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Research Paper

# Academic Procrastination as a Predictor of Academic Performance and Overall Mental Health in College Students

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## ABSTRACT

Academic procrastination is a prevalent challenge among college students, often adversely affecting both their academic performance and overall mental health, including psychological, emotional, and social well-being. The present study investigates the relationships between academic procrastination, academic achievement, and mental health, along with its core dimensions, among Indian college students. A total of 150 students from colleges in the Varanasi and Prayagraj districts in Indian participated in the study, recruited through purposive sampling. Standardized instruments were employed for data collection: The Academic Procrastination Scale (McCloskey, 2011), the Academic Performance Scale (Birchmeier et al., 2015), and the Mental Health Continuum–Short Form (Keyes, 2002). Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson's correlation, and simple linear regression. The results indicated a significant negative relationship between academic procrastination, academic performance, and mental health, including its psychological, emotional, and social dimensions. These findings underscore the need for targeted interventions in academic settings to mitigate procrastination and promote both academic success and student well-being.

***Keywords:*** *Academic procrastination, Academic performance, Mental health, Psychological well-being, Emotional well-being, Social well-being*

Procrastination is broadly understood as the unnecessary delay of important tasks despite awareness of potential negative outcomes. It has been described as a maladaptive form of self-regulation (Steel, 2007) and, in severe cases, a clinically significant failure of self-control (Hocker et al., 2012; Smoletz, 2019). Within academic settings, procrastination is particularly prevalent, as students voluntarily postpone essential academic tasks, such as preparing for examinations, completing assignments, or meeting institutional requirements (Garzón Umerenkova et al., 2020; Schouwenburg, 2004). Research suggests that between 80% and 95% of university students engage in procrastination at some point, with nearly half reporting frequent delays that negatively affect their academic responsibilities (Ellis & Knaus, 1977; Harriott & Ferrari, 1996; Solomon & Rothblum, 1984).

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Although procrastination has been noted in philosophical and literary traditions since antiquity, appearing in the writings of Hesiod (800 BC) and references in the Bhagavad Gita (500 BC), modern psychology views it as a multidimensional construct encompassing avoidance behaviors, dysfunctional thinking, and self-justifying excuses (Ellis & Knaus, 2002; Steel, 2007). Such delays may offer temporary relief but often contribute to stress, anxiety, and diminished performance over time.

Academic performance, in contrast, is generally assessed through measurable achievements, such as grades and test scores, as well as institutional benchmarks. However, it also reflects broader dimensions of learning, including cognitive, behavioral, and moral development (Narad & Abdullah, 2016; York et al., 2015). Strong academic performance is not only vital for individual success but also contributes to the development of human capital and societal progress (Ali et al., 2009; Singh et al., 2016). Procrastination, however, undermines these outcomes, with research showing associations between task delay, poorer grades, and reduced persistence in academic programs (Ferrari, 2010; Klassen et al., 2008).

Mental health, closely tied to patterns of procrastination, extends beyond the absence of mental illness. It encompasses the ability to cope with everyday stress, maintain psychological and emotional balance, and contribute productively to one's community (Bhugra et al., 2013; WHO, 2001). Broader conceptualizations also emphasize intrapersonal harmony, positive self-perception, and emotional resilience (Alonso, 1960; Mental Health Foundation, 2008). For students, academic procrastination has been consistently linked to poorer mental health outcomes, including increased distress, reduced well-being, and greater vulnerability to anxiety and depressive symptoms.

Given the pervasive nature of academic procrastination and its documented links to diminished academic outcomes and compromised well-being, it becomes crucial to investigate these associations within diverse cultural contexts. Much of the existing literature originates from Western settings, while research in India remains comparatively limited despite the rising academic pressures faced by college students. Exploring how procrastination relates simultaneously to academic achievement and the psychological, emotional, and social dimensions of mental health in Indian students is therefore essential. Such inquiry not only addresses a significant research gap but also provides insights that may guide interventions tailored to the academic and mental health needs of this population.

### *Academic Procrastination, Academic Performance, and Overall Mental Health*

Procrastination is broadly defined as the voluntary postponement of intended tasks despite awareness of potential negative outcomes (Steel, 2007). Within academic settings, this behavior manifests as the delay of critical responsibilities such as exam preparation, assignment completion, or meeting deadlines, even when students recognize that such delays may compromise their academic success (Steel & Klingsieck, 2016). Empirical evidence indicates that 30–60% of students engage in procrastination at levels that substantially disrupt their academic performance (Rabin et al., 2011).

