

## Gender Difference Study on the Effects of Self-efficacy and Personality on Procrastination

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### ABSTRACT

Procrastination is the term used to describe the behavior of putting a task at hand, to be completed later due to lack of motivation, any other activity being more desirable, or because one may consider they are not capable of doing the task at hand. Usually, it is stated that people with lower self-efficacy engage in higher levels of procrastination; self-efficacy being the belief of a person in themselves to do anything. Procrastination has also been linked to personality, which is the characteristic way of a person's behavior, emotions and, thinking. The current research aims to study the relationship between procrastination, self-efficacy and, personality among young adults. A sample of 64 (32 females and, 32 males) young adults in the age group of 18-26 were taken. Standardized scales were used to measure procrastination, self-efficacy and, personality. The results showed a negative significant correlation between self-efficacy and, procrastination; a negative significant correlation between procrastination and, conscientiousness (personality trait of being goal-directed). The gender difference in procrastination came out to be insignificant. Males were found to be higher on the personality trait for emotional stability. The most common thing that people tend to do while putting off their work was found out to be spending time on social media followed by spending time on OTT platforms, followed by sleeping. When procrastination starts affecting life activities it needs to be checked upon.

**Keywords:** Procrastination, Self-Efficacy, Personality, Young Adults

Procrastination i.e., putting off something, could be something you think you would not be able to do, or something you think you can easily do even if you start a little later, or anything that takes a backseat because something else looks more interesting. The word 'procrastination' comes from Latin, where 'pro' forward and, 'crastinus' means tomorrow (Mish, 1994). It has been described as "delaying task completion to the point of experiencing subjective discomfort" (Ferrari, 1992, p. 315)

"Procrastination is not waiting and, it is more than delaying. It is a decision to not act." (Ferrari, 2010)

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Procrastination has an inverse relationship with self-esteem, self-efficacy and, motivation. (Klassen, Krawchuk and, Rajani, 2008). Procrastination is more common in men than women and, younger people. (Steel, 2007)

In a study, Ferrari et al. (1992), found a negative relationship between general self-efficacy and, academic procrastination among college students, with the mean age of 18.2 of the sample group consisting of 241 women and, 78 men.

It is generally considered that the people who tend to procrastinate are low on self-efficacy. This idea is also confirmed by Hen & Goroshit (2014). Self-efficacy is the confidence in oneself to do something. Self-efficacious individuals due to their confidence in themselves to handle challenging situations, experience low negative emotions in stressful situations (Bandura, 1997).

Lai et al. (2015) studied the association between personality traits and, procrastination behaviour among 148 university students (52 males, 96 females). Independent sample t-test showed no significant gender differences in respondents' level of academic procrastination. There were no significant correlations between the five personality traits with procrastination behaviour among university students.

Personality is considered to be the relatively stable, characteristics of individuals, differentiating them from each-other, explaining the patterns of behaviour, cognition and, emotions (Hogan et al.1996).

The term 'personality' has its roots in the Latin term 'persona', literally meaning masks worn by theatre artists (Kopliman, 2007).

Procrastination may be linked to The Big Five Model by Costa McCrae; extraversion's characteristic of being impulsive can increase procrastination i.e., positive correlation (Johnson and, Bloom, 1995). Being low conscientiousness and self-regulatory behaviour can lead to procrastination (Reynolds, 2015). Extraversion, Agreeableness and, Openness to experience is not related to procrastination (Steel, 2007).

### ***Procrastination***

It can be defined as "the purposive delay in the beginning and/or completion of an overt or covert act, typically accompanied by subjective discomfort" (Ferrari, 1998, p. 281).

Steel (2007) has defined procrastination as behaviour "to voluntarily delay an intended course of action despite expecting to be worse off for the delay".

Procrastination can be seen as the difference between intent and, behaviour (Lay, 1994). It is labelled as "one of the least understood minor human miseries" (Ferrari, 1994, p. 673). People tend to rationalise their tendency to put off work by believing that they work better under pressure (Wohl, Pychyl & Bennett, 2010). In modern society due to easier access to things that can easily distract someone, people tend to give in to their temptations more easily, having lesser control over their will, leading to procrastination (Steel, 2007). Self-regulation behaviour is low in procrastinators during times of high stress (Klassen, Krawchuk & Rajani, 2008). Inability to manage time is a reason for academic procrastination (Solomon & Rothblum, 1984). Time management is the ability to control behaviours and, activities to maximize one's time in hand, (Mish, 1994). Fear of failure can

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also cause procrastination (Steel, 2007), with these two more components, laziness and, task aversion has been considered to be factors of procrastination (Schraw et al., 2007, p. 13). It is found less common in intrinsically motivated individuals, with an internal locus of control (Steel, 2007). Ackerman and, Gross (2005) found that those low on procrastination find assignments more interesting than those high on procrastination, supporting the idea that less interesting tasks tend to raise procrastinating behaviour.

