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Research Paper

Impact of Procrastination and Attention on Perseverance in Task Completion among Young Adults

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the impact of procrastination and attention on perseverance in task completion among students. A sample of 129 young adults participated in the research, completing standardized measures of procrastination, attention, and perseverance. Descriptive statistics indicated moderate levels of procrastination and perseverance, and relatively high levels of attention. Pearson correlation analysis revealed that procrastination was significantly negatively correlated with both attention and perseverance, while attention was positively correlated with perseverance. Multiple regression analysis showed that procrastination and attention significantly predicted perseverance, with attention emerging as a strong predictor. An independent samples t-test found no significant gender differences in procrastination levels. The findings suggest that enhancing attention and reducing procrastination may play a critical role in fostering perseverance among students. These results have implications for educational strategies aimed at improving task completion and academic perseverance.

Keywords: *Procrastination, Attention, Perseverance, Task Completion, Students, Gender Differences, Regression Analysis*

"The chronic procrastinator, the person who does this as a lifestyle, would rather have other people think that they lack effort than lacking ability"
-Joseph. R Ferrari

With the fast-paced, cognitively complex world of today, the capacity to get things done in a timely and consistent manner has emerged as an essential dimension of scholastic and professional achievement. Yet, the ubiquitous existence of procrastination, the intentional deferment of planned activities despite anticipating negative outcomes; is a dangerous threat to efficiency and psychological health (Steel, 2007). Over 70% of students identify as procrastinators, and around 20% do so chronically, leading to increased stress, decreased performance, and mental health problems. The scientific issue is why people persist in procrastinating despite recognizing that procrastination is clearly adverse. It is also unclear how the behaviour crosses over with other fundamental psychological variables such as attention and perseverance.

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Whereas prior studies have investigated procrastination in relation to personality and emotional regulation deficiencies (Baumeister & Heatherton, 1996; Sirois & Pychyl, 2013), there is growing recognition that procrastination is ultimately not possible to fully grasp on its own. Attention, the process of selective focus on stimulus, is a central mechanism in generating and maintaining task-driven behaviour (APA, 2018). Research has revealed that impairments in sustained and selective attention enhance vulnerability to procrastination, especially under cognitive load or emotional pressure (Kahneman, 1973; Eysenck et al., 2007). In the same way, perseverance, which is persistent effort despite adversity, has been identified as a counterbalancing influence. Studies on self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997), grit (Duckworth et al., 2007), and motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985) are all supportive of the operation of perseverance in the facilitation of long-term goal striving and resistance against procrastinatory inclinations.

Although there has been a large amount of research addressing each of these variables separately, very few studies have examined the interactive processes among procrastination, attentional control, and perseverance. Understanding this interaction is critical for discovering psychological mechanisms that underlie task delay and for crafting focused interventions. This gap is what the current work seeks to fill by exploring how each of these three constructs impacts the others and how they interact to influence task accomplishment. Through the integration of research in cognitive psychology, motivational theory, and behavioural science, this research adds to a more holistic model of self-regulation- one that has implications both for clinical intervention and school-based strategies for improving goal-directed behaviour.

METHODOLOGY

Variables of the study

Independent Variables

- **Procrastination:** Procrastination describes the voluntary postponement of task initiation in spite of anticipating negative consequences.
- **Attention:** Attention refers to the person's ability to selectively concentrate on target stimuli despite distant stimuli.

Dependent Variable

- **Perseverance:** Perseverance of a person refers to the continued effort towards goal achievement irrespective of the adversities.

Objectives

- To analyse the relationship and impact of procrastination and attention on perseverance in task completion.
- To examine gender differences in levels of procrastination between males and females.

Hypotheses

- **Hypothesis 1:** Procrastination and attention will significantly predict perseverance in task completion among young adults.
- **Hypothesis 2:** There will be a significant difference in procrastination levels based on gender.

Sample

129 college students between the age group of 18 to 30 years participated in the study. The purposive sampling method was used for sample selection. This was done as per the inclusion and exclusion criteria as per the objectives of the study. After identifying the target population, samples were selected based on the snowball technique of sample selection.

Research design

The study employed a quantitative research design with correlational, predictive and comparative elements. It aimed to examine the relationship and prediction between procrastination, attention, and perseverance, and to explore gender-based differences in procrastination levels.