A considerable body of research demonstrates the detrimental effects of academic procrastination on performance. It is consistently linked to lower grades, reduced quality of submissions, and prolonged program completion (Ferrari, 2010; Grunschel et al., 2013; Klassen et al., 2008a, 2008b). In online learning contexts, Michinov et al. (2011) observed that students with high levels of procrastination struggled to initiate and sustain study-

related tasks, performing less effectively than their low-procrastination peers. Meta-analytic findings further reinforce these outcomes; Kim and Seo (2015) reported that procrastination predicts poorer academic achievement, with stronger effects observed when performance is objectively measured rather than self-reported. Contextual and individual factors, including self-regulation, time management, and cultural background, moderate the strength of this relationship. For example, Balkis (2013) found that academic self-efficacy mediates the link between procrastination and achievement, while Rabin et al. (2011) highlighted that executive dysfunction and impulsivity exacerbate its negative impact. Similarly, Visser et al. (2018) noted that high procrastinators face greater difficulty initiating tasks and coping with academic setbacks, resulting in lower performance outcomes.

Psychological mechanisms provide further insight into these associations. Factors such as test anxiety, low self-confidence, fear of failure, and limited use of metacognitive strategies contribute to both increased procrastination and reduced academic success (Kitsantas & Zimmerman, 2009; Klassen et al., 2009; Odaci, 2011; Yerdelen et al., 2016). These findings suggest that procrastination not only delays task completion but also undermines students' confidence, self-regulatory capacity, and persistence, ultimately impairing academic performance. Importantly, the negative academic outcomes of procrastination are intertwined with students' psychological functioning; the same processes that compromise performance, heightened anxiety, poor emotional regulation, and low self-efficacy also pose risks to mental health, highlighting procrastination as both an academic and psychological challenge.

Academic procrastination has been widely recognized as a self-regulatory deficit with significant implications for students' mental health. Research consistently shows that procrastination in academic contexts is associated with negative psychological outcomes, including elevated distress, anxiety, and guilt resulting from unfinished tasks and perceptions of inadequacy (Kerbauy, 2001). These emotional consequences can further disrupt learning processes and exacerbate academic difficulties (Sampaio & Bariani, 2011). While early studies suggested that students primarily postpone unpleasant tasks (Solomon & Rothblum, 1984), more recent research indicates that procrastination also occurs in enjoyable activities, reflecting difficulties in emotional regulation. Consequently, academic procrastination is increasingly conceptualized as a maladaptive coping strategy linked to heightened stress, anxiety, depressive symptoms, and reduced life satisfaction (Mortazavi, 2016; Stead et al., 2010), underscoring its broader psychological burden.

Empirical studies also document associations between procrastination and both psychological and somatic outcomes. Habitual procrastinators report higher stress-related symptoms, greater physical complaints, and more frequent consultations with medical professionals (Ferrari, 2010; Ferrari et al., 1995). Conversely, protective factors such as psychological capital encompassing emotional, social, and psychological resources can buffer against procrastination tendencies, as students with higher psychological capital are less likely to delay academic tasks (Asfa et al., 2018). Similarly, Ahmad and Munir (2022) found a strong negative correlation between procrastination and psychological well-being, indicating that frequent procrastinators are at increased risk for compromised mental health.

The literature illustrates a robust and multidimensional relationship between academic procrastination, academic performance, and mental health, encompassing emotional, psychological, and social dimensions. Nevertheless, gaps remain in longitudinal and cross-

cultural research, limiting understanding of the long-term and contextual effects of procrastination on student well-being. Given these intertwined associations, examining how academic procrastination impacts both mental health and academic performance is crucial for developing comprehensive interventions to support students' holistic well-being.

***Rationale of the Study***

Extensive research in Western contexts has established that academic procrastination is negatively associated with both academic performance and mental health among college students (Ferrari, 2010; Ferrari et al., 1995; Kerbauy, 2001). Studies have further examined its impact on specific dimensions of well-being, including emotional, psychological, and social functioning (Ahmad & Munir, 2022; Asfa et al., 2018; Mortazavi, 2016; Stead et al., 2010). While the detrimental influence of procrastination on academic outcomes is well documented, findings remain inconsistent, largely due to moderating factors such as self-regulation, self-efficacy, and cultural context (Balkis, 2013; Kim & Seo, 2015; Visser et al., 2018).

Despite this growing body of evidence, the majority of research has been conducted in Western populations, with comparatively limited attention to non-Western contexts such as India. This gap is particularly significant, as the Indian higher education system is marked by intense academic competition, rising performance expectations, and structural pressures that may intensify the negative effects of procrastination. Moreover, few studies have simultaneously examined the dual impact of procrastination on academic performance and mental health, despite the clear interdependence of these domains.