“Putting off until tomorrow, next week, next month, or next year has killed more ideas, innovations, improvements, and, human initiative than all other faults combined” (Caruth & Caruth, 2003, p.1).

It is common to put off tasks sometimes due to many reasons; “everyone procrastinates, but not everyone is a procrastinator”; but if it is a habit and, happens for all the tasks to be performed and, is affecting life activities, then it is chronic procrastination (Ferrari, 2010). With proper interventions, the tendency to procrastinate can be modified (McCloskey, 2012).

In a study conducted by Senecal et al. (1995) to assess the role of autonomous self-regulation as a predictor of academic procrastination, on 498 junior college students, the results found out that intrinsic motivation was negatively related to procrastination. It concluded that procrastination is a motivational problem which is more than poor time-management skills and, trait laziness.

### *Self-efficacy*

It refers to a sense of personal competence to deal effectively with a variety of stressful situations (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995).

Self-efficacy is described as individuals' beliefs in their capabilities to exercise control over challenging demands and, their functioning. (Luszczynska et al., 2005)

People high on self-efficacy tend to more committed to planning because they are more focussed on their future and, create successful scenarios of what they do. (Luszczynska et al., 2005). A study conducted by Garrido et al., (2019) on 237 (202 women and, 25 men) nursing students showed a negative significant correlation between procrastination scale with other variables measured i.e., perceived competence, resilience coping, self-esteem and, self-efficacy. People choose difficult goals and, challenges and, remain committed to them if they have higher perceived self-efficacy. The more success a person has in the tasks he does, the better the belief in oneself is built, whereas continuous failures especially if faced before self-efficacy is built, make the individual have less confidence in his abilities (Bandura, 1994). The same tasks that people with high self-efficacy accept as challenges become perceived threats for people with lower self-efficacy (Bandura, 1994), and, to avoid the failure due to this perceived threat they procrastinate; it gives “an out” from the fear of failure (Steel, 2007).

In a study conducted by Wäschle et al, (2014) students high on procrastination had low goal achievement and, low goal achievement made them put off tasks more. And, students scoring high on self-efficacy had higher perceived goal achievement, leading to further higher self-efficacy. The results being that, students low on self-efficacy find themselves stuck in the vicious circle of self-efficacy.

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In a study performed by Klassen et al., (2007) to explore the relationships among academic procrastination, self-regulation, academic self-efficacy, self-esteem, and, self-efficacy for self-regulation, conducted on 456 undergraduates, it was found out that all self-variables are related to procrastination but self-efficacy for self-regulation is most predictive of procrastination tendencies.

### ***Personality***

According to McGeown et al. (2014), personality is “a set of underlying traits that determine how an individual typically behaves, thinks and, feels” (p. 279)

Funder (1997) defined personality as “an individual’s characteristic pattern of thought, emotion, and, behaviour, together with the psychological mechanisms (hidden or not) behind those patterns” (p. 2).

McCrae and, Costa (1987) identified 5 personality traits, commonly known as OCEAN i.e., Openness to experience, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, Neuroticism (emotional stability).

Each of these traits is considered to be on a continuum. Openness to experience is related to imagination, curiosity and, creativity, being able to embrace new experiences easily. The agreeableness dimension is related to the characteristics of cooperation, flexibility, trust (Viswesvaran et al., 2003). Conscientiousness includes being dutiful, orderly, planned and, having high willpower (Viswesvaran et al., 2003), they are dependable, organised and, responsible (Davis & Palladino, 2007), these people can delay gratification and, meet deadlines, agreeing to Van Eerde (2003) that conscientiousness and, procrastination have a largest negative correlation. Extraversion is a temperament, people high on this trait tend to be friendly, impulsive and, seek pleasure from outside of themselves. Neuroticism refers to being emotionally unstable.

In a study conducted by Kader et al. (2015), based on a sample of 120 undergraduate male students, no significant relationship was found between academic procrastination and, personality traits.

In a study conducted by (McCloskey, 2011) Conscientiousness was highly negatively related to measures of academic procrastination as recorded by the Academic Procrastination Scale.

### ***Purpose***

The purpose of the research is to study the effects of self-efficacy and, personality on procrastination among young adults and, to find out whether there are any gender differences in procrastination habits.

### ***Hypothesis***

- There will be a negative correlation between procrastination and, self-efficacy.
- There will be no difference between males and, females in procrastination.
- There will be no correlation between procrastination and, agreeableness, emotional stability, extraversion, openness to experience.
- There will be a negative relationship between procrastination and, conscientiousness.

## METHODOLOGY

### Sample

The study was conducted on a sample of 64 participants (32 females; 32 males) aged 18-26 years. The sample has been collected from Bangalore and, Chandigarh.

