

The Relationship between Self-Esteem, Procrastination and Mental Health, among College Students

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the relationship between self-esteem, procrastination, and mental health among college students. A sample of 100 students (50 males and 50 females) aged 18-23 years from Kolhapur district participated in the study. The research utilized three tools: the Self-Esteem Scale (SES), Samvaiddna's Procrastination Scale, and the Mental Health Inventory. Data analysis was conducted using Pearson's product-moment correlation to explore the interrelationships between self-esteem, procrastination, and mental health. Results revealed a strong negative correlation between self-esteem and procrastination ($r = -0.59, p < .01$), indicating that higher self-esteem is associated with lower levels of procrastination. Additionally, a strong positive correlation was found between self-esteem and mental health ($r = 0.75, p < .01$), suggesting that individuals with higher self-esteem report better mental health outcomes. Furthermore, a negative correlation was observed between procrastination and mental health ($r = -0.61, p < .01$), indicating that increased procrastination is linked to poorer mental health. These findings support previous research highlighting the role of self-esteem in reducing procrastination and enhancing mental health, while also underscoring the detrimental impact of procrastination on mental well-being. The study emphasizes the importance of fostering self-esteem in college students to mitigate procrastination and improve mental health.

Keywords: *self-esteem, procrastination, mental health, college students, correlation, well-being, psychological resilience, stress*

Procrastination, self-esteem, and mental health are central themes in understanding students' academic and emotional well-being. Research has consistently shown that procrastination negatively impacts academic performance and mental health, while self-esteem is crucial in how individuals cope with academic stress and challenges. Students often experience a complex relationship between these factors, particularly in high-pressure environments. Procrastination, commonly characterized by the delay in completing tasks despite potential negative consequences, has been found to correlate with lower self-esteem and poorer mental health outcomes (Sirois, Melia-Gordon, & Pychyl, 2013). On the other hand, self-esteem, defined as an individual's sense of self-worth or personal value, is a critical psychological factor that influences emotional resilience and coping strategies in the face of stress. Higher self-esteem is often associated with positive mental health outcomes,

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while low self-esteem can lead to feelings of inadequacy, contributing to negative emotions and procrastination (Steel, 2007). This relationship is particularly evident in students, where academic pressures and personal challenges may interact, affecting both their academic performance and emotional well-being. Therefore, exploring the intricate link between self-esteem, procrastination, and mental health among students is crucial for understanding how these factors influence each other and for developing effective interventions to support students' overall well-being.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Self-esteem has been identified as a key factor influencing students' motivation, academic performance, and emotional well-being. High self-esteem is typically associated with increased confidence, motivation, and the ability to handle stress effectively (Mruk, 2013). According to Baumeister et al. (2003), individuals with higher self-esteem tend to have a more positive self-concept, which fosters better decision-making and adaptive coping mechanisms. In contrast, low self-esteem is often linked to a negative self-view, poor self-worth, and a higher likelihood of experiencing academic stress and anxiety (Harter, 2012). Research has demonstrated that students with low self-esteem are more likely to struggle with challenges, such as completing assignments on time, which can lead to procrastination (McCrea, 2019). Furthermore, low self-esteem can contribute to feelings of hopelessness and helplessness, exacerbating mental health issues such as depression and anxiety (Orth, Robins, & Widaman, 2012).

Procrastination and Its Impact on Mental Health

Procrastination, a pervasive problem among students, is often linked to emotional regulation difficulties and low self-esteem. Steel (2007) identified procrastination as a behavior that typically stems from emotional avoidance, where students delay tasks to escape feelings of anxiety, fear, or lack of confidence. Procrastination has been shown to have detrimental effects on mental health, leading to increased stress, anxiety, and depression (Sirois et al., 2013). The delay in task completion causes students to feel overwhelmed, guilty, and frustrated, which can further erode their self-esteem (Tuckman, 1991). Moreover, research suggests that chronic procrastinators experience higher levels of negative emotions, including anxiety and depressive symptoms, which are often compounded by the pressure of impending deadlines (Steel, 2007). This vicious cycle of procrastination and mental distress highlights the need for interventions that address both emotional regulation and academic habits among students.

The Interplay Between Self-Esteem, Procrastination, and Mental Health

The relationship between self-esteem, procrastination, and mental health is multifaceted, with each factor influencing the others. According to the Cognitive-Affective Processing System (CAPS) model, self-esteem affects how individuals perceive and respond to stressors, which in turn influences their procrastination tendencies and mental health outcomes (Mischel & Shoda, 1995). Students with higher self-esteem are generally better equipped to manage academic stress and are less likely to procrastinate (Mikolajczak et al., 2015). On the contrary, students with lower self-esteem may struggle to manage their emotions effectively, leading to procrastination as a coping mechanism. This procrastination, in turn, may contribute to poor mental health outcomes, including heightened stress, anxiety, and depression. Several studies have supported this bidirectional relationship, emphasizing that low self-esteem not only predicts procrastination but also exacerbates negative emotions and mental health concerns (Sirois et al., 2013). Additionally,

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procrastination can perpetuate a cycle of negative thoughts and behaviors, undermining self-esteem and exacerbating mental health challenges.

