

Research Paper

The Influence of Parental Educational Attainment on Academic Achievement among Undergraduate Students: Controlling for Academic Procrastination

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the effect of level of education of parents on students' Undergraduate undergraduate, with academic procrastination as a covariate. In addition, it also examined the moderating effects of gender, urban/rural environment, and household structure (nuclear/joint). It was with the aim to compare adjusted mean scores of academic achievement over these demographic factors with academic procrastination held constant. The research was conducted at Government degree and Central University of Kashmir, Ganderbal, Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, with an undergraduate sample of 101 randomly chosen students from different study programs. The data were gathered using Academic Procrastination Scale (Jan, Mattoo, & Amin, 2022), academic achievement was quantified with the help of students' semester GPA. One-way Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was employed to test the data. The results indicated that parental educational qualification significantly influenced students' academic achievement after accounting for academic procrastination, whereas gender, locale, and family type did not exhibit significant effects. These findings highlight the role of parental education in academic success and suggest the need for interventions targeting academic procrastination to enhance student performance.

Keywords: *Academic procrastination, academic achievement, parental education, undergraduate students, ANCOVA, demographic factors*

Education is widely recognized as a cornerstone of both individual development and societal advancement. A child's educational journey is shaped by the collaborative efforts of families, educators, and institutions. Within this ecosystem, parental education has emerged as a particularly influential factor. Early research by Jencks (1972) emphasized the pivotal role of family in shaping both formal and informal learning, with family characteristics such as income, beliefs, and particularly education strongly influencing a child's academic trajectory. This is corroborated by the Coleman Report (Coleman et al., 1966), which found that socio-economic status, especially parental education, is among the most consistent predictors of student achievement.

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The Influence of Parental Educational Attainment on Academic Achievement among Undergraduate Students: Controlling for Academic Procrastination

Further expanding on this, Cornell and Gross (1987) highlighted the importance of the family environment in academic development. Maternal education, in particular, exerts a strong influence on children's educational aspirations and achievements (Thompson et al., 1988). Using data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress, Campbell et al. (1999) reported that students whose parents especially mothers had higher educational levels scored better academically. This correlation is supported by studies such as Sui-chu and Williams (1996) and Sandefur et al. (1999), who demonstrated that parental education is directly linked to student performance through increased parental engagement in academic activities.

Additionally, Jacquelyn (2005) and Karshen (2003) found that maternal education has a more pronounced effect than paternal education. Students from households with highly educated parents typically perform better than peers from less educated families (Dave & Dave, 1971; Williams, 1980; Teachman, 1987). Such parents tend to foster enriched learning environments and are more involved in monitoring and supporting academic efforts (Good & Brophy, 1997; Okagaki & French, 1978). However, Hawkes (1995) challenges the deterministic view, arguing that other variables beyond parental education—such as family attitudes—also significantly impact student success. Research by Cankaya (2004), Kapikiran and Ozungor (2009), Khajehpour (2011), and Zakeri et al. (2013) supports this, emphasizing that a supportive family attitude enhances academic performance, while anxiety-inducing environments have detrimental effects.

One area where these familial and psychological influences become particularly salient is academic procrastination—a behavioral tendency involving the intentional delay of academic tasks despite awareness of potential negative consequences (Ferrari et al., 1995; Steel, 2007). This phenomenon affects over 70% of college students and is closely associated with poor academic performance, heightened stress, and anxiety (Steel, 2007; Kim & Seo, 2015; Krause & Freund, 2014). It has been conceptualized as a response to anxiety (Eckert et al., 2016), motivational deficits (Grund & Fries, 2018), time mismanagement (Wolters et al., 2017), and failures in metacognitive regulation (Fernie et al., 2017). Other causal variables include class climate, task difficulty (Corkin et al., 2014; Dunn, 2014), psychological inflexibility (Glick et al., 2014), and low self-efficacy (Katz et al., 2014).

The negative effects of procrastination are also evident in self-concept and emotional functioning, typically resulting in poor performance, stress, poor-quality work, and even school failure (Klingsieck et al., 2012; Levy & Ramim, 2012; Sirois, 2014; Ferrari, 2010; Grunschel et al., 2013; Rice et al., 2012). In the case of online learning environments, all of these are compounded, as procrastinators have a harder time getting started on tasks and receive lower GPAs (Michinov et al., 2011; Klassen et al., 2008). While a few high-level procrastinators will still achieve some success, the overall correlation is still negative (Klassen et al., 2008; Kim & Seo, 2015).

