender	n	Mean	SD	SEM	t test	P
Procrastination	Male	119	49.05	15.75	1.44	.60	.12
	Female	105	47.70	17.77	1.73	.60	

Table-2 gives a description of Mean, SD, SEM, t-test and p-values of males and females for procrastination among the adult Indian population. The findings indicated that the obtained t-values were not statistically significant and thus, it can be concluded that the mean scores of male and female participants were not significant.

Table 3 Correlation between stress, anxiety, psychological well-being and Procrastination

Variables	Stress	Anxiety	Psychological well-being	Procrastination
Stress	1			
Anxiety	.73**			
Psychological well-being	-.41**	-.40**		
Procrastination	.20**	.23**	-.23**	1

Investigation of Table-3 shows the r-values and significance level of inter-correlation among stress, anxiety, Psychological well-being, and Procrastination among the adult Indian population (N=224). The correlation coefficient is found to be statistically significant in stress, anxiety, psychological well-being, and procrastination. A weak positive association of procrastination was evident with stress as well as anxiety (r = .20 and r = .23 respectively). It was also seen that psychological well-being and procrastination were weakly negatively associated with each other (r = -.23).

Table 4 Regression analysis summary of stress, anxiety, and psychological well-being as predicting procrastination

Variable	B	95% CI	β	T	P
Constant	60.129			7.012	.000
Stress	.132	(7.71-8.87)	.035	.362	.717
Anxiety	.511	(5.72-6.92)	.139	1.454	.147
Psychological well-being	-.191	(81.97-85.58)	-.157	-2.185	.030

Adjusted R^2=.06, F(3,220)= 5.84, p=.001, CI = Confidence Interval*

Multiple regression analysis summary of stress, anxiety, and psychological well-being as predicting procrastination among the adult Indian population is depicted in Table-4. The result shows that 6% of the variance in procrastination is due to stress, anxiety, and psychological well-being. The obtained t-value for the measure of Psychological well-being is found to be statistically significant (t =-2.185) which carry β-value of -.157.

DISCUSSION

The present study focused on exploring the relationship between stress, anxiety, psychological well-being, and procrastination among the adult Indian population. The findings depict that no significant difference was apparent between males and females on procrastination tendencies. The correlational analysis divulged a significant positive relationship between stress and procrastination as well as between anxiety and procrastination, while a significant negative relationship was evident between psychological well-being and procrastination. This indicates that higher stress and anxiety are associated with higher levels of procrastination while higher levels of psychological well-being suggest lower levels of procrastination. In multiple regression analysis, psychological well-being was found to be a significant negative predictor of procrastination.

Stress is found to be significantly positively associated with procrastination. The results were complementary to the findings revealed by Liesel Van Wyk (2006) wherein higher stress levels lead to higher procrastination and vice-versa in high school teachers. Similarly, Verešová (2013) also found a positive association between stress and procrastination. It can be said that when a person is stressed, it is more likely that they would put things off, which would ultimately lead to more stress due to increased workload, and thus, the vicious cycle of stress and procrastination affecting each other continues.

Moreover, anxiety was also significantly positively linked with procrastination. Similar shreds of evidence have been provided by Kamran and Fatima (2013) wherein they established that trait anxiety was significantly positively linked with procrastination. Recent research by Maria-Ioanna and Patra (2020) also agreed with these findings as they also stated that students who indulged in procrastination had higher levels of anxiety. The findings can be explained by the fact that anxiety comprises of low self-esteem, perfectionism, and other negative aspects that lead to fear of failure which further is related with tendencies to procrastinate as there is a lack of motivation to proceed further.

In contrast to above findings, psychological well-being is significantly negatively associated with procrastination. Complementary findings were evident in the study conducted by Beutel et al. (2016) wherein procrastination and life satisfaction was negatively associated with each other. This can be attributed to the fact that a decrease in motivation to complete tasks, whether they are related to domestic work or relationships, worsen the cognitive and affective states of an individual, which in turn impacts their psychological well-being. Not being able to give optimal output affects the mental health of an individual.

Another major finding was that psychological well-being was found to be a significant negative predictor of procrastination. The findings were relatable to the study conducted by Maryam, Kiani, and Dahar (2016) wherein reduced degrees of life satisfaction were linked with higher levels of procrastination. This could be because being satisfied in life may make it easier to take up the responsibilities attached to one's daily life. This motivates the person

to continue and cope up with the work requirements and thus, reduced tendencies to procrastination.

Overall, the findings suggested that higher stress levels, higher anxiety levels, and lower psychological well-being levels were associated with higher procrastination tendencies in an individual. Psychological well-being was found to be a significant negative factor in predicting procrastination.

CONCLUSION

The present results provide us with risk factors associated with procrastination in the adult Indian population. The associated risk factors with increased procrastination were higher stress levels, higher anxiety levels, and lower psychological well-being levels. Procrastination was found to be significantly higher among individuals with lower psychological well-being. Thus, the findings suggest the significance of these factors while studying and analyzing procrastination tendencies. The general population also needs to be educated regarding the impact of these factors on their functioning in daily life.

Implications

Stress, anxiety, and psychological well-being can be considered for the forthcoming inquest on procrastination. The results of the present study provide us with risk factors that can be used while assessing the psychological state of an individual and additionally, coming up with interventions to improve their psychological state of living. The general population is also encouraged to be cognizant about their welfare and different psychological factors that may harm their mental health and secure themselves against mental health issues.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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