The relationship between self-esteem, procrastination, and mental health among students is complex and interconnected. High self-esteem promotes better emotional resilience, reducing procrastination and fostering positive mental health. Conversely, low self-esteem can lead to procrastination, which, when combined with academic stress, significantly impacts students' mental health. The interplay between these factors underscores the importance of addressing both psychological and academic challenges in interventions designed to support students. Future research should continue to explore these relationships in greater depth, focusing on the development of targeted strategies that can help students enhance their self-esteem, reduce procrastination, and improve their overall mental well-being.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Objective of the study:

To examine the relationship between self-esteem, procrastination and mental health among college students.

Hypothesis:

Ho - Self-esteem and procrastination are negatively correlated and negatively correlated with mental health outcomes. Higher self-esteem is associated with lower levels of procrastination and better mental health, while higher levels of procrastination are associated with poorer mental health.

Sample:

The current study involved 100 college students from the Kolhapur district, with an equal distribution of 50 male and 50 female participants. The participants' ages ranged from 18 to 23 years, with a mean age of 21.08 years (SD = 3.05), indicating a relatively young cohort. Participants were selected using non-probability purposive sampling.

Research Tools:

- 1. Self Esteem Scale (SES)-** Dr. Santosh Dhar and Dr. Upinder Dhar constructed and standardised this scale. It is consisted 23 items with the following six factors: Positivity, Openness, Competence, Humility, Self worth, Learning Orientation. The scoring procedure for 23 items set against a Likert five-point scale, i.e. Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Not Sure, Agree and Strongly Agree, awarded 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, respectively. Split has established the tool's reliability- the half method. The reliability of the tool is 0.71. Therefore, the tool is reliable.
- 2. Samvaidna's Procrastination Scale (Abraham, 2013):** Mental health inventory constructed by Abraham, 2013. The response was measured on a 5-point Likert Scale. A weight of 5 was assigned to the strongly agree response, 4 for agree, 3 for undecided, a weight for disagree and 1 for the strongly disagree response. The total scores are obtained by adding the weights assigned. The total range is from 30-150. If scores between 110-150 indicate high procrastination, 71-109 indicate average procrastination, 30-70 indicate low procrastination—a highly reliable and valid tool.
- 3. Mental Health Inventory:** Mental health inventory constructed by Dr. Jagdish and Dr. A K Srivastav. 56 items are in the questionnaire and each of the items has four responses – 1. Almost always true, 2. Some time true, 3. Rarely true and 4. Almost

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never true. The reliability of the inventory was determined by split-half method using odd-even procedure. Overall mental health reliability coefficients is .73 and Construct validity mental health inventory and general health questionnaire (Gold beig, 1978) it was found to be .54

Statistical Analysis

The analysis employed the Product Moment Coefficient of Correlation, commonly known as Pearson's r. This statistical method measures the strength and direction of the linear relationship between two continuous variables.

Variable

Self-esteem 2) Procrastination 3) Mental Health

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Product moment Coefficient correlation (Pearson r) between Self-esteem, Procrastination and Mental Health among college students.

Table 1

	Self-esteem	Procrastination	Mental Health
Self-esteem	1	-0.59**	0.75**
Procrastination		1	-0.61**
Mental Health			1

*Significant at *0.05 = 0.195, **0.01 = 0.254*

Pearson product-moment correlation (Pearson r) was conducted to examine the relationship between self-esteem, procrastination, and mental health among college students. The results indicated a strong negative correlation between self-esteem and procrastination ($r = -0.59^{**}$, $p < .01$). This suggests that as self-esteem increases, procrastination decreases. The strong negative correlation between self-esteem and procrastination suggests that as self-esteem increases, procrastination decreases. This is consistent with the work of Steel (2007), who found that individuals with higher self-esteem tend to be more proactive and less likely to delay tasks. Higher self-esteem is associated with greater self-confidence and emotional resilience, which can lead to improved time-management skills and fewer procrastination behaviors (Sirois, Melia-Gordon, & Pychyl, 2013).

A strong positive correlation was found between self-esteem and mental health ($r = 0.75^{**}$, $p < .01$). This indicates that higher self-esteem is associated with better mental health. The strong positive correlation between self-esteem and mental health suggests that higher self-esteem is associated with better mental health outcomes. This result is supported by a wealth of literature showing that individuals with high self-esteem are more resilient to stress, have better coping mechanisms, and report lower levels of depression and anxiety (Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger, & Vohs, 2003; Orth, Robins, & Widaman, 2012). High self-esteem fosters a positive self-concept, which in turn supports better emotional regulation and overall well-being, contributing to the strong relationship between self-esteem and mental health observed in this study.

Negative correlation was observed between procrastination and mental health ($r = -0.61^{**}$, $p < .01$), suggesting that as procrastination increases, mental health tends to decrease. This aligns with the findings of Sirois et al. (2013), who demonstrated that procrastination is

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associated with higher levels of stress, anxiety, and depression. Procrastination often stems from avoidance of stress-inducing tasks, but this delay can create a cycle of heightened anxiety and negative emotions, which ultimately worsens mental health. Steel (2007) also highlighted that procrastination leads to feelings of guilt and inadequacy, which further exacerbate emotional distress.

CONCLUSIONS

1. Self-esteem is negatively correlated with procrastination among college students.
2. Self-esteem is positively correlated with mental health among college students.
3. Procrastination is negatively correlated with mental health among college students.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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