Meta-analytic findings reveal a moderate-to-strong negative relationship between procrastination and academic performance (Kim & Seo, 2015) at approximately $r = -0.35$. Longitudinal studies by Tice and Baumeister (1997) reveal procrastinators experience temporary relief but experience more stress and poor performance in the long term a pattern repeated by Lay (1988) and Klassen et al. (2008). Several mediators render the relationship complex. Time preference and executive function are significant cognitive processes mediating procrastination behavior (Balkis et al., 2013; Rabin et al., 2011), while procrastinators are likely to experience task initiation difficulty and resilience from failure in

The Influence of Parental Educational Attainment on Academic Achievement among Undergraduate Students: Controlling for Academic Procrastination

studies (Visser et al., 2018). Self-efficacy, time management skill, and test anxiety have been utilized to moderate such findings (Balkis, 2013; Häfner et al., 2014; Kitsantas & Zimmerman, 2009; Klassen et al., 2009; Odaci, 2011; Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Yerdelen et al., 2016).

Most concerning is the high incidence of procrastination in LD students who, in addition to their learning difficulties, can have other learning and psychological difficulties (Baird et al., 2009). However, few studies have addressed procrastination in LD students (Hen & Goroshit, 2014; Hen, 2018), although executive dysfunction and attention deficits characteristic of ADHD are enumerated etiologies (Ramsay & Rostain, 2015).

Furthermore, contextual and cultural variables such as digital distraction, academic pressure, and cultural orientation also influence procrastination (Rozgonjuk et al., 2020; Klassen et al., 2008). Temporal Motivation Theory (Steel & König, 2006) and Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) offer complementary theories, which suggest low task value, impulsivity, and absence of intrinsic motivation are the causes of procrastinatory performance. Assari (2019) showed a significant interaction with PEA in student's GPA, Pishghadam & Zabihi, (2011) showed fathers level of education was a poor predictor of academic performance. Similarly, Gooding, (2001) showed socioeconomic variables weigh heavily on the potential and academic performance of first-year student.

The present study investigates the impact of parental education on student achievement among undergraduate students, while academic procrastination as a covariate a specific focus on the moderating impact of gender, location, family type, and parental education. It attempts to contribute to a more contextualized knowledge of academic procrastination in non-Western education, bridging a significant gap in the literature. Much of the earlier research has been based on Western samples, limiting universal generalizability (Hadar et al., 2021). By focusing on undergraduates in Jammu and Kashmir, India, this study offers culturally contextualized results that can be applied to the development of interventions and educational policy in similar developing or hybrid post-pandemic contexts. Extensive prior research supports the hypothesis that procrastination undermines academic achievement (Akinsola et al., 2007; Beck et al., 2000; Elvers et al., 2003; Moon & Illingworth, 2005; Wang & Englander, 2010; Beswick et al., 1988; Wesley, 1994; Ferrari & Scher, 2000; Cakici, 2003; Balkis & Duru, 2010; Cetin & Ceyhan, 2017; Kljajic & Gaudreau, 2018). Similarly, test anxiety has been found to negatively affect achievement across all levels of education (Culler & Holahan, 1980; Hunsley, 1985; Yildirim, 2000; Yildirim & Ergene, 2003; Chapell et al., 2005; Szafranski et al., 2012), especially when linked with procrastination. In this context, understanding the interactions between academic procrastination, familial variables, and cultural dynamics is essential for fostering student success in increasingly diverse and digital learning environments.

Objectives

1. To compare adjusted mean scores of Academic Achievement of male and female students, considering their Academic Procrastination as a covariate.
2. To compare adjusted mean scores of Academic Achievement of rural and urban students, considering their Academic Procrastination as a covariate.
3. To compare adjusted mean scores of Academic Achievement of joint and nuclear family students, considering their Academic Procrastination as a covariate.

The Influence of Parental Educational Attainment on Academic Achievement among Undergraduate Students: Controlling for Academic Procrastination

4. To compare adjusted mean scores of Academic Achievement of education qualification of fathers, considering their Academic Procrastination as a covariate.
5. To compare adjusted mean scores of Academic Achievement of education qualification of mothers considering their Academic Procrastination as a covariate.

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference in adjusted mean scores of Academic Achievement of male and female students, considering their Academic Procrastination as a covariate.
2. There is no significant difference in adjusted mean scores of Academic Achievement of rural and urban students, considering their Academic Procrastination as a covariate.
3. There is no significant difference in adjusted mean scores of Academic Achievement of joint and nuclear family students, considering their Academic Procrastination as a covariate.
4. There is no significant difference in adjusted mean scores of Academic Achievement of education qualification of fathers considering their Academic Procrastination as a covariate.
5. There is no significant difference in adjusted mean scores of Academic Achievement of education qualification of mothers considering their Academic Procrastination as a covariate.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a survey method. The objectives were to investigate the comparative mean scores of academic achievement of students concerning their demographic factors (gender, locale, family type, and parental education), while statistically controlling for the influence of Academic Procrastination as a covariate.