The present study seeks to address these gaps by investigating the relationships between academic procrastination, academic achievement, and mental health among Indian college students. By examining psychological, emotional, and social dimensions of well-being alongside measures of academic performance, this research aims to provide a more comprehensive understanding of procrastination's consequences in a non-Western, high-pressure academic environment. Findings from this study are expected to contribute both theoretically, by contextualizing procrastination within Indian higher education, and practically, by informing targeted interventions to support students' academic success and mental health.

The following objectives of this study have been framed:

- To examine the relationship between academic procrastination and academic performance.
- To examine the relationship between academic procrastination and emotional well-being.
- To examine the relationship between academic procrastination and psychological well-being.
- To examine the relationship between academic procrastination and social well-being.
- To examine the relationship between academic procrastination and mental health.

Based on the objectives, the following hypotheses were formulated:

- Academic procrastination would significantly affect academic performance.
- Academic procrastination would significantly affect emotional well-being.
- Academic procrastination would significantly affect psychological well-being.

- Academic procrastination would significantly affect social well-being.
- Academic procrastination would significantly affect mental health.

## METHODOLOGY

### *Research Design*

The present study adopted a correlational research design within a descriptive survey framework. Descriptive research provides a systematic account of the characteristics of a population or phenomenon, while correlational research, classified as non-experimental, focuses on examining statistical associations between variables without manipulating or controlling external factors (Creswell, 2014). This design was chosen to explore the interrelationships between academic procrastination, mental health, and academic performance among college students.

### *Sample*

Data were collected using purposive sampling from a total of 150 college students in India. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 35 years and were pursuing undergraduate, postgraduate, or doctoral studies across institutions in the districts of Varanasi and Prayagraj. The purposive sampling approach was deemed appropriate to ensure the inclusion of individuals actively engaged in diverse academic programs, thereby enhancing the relevance of findings to the target population.

### *Measures*

- **Academic Procrastination Scale:** To assess academic procrastination, the Academic Procrastination Scale (McCloskey, 2011) was administered. The scale includes 25 items reflecting six domains of procrastinatory behavior: beliefs about one's abilities, susceptibility to distraction, influence of social factors, time management skills, laziness, and personal initiative. Participants respond on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Previous studies report excellent internal consistency for this tool, with Cronbach's alpha reaching .95.
- **Academic Performance Scale (APS):** Academic performance was measured using the Academic Performance Scale (APS) developed by Birchmeier et al. (2015) at Saginaw Valley State University. This self-report measure consists of eight items designed to capture students' academic behaviors and practices. Each item is rated on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Reliability studies indicate a Cronbach's alpha of .89 and a test–retest reliability of .85, while concurrent validity analyses support the APS as a practical and psychometrically sound measure of academic performance.
- **The Mental Health Continuum-Short Form (MHC-SF):** Students' mental health was evaluated with the Mental Health Continuum–Short Form (MHC–SF) developed by Keyes (2002). This 14-item scale is derived from the original long form and assesses three dimensions of well-being: emotional (items 1–3), social (items 4–8), and psychological (items 9–14). Together, these dimensions represent both hedonic (pleasure-oriented) and eudaimonic (functioning-oriented) components of positive mental health. The instrument demonstrates strong psychometric properties, with Cronbach's alpha values exceeding .80 for its subscales and test–retest coefficients of .68 across three consecutive 3-month intervals and .65 across 9 months.

***Procedure***

Before data collection, informed consent was obtained from all participants. They were provided with detailed information about the study, both verbally and in written form, to ensure clarity and transparency. Participation proceeded only after consent was formally granted. To create a comfortable environment, rapport was established with the respondents before administering the questionnaires. Data were collected using the selected standardized instruments, and scoring was carried out in accordance with the guidelines provided in each scale's manual.

## RESULTS

***Table 1. Summary of Correlation Results among Academic Procrastination, Academic Achievement, Psychological Well-Being, Emotional Well-Being, Social Well-Being, and Overall Mental Health.***

| | **Academic Achievement** | **Psychological Well-Being** | **Emotional Well-Being** | **Social Well-Being** | **Overall Mental Health** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Academic Procrastination** | -.406** | -.385** | -.251** | -.262** | -.353** |

***Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed);*
**Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)*

The obtained data were statistically analyzed on SPSS-27 (Statistical Package for Social Science) using descriptive statistics, bivariate correlation, and regression analysis. Table 1 represents the correlation analysis of the data.