Assessment Tools

- **General Procrastination Scale:** GPS was developed by Pragya Lodha et.al in 2016 which measures Procrastination quotient of the subject with regard to the four dimensions: Academic, Workplace, Medical and Civic responsibilities. It consists of 23 items with a 5-point likert scale corresponding to the categories as Always (5), Often (4), Sometimes (3), Rarely (2), Never (1). GPS demonstrates acceptable reliability, with a split-half reliability coefficient of 0.711 and a Cronbach's alpha of 0.714, indicating good internal consistency. In terms of validity, the GPS shows strong construct validity.
- **Attention Control Scale:** ATTC was developed by Douglas Derryberry and Michael Reed in 2002 which measures the level of attention of an individual having two dimensions: attention focusing and attention shifting. It consists of 20 items with a 4-point likert scale corresponding to the categories as Always (4), Often (3), Sometimes (2), Almost never (1). The ACS-20 shows strong internal consistency, with alpha values of 0.88 for the composite scale, 0.80 for attentional focusing, and 0.65 for attentional shifting. The ACS-20 has demonstrated acceptable test-retest reliability over a 2-week interval ($r = 0.76$). ACS has been demonstrated to have acceptable validity.
- **The Grit Scale:** The grit scale was developed by Duckworth et al. in 2007 consisting of 12 items that measure perseverance and passion for long-term goals from two sub-dimensions: consistency of interests (passion) and perseverance of effort. The items must be evaluated on a scale from 1 to 5, according to their degree of agreement/disagreement with the statements: completely disagree (1), somewhat disagree (2), neither agree nor disagree (3), (4) quite agree, and completely agree (5). It has good psychometric properties with a reliability (Cronbach's alpha) of 0.70 for the passion sub-dimension and 0.71 for the perseverance sub-dimension.

Data Collection Procedure

The data was gathered using a Google Form containing an informed consent declaration, and three standardized questionnaires: General Procrastination Scale (GPS), Attention Control Scale (ATTC), and the Grit Scale, for measuring procrastination, attentional focus, and perseverance towards long-term goals, respectively. Young adults within the age group of 18 to 30 years were contacted to gather the data. Data was collected over a span of 42 days.

Statistical Analysis

The collected data was analysed using Microsoft Excel and Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Throughout the process, Microsoft Excel was utilized for data cleaning, code formatting and organizing the data prior to importing it into SPSS for data

analysis. Pearson correlation, multiple regression and independent sample t-test were used as statistical tools for result and interpretation.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 Means and Standard Deviations of Study Variables (N = 129)

Variable	M	SD
Procrastination	62.73	10.31
Attention	52.33	6.61
Perseverance	3.28	0.50

Table 1 presents the means and standard deviations for the main study variables. The mean score for procrastination was 62.73 (SD = 10.31), indicating moderate levels of procrastination among participants. Attention had a mean of 52.33 (SD = 6.61), suggesting generally high attentional capacity. The mean score for perseverance was 3.28 (SD = 0.50), reflecting a moderate to high level of perseverance in the sample.

Table 2 Pearson Correlation Coefficients Among Study Variables (N = 129)

Variable	1	2	3
1. Procrastination	—	–.377**	–.343**
2. Attention	–.377**	—	.463**
3. Perseverance	–.343**	.463**	—

***. Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).*
**. Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).*

The results of the Pearson correlation analysis shown in **table 2** revealed significant relationships among procrastination, attention, and perseverance. A significant negative correlation was found between procrastination and perseverance, $r = –.343$, $p < .001$, indicating that higher levels of procrastination are associated with lower levels of perseverance. Additionally, attention was positively correlated with perseverance, $r = .463$, $p < .001$, suggesting that individuals with higher attention levels tend to show greater perseverance. Furthermore, a significant negative correlation was observed between procrastination and attention, $r = –.377$, $p < .001$, indicating that increased procrastination is linked to reduced attention. All correlations were significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed), supporting the hypothesis that procrastination and attention significantly influence perseverance in task completion.

Table 3 Model Summary for Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Perseverance

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.497	.247	.235	.439

To assess the predictive value of procrastination and attention on perseverance, a standard multiple regression analysis was conducted.