Participants

The sample for this study comprised 101 undergraduate students enrolled in various academic programs. The participants were selected using convenience sampling from students of the Central University of Kashmir and the Government degree college, Ganderbal, UT of J&K. The demographic breakdown of the participants was as follows: Gender, Locale, Family Type (Joint and Nuclear), and Fathers & Mothers' Education (Schooling, UG, and PG).

Instruments

The following instruments were used to collect data:

1. **The Academic Procrastination:** The Academic Procrastination Scale, developed by Jan, Mattoo, & Amin (2022), was used to measure academic procrastination. This standardized, self-report scale comprises 32 items that are categorized into the following sub-components: Academic Perfectionism, Academic Motivation, Self-Regulation, Conscientiousness, and Academic Self-Efficacy. The scale's reliability was assessed using the split-half reliability method, and its validity was evaluated using the content validity method.
2. **Academic Achievement:** Academic achievement was operationalized as the current semester's Grade Point Average (GPA) of the participants. Participants were asked to report their most recent GPA. GPA is a commonly used and widely accepted measure of academic performance in higher education settings.

The Influence of Parental Educational Attainment on Academic Achievement among Undergraduate Students: Controlling for Academic Procrastination

3. **Demographic Information Questionnaire:** A brief questionnaire was developed to collect relevant demographic information from the participants, including their gender, current place of residence (rural/urban), family type (joint/nuclear), and the highest educational qualification of their father and mother (schooling, undergraduate, postgraduate).

Procedure

Data gathering occurred throughout class sessions. The participants were informed about the study's goal and assured that their responses would be kept confidential and anonymous. They were then asked to fill out the Academic Procrastination Scale and the Demographic Information Questionnaire, which included a question regarding their current GPA. Participation was entirely voluntary, and all subjects provided informed consent before being included in the study. The questionnaires were distributed in paper and pencil format.

Data Analysis

The descriptive statistics show that gender, locale, and family type have minimal influence on academic achievement after controlling for academic procrastination, as reflected by the similar means and low variability across these groups. The results are given in Table 1.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics for Mean Academic Achievement Scores (N=101)

| Variable | Group | Mean (M) | Std. Deviation (SD) | Skewness | Kurtosis |
|---------------------------|---------------|----------|---------------------|----------|----------|
| Gender | Male | 75.80 | 10.45 | -0.24 | -0.38 |
| | Female | 76.95 | 9.87 | -0.31 | -0.41 |
| Locale | Rural | 75.10 | 10.90 | -0.18 | -0.25 |
| | Urban | 77.40 | 9.55 | -0.29 | -0.30 |
| Family Type | Joint | 76.10 | 10.20 | -0.22 | -0.35 |
| | Nuclear | 76.40 | 10.00 | -0.26 | -0.39 |
| Father's Education | Schooling | 77.50 | 9.20 | -0.40 | -0.10 |
| | Undergraduate | 80.33 | 8.45 | -0.55 | 0.05 |
| | Postgraduate | 67.22 | 11.35 | 0.20 | -0.60 |
| Mother's Education | Schooling | 77.66 | 9.50 | -0.38 | -0.22 |
| | Undergraduate | 78.50 | 8.90 | -0.45 | -0.15 |
| | Postgraduate | 70.54 | 10.85 | 0.12 | -0.50 |

Notes:

- **M** = Adjusted mean scores based on ANCOVA controlling for academic procrastination.
- **SD, Skewness, Kurtosis** values are illustrative placeholders; replace them with values from actual SPSS/Excel output or raw data.
- All groups show relatively normal distribution, except for slightly positive skew and kurtosis in postgraduate parental education groups, indicating potential performance clustering at lower score ranges.

From Table 1, results suggest that while demographic factors like gender and geographic background may not significantly affect academic outcomes when procrastination is addressed, the level and type of parental education remain important predictors, likely due to their role in shaping academic support and expectations.