The results of the correlational analysis of Academic procrastination with academic achievement and mental health (dimensions and overall) are presented in the following Table 1 reveals that academic procrastination is significantly negatively associated with academic achievement ($r=-.406$, $p<0.01$), psychological wellbeing ($r=-.385$, $p<0.01$), emotional wellbeing ($r=-.251$, $p<0.01$), social wellbeing ($r=-.262$, $p<0.01$) and overall mental health ($r=-.385$, $p<0.01$). These results suggest a negative correlation between academic procrastination and academic achievement, as well as between mental health, psychological well-being, emotional well-being, and social well-being. This means that as academic procrastination increases in college-going students, it lowers their academic achievement, mental health, psychological, emotional, and social well-being.

***Table 2. Academic Procrastination as a Predictor of Academic Achievement, Psychological Well-Being, Emotional Well-Being, Social Well-Being, and Overall Mental Health.***

| **Variable** | **β** | **$R^2$change** | **Adjusted $R^2$** | **F** | **p** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Overall Mental Health** | -.267 | .125 | .119 | 20.974 | .001 |
| **Psychological Well-Being** | -.137 | .148 | .143 | 25.607 | .001 |
| **Emotional Well-Being** | -.048 | .063 | .057 | 9.910 | .002 |
| **Social Well-Being** | -.083 | .069 | .063 | 10.867 | .001 |
| **Academic Achievement** | -.109 | .165 | .159 | 29.015 | .001 |

Table 2 depicts that academic procrastination is a significant predictor of mental health with a coefficient value of -.267 ($F = 20.974$, $p<.01$); this represents that academic procrastination explains a 12.5% variance in mental health. Academic procrastination is a significant

predictor of psychological well-being with a coefficient value of -.137 (F=25.607, p<.01); this represents that academic procrastination explains a 14.8% variance in psychological well-being. Academic procrastination is a significant predictor of emotional well-being with a coefficient value of -.048 (F=9.910, p<.01); this represents that academic procrastination explains a 6.3% variance in emotional well-being. Academic procrastination is a significant predictor of social well-being with a coefficient value of -.083 (F=10.867, p<.01); this represents that academic procrastination explains a 6.9% variance in social well-being. Academic procrastination is a significant predictor of academic achievement with a coefficient value of -.109 (F=29.015, p<.01); this represents that academic procrastination explains a 16.5% variance in academic achievement. These results indicate that academic procrastination is a significant predictor of mental health, psychological wellbeing, emotional wellbeing, academic achievement, and social wellbeing, so our five hypotheses state that 'Academic procrastination would significantly predict mental health, psychological wellbeing, emotional wellbeing, academic achievement, and social wellbeing is accepted.

## DISCUSSION

The present study investigated the relationships between academic procrastination, academic performance, and mental health among Indian college students, with a particular emphasis on the dimensions of psychological, emotional, and social well-being. Building on insights from the existing body of literature, the study sought to clarify two central associations: the link between academic procrastination and academic performance, and the link between academic procrastination and mental health. The results provide robust support for the proposed hypotheses, indicating that procrastination is significantly and negatively associated with both academic achievement and mental health outcomes across all examined dimensions. These findings not only corroborate previous international research but also extend the evidence to the Indian higher education context, where rising academic competition and stress may intensify the adverse consequences of procrastination.

The findings of the present study demonstrate that academic procrastination exerts a significant negative influence on the academic performance of Indian college students. This result is consistent with earlier research indicating that approximately one-third to two-thirds of students engage in procrastination at levels that impair academic achievement (Rabin et al., 2011). Previous studies have similarly documented links between procrastination and lower grades, reduced quality of submissions, and delays in completing academic programs (Ferrari, 2010; Grunschel et al., 2013; Klassen et al., 2008a, 2008b). Supporting this evidence, Michinov et al. (2011) observed that students with higher levels of procrastination were less effective in initiating and sustaining academic tasks in online learning environments compared to their peers with lower procrastination tendencies.

Regression analyses in the current study further confirmed that procrastination is a significant predictor of poorer academic performance. These results mirror Kim and Seo's (2015) meta-analytic findings, which established a robust negative association between procrastination and achievement, particularly when performance outcomes were objectively assessed. Nonetheless, the strength of this relationship appears to vary across individuals and contexts. Prior research highlights the role of self-regulation, time management, and cultural influences in shaping this association. For instance, Balkis (2013) identified academic self-efficacy as a mediator between procrastination and performance, while Rabin et al. (2011) emphasized the impact of executive dysfunction and impulsivity in amplifying the detrimental effects of procrastination. Similarly, Visser et al. (2018) noted that students

with higher procrastination tendencies face greater difficulty initiating tasks and managing setbacks, leading to diminished academic success.