### Measures

- **Procrastination Scale** (Lay, 1986) consisting of 20 questions, rated on a 5-point Likert scale from extremely uncharacteristic (1) to extremely characteristic (5), was used.
- **General Self-efficacy Scale (GSE)** (Schwarzer et al., 1995) is a self-report measure consisting of 10 items to be rated at a 4-point Likert Scale (1=not at all true, 2=hardly true, 3=moderately true, 4=exactly true). The total score was calculated by combining scores of all the items. The total score for GSE can vary from 10-40, higher the score, higher the self-efficacy.
- **Ten Item Personality Measure (TIPI)** (Gosling et al., 2013) is a 10-item inventory scored on a 7- point Likert Scale, 1=disagree strongly; 4=neither agree nor disagree; 7=agree strongly. It measures the 5 personality traits of extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability and, openness to change. Items 2,4,6,8,10 were reverse scored.

### Procedure

The participants were informed about the purpose of the research. The data was collected using the self-report measures wherein participants had to fill the questionnaires using google forms. Standardised psychological tests were administered.

## RESULTS

**Table 1:** N, Mean and, Standard Deviation (SD) of all variables.

	Procrastination	Self-efficacy	Extraversion	Agreeableness	Conscientiousness	Emotional Stability	Openness to experience
N	64	64	64	64	64	64	64
Mean	63.5	29.4	7.08	10.4	9.52	8.23	10.3
Standard deviation	12.2	4.66	3.27	2.08	3.02	3.28	2.73

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**Table 2: Correlation of all variables.**

	Procrastination	Self-efficacy	Extraversion	Agreeableness	Conscientiousness	Emotional Stability	Openness to experience
Procrastination	—						
Self-efficacy	-0.486 ***	—					
Extraversion	-0.199	0.223	—				
Agreeableness	-0.180	0.338 **	-0.033	—			
Conscientiousness	-0.513 ***	0.398 **	0.100	0.304 *	—		
Emotional Stability	-0.195	0.209	0.226	0.151	0.243	—	
Openness to experience	0.038	0.371 **	0.193	0.110	0.165	0.115	—

Note. \* p < .05, \*\* p < .01, \*\*\* p < .001

**Table 3: Independent sample t-test and, group descriptive**

	Group	N	Mean	SD	p	Statistics
Procrastination	Female	32	65.19	12.36	0.258	1.1416
	Male	32	61.72	11.95		
Self-efficacy	Female	32	28.97	4.99	0.426	-0.8020
	Male	32	29.91	4.34		
Extraversion	Female	32	7.19	3.05	0.792	0.2654
	Male	32	6.97	3.52		
Agreeableness	Female	32	10.41	2.05	0.953	-0.0597
	Male	32	10.44	2.14		
Conscientiousness	Female	32	9.78	2.80	0.486	0.7012
	Male	32	9.25	3.24		
Emotional Stability	Female	32	7.28	3.10	0.019	-2.4125
	Male	32	9.19	3.22		
Openness to experience	Female	32	10.53	2.85	0.468	0.7303
	Male	32	10.03	2.62		

## DISCUSSION

The results found out that there is a significant negative correlation between, Procrastination and, Self-efficacy ( $r = -0.486$ ,  $p < .001$ ); and, Procrastination and, Conscientiousness ( $r = -0.513$ ,  $p < .001$ ). No significant correlation was found between Procrastination and, personality traits like extraversion, agreeableness, openness to change and, emotional stability. The results also found that males scored higher on emotional stability. However, there are no significant gender differences in habits of procrastination.

In a study, Karatas et al. (2015), conducted on 475 undergraduate students, correlating academic procrastination, personality traits, and, academic achievement, found that academic procrastination is negatively associated with conscientiousness and, extraversion.

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In a study, Joseph et al. (1992), found a negative relationship between general self-efficacy and, academic procrastination among college students.

### CONCLUSION

The current research aimed to study the relationship between procrastination, self-efficacy and, personality among young adults. A sample of 64 (32 females and, 32 males) young adults in the age range of 18-26 was taken. Standardized scales were used to measure procrastination, self-efficacy and, personality. The results showed a negative significant correlation between self-efficacy and, procrastination; a negative significant correlation between procrastination and, conscientiousness. The gender difference in procrastination came out to be insignificant. Males were found to be higher on the personality trait for emotional stability. Usage of social media (Instagram) was found to be the most by individuals when putting off tasks.

Nothing (is) so fatiguing as the eternal hanging on of an uncompleted task (James, 1926). Individuals who tend to procrastinate more have shown signs of frustration, stress and, regret because of their inability to start work on time (Steel et al, 2015) sometimes leading to missing the deadlines. It can help in temporary mood repair or relaxation but in a longer period procrastination can have a negative impact on the overall well-being of a person, it can lead to feelings of personal failure. (Steel et al, 2007). Self-management strategies like time management, organising the day's schedule, goal setting can be used to help from procrastinating. Cognitive restructuring or relaxation techniques can also be helpful (Steel et al, 2007).

One limitation of the current study could be the fact that the sample was collected using self-report measures. And, in self-assessment there would be reporting of true behaviour but there could also be contamination due to self-concept. (Kader et al, 2015)

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### **Conflict of Interest**

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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