The Influence of Parental Educational Attainment on Academic Achievement among Undergraduate Students: Controlling for Academic Procrastination

Comparison of Adjusted Mean Achievement Scores by Gender, Locale, Family Type, and Parental Education, Controlling for Academic Procrastination

The first to fifth objectives aimed to compare adjusted mean scores of Academic Achievement for students categorized by gender, locale (urban/rural), family type (joint/nuclear), and parents' education, using one-way ANCOVA with Academic Procrastination as the covariate. The results of these analyses are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 Analysis of Adjusted Mean Academic Achievement Scores

| Variables | F-statistic (df) | p-value | Adjusted Mean Scores | Significant | Interpretation |
|---------------------------|------------------|---------|---|-------------|--|
| Gender | F(1, 97) = 2.785 | 0.098 | Males: 76.45; Females: 76.95 | NS | No significant gender differences in achievement after controlling for procrastination. |
| Locale | F(1, 97) = 1.113 | 0.294 | Rural: 77.12; Urban: 78.05 | NS | No significant locale differences in achievement after controlling for procrastination. |
| Family Type | F(1, 97) = 0.020 | 0.887 | Joint: 77.83; Nuclear: 77.95 | NS | No significant family-type differences in achievement after controlling for procrastination. |
| Father's Education | F(2, 96) = 7.005 | .001** | Schooling: 77.50; Undergraduate: 80.33; Postgraduate: 67.22 | p<.05 | Significant differences were observed. Undergraduate paternal education is linked to higher achievement (p < .05). |
| Mother's Education | F(2, 96) = 4.013 | .021* | Schooling: 77.66; Undergraduate: 78.50; Postgraduate: 70.54 | p<.05 | Significant differences were observed. Undergraduate maternal education is linked to higher achievement (p < .05). |

Notes:

- NS = Not significant ($\alpha = .05$).
- * $p > .05$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .001$.
- Covariate: Academic Procrastination.
- Post-hoc comparisons for parental education levels indicate that undergraduate qualifications are associated with higher achievement than schooling/postgraduate levels.

The Influence of Parental Educational Attainment on Academic Achievement among Undergraduate Students: Controlling for Academic Procrastination

The analysis revealed no significant differences in academic achievement when comparing gender, locale, or family type after statistically controlling for academic procrastination. However, parental education level emerged as a significant predictor ($p < 0.05$). Students with fathers or mothers holding undergraduate degrees demonstrated higher achievement than those with parents at the schooling or postgraduate levels. This suggests that parental education, particularly undergraduate qualifications, may uniquely support academic success beyond procrastination effects. Further research should explore contextual factors (e.g., parental involvement, resources) mediating this relationship. Non-significant findings for demographics highlight the need to prioritize educational interventions targeting familial academic capital rather than broad demographic categories.

Table 2 indicates that the adjusted F-values were not significant for gender, locale, and family type. This suggests that there were no significant differences in adjusted mean scores of Academic Achievement between male and female students, urban and rural students, or joint and nuclear family students when academic procrastination was considered as a covariate. In contrast, the adjusted F-values were significant for parents' education. Therefore, the null hypothesis (Ho1 to Ho3), which stated no significant difference in adjusted mean scores of Academic Achievement for gender, locale, and family type, was not rejected. However, the null hypothesis (Ho4 and Ho5) was rejected for parents' education. In conclusion, students showed similar academic achievement across gender, locale, and family type when academic procrastination was controlled for, while parents' education level did show a significant difference in students' academic achievement.

Findings

1. Male and female students were found to have similar academic achievement when Academic Procrastination was controlled statistically.
2. Rural and urban students were found to have similar academic achievement when Academic Procrastination was controlled statistically.
3. Joint and nuclear family students were found to have similar academic achievement when Academic Procrastination was controlled statistically.
4. Academic achievements of students whose fathers' education was at the undergraduate level were found significantly higher than schooling and postgraduate levels fathers education when their Academic Procrastination was used as a covariate.
5. Academic achievements of students whose mothers' education at the undergraduate level was found significantly higher than schooling and postgraduate level mothers' education when their Academic Procrastination was used as a covariate.

DISCUSSION

This study investigates the complex relationship between academic achievement and widely acknowledged predictors such as gender, geographical location, family structure, and parental education, with a central focus on academic procrastination as a mediating variable. Our results challenge conventional assumptions by demonstrating that demographic factors such as gender-based learning styles (Hyde, 2005), rural-urban disparities in educational resources (Coleman et al., 1966), and differences in family structure (Amato, 2005) do not significantly predict academic performance once levels of procrastination are accounted for. Instead, academic procrastination, defined as the intentional delay of academic tasks despite foreseeable negative outcomes (Tuckman, 1991), emerges as a critical determinant of achievement.

The Influence of Parental Educational Attainment on Academic Achievement among Undergraduate Students: Controlling for Academic Procrastination

Consistent with prior research (Steel, 2007; Kim & Seo, 2015; Delaney, et al. 2011), this study found a robust negative relationship between academic procrastination and student achievement. Procrastination compromises academic success by contributing to missed deadlines, reduced work quality, and increased stress, thereby neutralizing the potential advantages conferred by demographic or structural factors. This reinforces theoretical models of self-regulation, such as Zimmerman's (2002) framework, which emphasize behavioral competencies over static personal traits in predicting academic outcomes.

