

Research Paper

Determinants of Academic Procrastination and Its Consequences on Academic Life

Ms. Mumni Tayeng^{1*}, Dr. Sushant Kumar Nayak²

ABSTRACT

The phenomenon of irrational and unnecessary postponing or delaying of work, a task, or an assignment is referred to as procrastination. It is a complex human behaviour rooted in various emotional and behavioural factors. To explain this complexity, this paper offers a detailed and comprehensive exploration of the meaning of procrastination, its inherent characteristics and various forms. Furthermore, it delves into the specific type of procrastination that is frequently observed among students, commonly known as academic procrastination. It identifies three broad determinants of academic procrastination: psychological and emotional determinants, behavioural and skill-related determinants, and task-related and motivational determinants. The paper also outlines the consequences of procrastination on students' academic lives, which include mental and physical health challenges, continuous delay of tasks, loss of credibility, and hidden loss. Additionally, it proposes various strategies aimed at pacifying academic procrastination in students and highlights the pivotal role of educators in addressing and mitigating the adverse effects of academic procrastination.

Keywords: *Academic Procrastination, Self-Regulation, Academic Life, Role of Teachers*

Procrastination is a behavioural pattern that individuals have confronted, either through first-hand experience or by observing it in others. It illustrates a common human disposition, with every person having encountered procrastination at least once in their life (Sirios, 2022). Procrastination is both insidious and global, yielding adverse effects. The Oxford dictionary defines it as “*the act of delaying something that must be done, often because it is unpleasant or boring*”. However, procrastination transcends the mere deferral or postponement of a task or activity. It is an intricate aspect of human behaviour (Steel, 2007) that needs to be carefully considered since ignoring it can result in persistent patterns that deprive people of their goals, feelings of value, relationships with others in their personal and professional lives, and their mental and physical health (Sirios, 2022).

Genesis of Procrastination

The etymology of procrastination is the Latin term “*procrastinare*,” which means “*to put off until tomorrow*” (Steel, 2007). Furthermore, it is derived from the merger of the Latin

¹Research Scholar, Department of Education, Rajiv Gandhi University, Arunachal Pradesh, India.

²Assistant Professor, Department of Education, Rajiv Gandhi University, Arunachal Pradesh India.

*Corresponding Author

Received: May 19, 2025; Revision Received: February 20, 2026; Accepted: February 24, 2026

Determinants of Academic Procrastination and Its Consequences on Academic Life

words' "pro" and "crastinus", which denote "forward" and "pertaining to tomorrow", respectively. This suggests that procrastination can be interpreted as an expression of intent, such as "I will attend to it tomorrow" or "I will do it tomorrow" (Burka & Yeun, 2008). Such delays are entirely unnecessary and voluntary, occurring despite an awareness of the ensuing consequences and adverse outcomes (Steel & Klingsieck, 2016). The focus on delay here clarifies that though all procrastination is delay, all delay is not procrastination. Delays can be caused by a wide range of factors, including setting priorities on tasks considered more urgent or unexpected emergencies (Sirios, 2022). In instances of such delays, it cannot be categorised as procrastination. For a delay to be classified as procrastination, it must be both voluntary and unnecessary, even with the awareness of the potential consequences.

Temporal Motivation Theory (Steel, 2007) provides a framework to understand procrastination. It highlights four components of why people procrastinate. According to this theory, when an individual feels that there is sufficient time left for task completion, they feel less compelled to start it. It also combines expectancy and value of task. If a person believes that they can succeed in any given task, then they are more likely to engage with the task. The third component is delaying discounting, which refers to preference for 'now' over 'later.' It means that if a person thinks that the future reward is far away, then they choose to procrastinate by doing something fun rather than completing their given task. The last component deals with the impulsiveness or lack of self-control of an individual. If a person is easily distracted and lacks self-control, they are likely to procrastinate over their task. This aligns with the definition provided by Sirios and Pychyl (2013) who have defined procrastination as "a form of self-regulation failure that involves prioritising short-term mood repair over the long-term pursuit of intended actions." Procrastination usually occurs due to two primary causes: lack of self-control and too much attention to feeling good in the present moment rather than accomplishing something. Self-regulation refers to the ability to control your thoughts, emotions, and behaviour. When a person is not very good at this, he or she can get easily off track and become a procrastinator. The second cause, attention to mood, refers to the way people feel when performing a task. If the task causes them to experience boredom, anxiety, or frustration, they might attempt to stay away from it. Yielding to such feelings may cause them to procrastinate and delay the task (Sirios, 2022).

The outcomes of procrastination are predominantly negative and tend to inflict damage in various forms. Consider a scenario in which a task has been assigned to a student, necessitating submission within a specified timeframe. However, the student continues to defer the task, operating under the assumption that it can be completed at a later time. As the deadline approaches, feelings of guilt and regret begin to overwhelm the individual, which may induce anxiety and worry, consequently impairing cognitive function. The students were aware of the fact that the assignment was graded, and failure to complete it within the designated deadline would adversely impact their academic standing. However, the student persisted in deferring their responsibilities until the last possible moment, ultimately experiencing the detrimental consequences of such procrastination.