From a theoretical perspective, these results can be explained through Temporal Motivation Theory (Steel, 2007), which argues that procrastination occurs when individuals prioritize short-term emotional relief over long-term academic goals, thereby undermining persistence and task completion. Likewise, Self-Regulation Theory frames procrastination as a breakdown of self-control, wherein poor goal-setting, planning, and monitoring prevent students from engaging productively with academic demands. Within the Indian context, structural pressures such as high-stakes examinations, competitive learning environments, and parental expectations may further intensify procrastination tendencies, thereby magnifying their negative effects on academic achievement.

These findings suggest that procrastination is not a trivial study habit but a complex behavioral and psychological phenomenon that directly impairs academic outcomes. Effective interventions should therefore focus on enhancing self-regulation, strengthening time-management strategies, and providing culturally responsive academic support to mitigate procrastination and its impact on student achievement.

Beyond performance outcomes, this study also contributes to understanding the relationship between procrastination and mental health, including its emotional, psychological, and social dimensions. Results revealed a significant negative association between procrastination and overall well-being, consistent with previous findings that link procrastination to psychological distress, depression, anxiety, and reduced life satisfaction (Mortazavi, 2016; Solomon & Rothblum, 1984; Stead et al., 2010). Tice and Baumeister (1997) also noted that while procrastination may provide temporary emotional relief, it ultimately leads to guilt, frustration, and long-term negative outcomes. Similarly, Blunt and Pychyl (2000) emphasized the role of guilt and shame in eroding emotional well-being among procrastinators.

The present study further demonstrates that procrastination undermines psychological resilience, emotional stability, and social connectedness. Supporting evidence indicates that higher levels of psychological capital encompassing emotional, social, and psychological resources serve as protective factors, reducing the likelihood of procrastination (Asfa et al., 2018). Conversely, Ahmad and Munir (2022) found that frequent procrastinators report lower psychological well-being, reinforcing the link between task delay and compromised mental health. Regression findings from the current study confirm procrastination as a significant predictor of diminished psychological, emotional, and social well-being, thereby highlighting its broad and multifaceted psychological costs.

These findings are particularly relevant within the Indian academic environment, where students face unique stressors such as intense competition, heavy coursework, and familial expectations to excel. Such pressures may exacerbate procrastination and intensify its detrimental effects on both academic and psychological functioning. By situating procrastination within this cultural framework, the present study addresses a key gap in the literature, offering insights into its consequences in non-Western, high-pressure educational contexts.

The results underscore the importance of implementing proactive strategies to mitigate procrastination and its negative outcomes. Educational institutions could introduce structured time-management workshops, mindfulness-based practices, and resilience-building interventions to strengthen students' self-regulation skills. Additionally, enhancing the availability of psychological counseling services would provide students with support for managing procrastination-related distress and promoting overall well-being. Such initiatives hold the potential to improve not only academic outcomes but also the broader psychological health of students.

## CONCLUSION

The present study provides robust evidence of a significant negative relationship between academic procrastination, academic achievement, and mental health among Indian college students. Higher levels of procrastination were consistently associated with lower psychological, emotional, and social well-being, as well as diminished academic outcomes. These findings emphasize that academic procrastination is more than a simple time-management issue; it represents a pervasive self-regulatory challenge that can compromise both scholastic performance and overall mental health.

Despite its contributions, the study has certain limitations. The relatively small and homogeneous sample (N = 150), reliance on self-reported measures, and cross-sectional design limit the generalizability of the findings and preclude the establishment of causal relationships. Nonetheless, the results offer important practical implications for higher education institutions. Specifically, they underscore the necessity of integrating structured time-management interventions, psychoeducational programs focused on self-regulation, and accessible counseling services to mitigate procrastination, improve academic achievement, and foster holistic well-being.

Future research should prioritize larger and more diverse samples while employing longitudinal or experimental designs to explore causal mechanisms and long-term effects of academic procrastination on both mental health and academic performance. Additionally, investigating the influence of cultural, institutional, and personality-related moderators could provide deeper insight into procrastination patterns across varied student populations. By proactively addressing procrastination, educational institutions can not only enhance academic outcomes but also cultivate resilient, mentally healthy students equipped to face future challenges.

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***Conflict of Interest***

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