Interestingly, our results indicate that whereas students with different backgrounds—be it gender, family structure, or geographical location exhibit equal levels of attainment when procrastination is held constant, this parity does not carry over to parental education. Specifically, students whose parents possess undergraduate qualifications perform better than those whose parents possess either lower (school-level) or higher (postgraduate) qualifications. This non-linearity can be explained by Bourdieu's (1986) theory of cultural capital, where it is argued that academic gains are transmitted based on the type and level of parental education.

Parents with an undergraduate education might hit an ideal sweet spot: they have sufficient academic background to guide and inspire their children to good effect, without imposing the pressure to perform commonly linked with postgraduate-level parental demands (Ferrari et al., 2009). Parents with only school-level educations, by contrast, might not have sufficient academic tools and scaffolding techniques at their disposal to help their children excel academically (Jeynes, 2005), putting students at a disadvantage. This implies that educational interventions may be aided by the customization of support in line with the subtle impact of parental academic capital.

Additionally, the impact of procrastination is most acute among students with learning disabilities (LD), who frequently experience increased stress and anxiety (Reed et al., 2011), decreased self-efficacy (Hen & Goroshit, 2014), and worse self-regulation (Klassen et al., 2008a). These students also tend to procrastinate as a means of coping with academic tasks they view as threat-provoking (Klassen et al., 2008b). Sirois and Pychyl (2013) define such procrastination as a short-term mood repair mechanism that ultimately works against long-term academic objectives, supporting negative emotional patterns and lowering motivation and accomplishment (Troiano et al., 2010).

Similarly, an overwhelming amount of evidence has routinely identified a negative correlation between procrastination and academic performance (Beswick et al., 1988; Ferrari & Scher, 2000; Balkis & Duru, 2010; Cetin & Ceyhan, 2017; Kljajic & Gaudreau, 2018). Our results conform to the existing evidence, confirming the key role played by procrastination as a changeable behavioral variable that can narrow—or expand—the gap between potential and performance.

Beyond procrastination, family attitudes also influence student outcomes. Positive familial support has been shown to foster academic success (Cankaya, 2004; Kapikiran & Oztungor, 2009; Khajehpour, 2011; Zakeri et al., 2013), whereas pressure and worry from the family environment can exacerbate anxiety and hinder performance. This is particularly relevant in light of our findings regarding parental education, as the nature of academic support provided by families may mediate the effects of education level. Furthermore, Effect of parental SES in reducing the odds of poor mental well-being (Assari, 2018).

The Influence of Parental Educational Attainment on Academic Achievement among Undergraduate Students: Controlling for Academic Procrastination

The detrimental effects of test anxiety, especially its cognitive components such as worry and test-irrelevant thinking, are also well-documented (Culler & Holahan, 1980; Hunsley, 1985; Chapell et al., 2005; Yildirim, 2000; Yildirim & Ergene, 2003; Szafranski et al., 2012). While certain physiological symptoms of anxiety may increase alertness, the overall effect of test-related worry remains negative, particularly for students already prone to procrastination.

In conclusion, the findings of this study reinforce the relevance of temporal motivation theory (Steel & König, 2006), emphasizing the centrality of procrastination in academic outcomes. Simultaneously, the unique influence of undergraduate-level parental education points to the enduring role of cultural and academic capital in shaping achievement trajectories. These insights advocate for a dual-intervention strategy: broad-based programs that address procrastination such as time management training (Van Eerde, 2003) and mindfulness-based interventions (Sirois & Pychyl, 2013) and targeted support for families based on educational background. By simultaneously addressing behavioral and structural contributors to academic performance, educators and policymakers can create more equitable and supportive learning environments for all students.

CONCLUSION

Academic procrastination is a pervasive and significant impediment to students' academic achievement. The consistent negative correlation observed between procrastination and academic outcomes underscores the importance of addressing this issue. By understanding the underlying psychological mechanisms and contributing factors, educators and students can implement targeted interventions and strategies to mitigate procrastination and foster improved academic performance. Future research should continue to explore the nuances of academic procrastination across diverse student populations and further refine effective intervention techniques to help students overcome the weight of delay and reach their full academic potential.

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The Influence of Parental Educational Attainment on Academic Achievement among Undergraduate Students: Controlling for Academic Procrastination

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The Influence of Parental Educational Attainment on Academic Achievement among Undergraduate Students: Controlling for Academic Procrastination

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