Table 3 presents the Model Summary, showing that the regression model had an R = .497 and an $R^2 = .247$, indicating that approximately 24.7% of the variance in perseverance scores can be explained by the combined influence of procrastination and attention. The adjusted R^2 value of .235 accounts for the number of predictors in the model, and the standard error of the estimate was .439, indicating a reasonably good model fit.

Table 4 ANOVA Summary for Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Perseverance

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	7.962	2	3.981	20.68	< .001
Residual	24.256	126	0.193		
Total	32.217	128			

Table 4 shows the ANOVA summary, which confirmed that the overall regression model was statistically significant, F (2, 126) = 20.68, p < .001. This indicates that the predictors together reliably estimate perseverance, supporting the use of this regression model.

Table 5 Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Perseverance (N = 129)

Predictor	B	SE B	β	*t*	*P*
Constant	2.336	0.490	—	4.767	< .001
Attention	0.029	0.006	.389	4.656	< .001
Procrastination	–0.010	0.004	–.197	–2.355	.020

Table 5 displays the regression coefficients. The variable attention significantly and positively predicted perseverance (β = .389, p < .001), suggesting that higher attention levels are associated with higher perseverance. On the other hand, procrastination had a significant negative effect (β = –.197, p = .020), indicating that increased procrastination is associated with decreased perseverance. These results support the hypothesis that attention enhances perseverance, while procrastination undermines it.

Table 6 Mean comparison on empathy between males and females

Variable	Males ($n_1 = 42$)		Females ($n_2 = 87$)		t- value	Significance Level
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Procrastination	64.71	10.29	61.77	10.23	1.528	< .001

An independent samples *t*-test was conducted to examine gender differences in procrastination. Results indicated that male participants (M = 64.71, SD = 10.29) did not significantly differ from female participants (M = 61.77, SD = 10.23) in their procrastination scores, $t(127) = 1.53$, $p = .129$. Therefore, gender was not found to be a significant factor in procrastination levels.

The current research investigated the role of procrastination and attention in perseverance in task completion among young adults and considered gender differences in procrastination. Correlation and regression analyses provided findings that both procrastination and attention were significantly correlated with perseverance, supporting previous research positing that cognitive and self-regulatory processes have a direct impact on task perseverance (Baumeister & Heatherton, 1996; Sirois & Pychyl, 2013).

Attention showed a positive correlation with perseverance, indicating that those who perform better on maintaining focus tend to exhibit persistence and perseverance in task completion (Kahneman, 1973; Eysenck et al., 2007). Procrastination was negatively correlated with perseverance, corroborating evidence that voluntary task delay frequently dismantles long-term effort and goal-directed activity (Steel, 2007; Sirois & Pychyl, 2013).

Multiple regression analysis identified procrastination and attention as the joint predictors of perseverance, which explained about 24.7% of the variance in task perseverance. Attention was the better predictor with a positive and significant contribution to perseverance, whereas procrastination, although weaker in magnitude, was still statistically significant. These results confirm earlier theoretical models that emphasize attentional control as boosting self-regulation, while procrastination is a maladaptive coping mechanism (Eysenck et al., 2007; Baumeister & Heatherton, 1996; Sirois & Pychyl, 2013). Therefore, the alternative hypothesis, which stated that procrastination and attention significantly predict perseverance, was supported.

An independent samples t-test indicated that males and females did not significantly differ in their procrastination scores. Thus, the alternative hypothesis, which stated that there is a gender difference in procrastination, was not supported. This is consistent with reports that procrastination is a general problem for both genders (Steel, 2007).

CONCLUSION

This research explored the interaction of procrastination, attention, and persistence among young adults. Attention was found to be a high predictor of reinforcing individuals' intent towards task performance. Higher attention levels were also linked to increased perseverance. Procrastination impacted negatively on perseverance, with a finding that increased tendencies to procrastinate are related to lower perseverance in tasks. The study further found no variations between males and females in their levels of procrastination, as the effect of procrastination holds constant for the two gender categories.

Together, the results highlight the importance of attentional processes and the negative effect of procrastination on consistency and task completion. Developing attentional skills and reducing procrastination could be essential to promoting perseverance, especially in academic settings. The present study adds to the understanding of the psychological determinants of perseverance and provides a useful site for continued efforts to promote young adults' goal achievement.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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