Characteristics of procrastination

Having explored the meaning of procrastination, it is equally important to look into the characteristics of procrastination. A comprehensive description of each characteristic is highlighted in the table below.

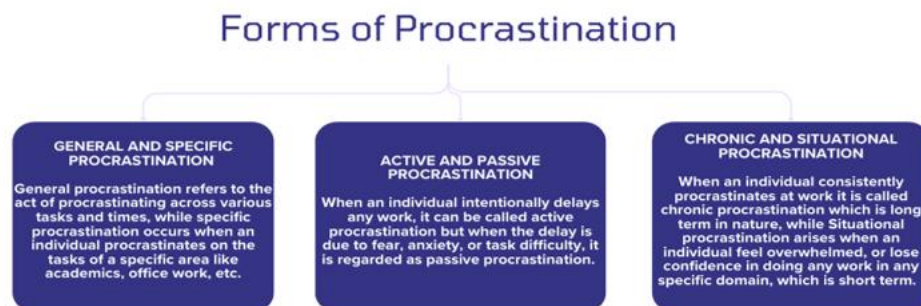
Table 1: Characteristics of procrastination and their description.

Characteristic	Description
Irrational Behaviour	Continuing to procrastinate despite knowing the negative consequences.
Voluntary Delay	Knowingly postponing tasks, leading to procrastination.
Lack of Self-Efficacy	Weakening of self-confidence in one's ability to complete tasks.
Negative Trait	A harmful and complex behaviour impacting goals, health, and performance.
Problem of Self-Regulation	Failure to control thoughts, feelings, and actions, resulting in loss of discipline.
Multi-faceted	Associated with emotions like anxiety, stress, indecision, poor planning, distractibility, and depression.
Defence Mechanism	Used to avoid unpleasant or difficult tasks.
Vicious Cycle	Delaying leads to fear and further procrastination, creating a repetitive cycle.

Forms of procrastination

Some kinds of behaviours are observed when a person is procrastinating that determine the form of procrastination. There are different forms of procrastination identified by various researchers, which are given below.

Fig. 1: Illustration of different forms of procrastination.



ACADEMIC PROCRASTINATION

Within the academic domain, the phenomenon of procrastination is remarkably and alarmingly prevalent, as it pervades many aspects of student life. It is a complex interplay of cognitive, behavioural and emotional factors (Jami, 2018). Considering the immense academic pressures that students face, along with the inexhaustible presence of looming deadlines for assignments, it is not at all surprising that there exists an extraordinarily high percentage of procrastination behaviours among the students (Sirios, 2022). Academic procrastination is a distinct behaviour that occurs when students indulge in procrastination, endangering their academic progress and overall learning experiences. It was formally mentioned in APA’s ‘Counselling Pedagogy’ in 1984, marking the beginning of its study (Qian & Fuqiang, 2018). This concept is uniquely relevant to the realm of academia and the scholarly practices undertaken by students as they navigate their educational journeys.

Academic procrastination has a negative correlation with student achievement, as found in different studies conducted across the globe (Duru & Balkis, 2014). The students who procrastinate more have a negative impact on their academic performance. The aftermath of academic procrastination is profoundly adverse, impacting not only productivity and

Determinants of Academic Procrastination and Its Consequences on Academic Life

creativity but also the overall learning process, which leads to a multitude of lost opportunities and a diminished ability to prioritise educational advancement and personal development. After mismanaging their time, students often turn to creating manufactured justifications, which makes the learning challenges significantly worse. The immense pressure to attain high grades often overrides their ethical considerations, leading them to engage in various forms of academic misconduct, including but not limited to cheating, plagiarism, the act of copying assignments, bringing unauthorised cheating materials during examinations, and the falsification of data in reports, among other dishonest practices. While these deceptive strategies may yield short-term academic success in the form of good grades, the fundamental objective of genuinely acquiring knowledge and skills is tragically neglected and left unfulfilled. In instances where students are caught engaging in such misconduct, they are likely to face severe consequences, including failing the course or, in the most extreme cases, expulsion from the academic institution. Moreover, this behaviour negatively impacts their future career prospects, as consistent procrastination on projects and assignments can lead potential employers to dismiss them as candidates for employment opportunities. Additionally, procrastination entails hidden costs, both financial and temporal; should a student continue to delay their academic responsibilities and ultimately fail to complete their course, the substantial monetary investments and time dedicated to their education are rendered entirely futile and wasted (Burka & Yeun, 2008; Sirios, 2022).

Determinants of academic procrastination

Understanding these causes or determinants of academic procrastination can help educators and students develop strategies to combat procrastination and improve academic performance. Addressing these underlying issues is crucial for combating academic procrastination among students. The determinants have been categorised into three broad categories.

1. Psychological and Emotional determinants: It includes the factors that are internal and often rooted in a student's mindset.

- i) **Low self-esteem:** People who have low self-esteem tend to procrastinate more than those with high self-esteem.
- ii) **Fear of Failure:** When an individual constantly puts off work due to their fear of being poorly evaluated or the fear of getting feedback that is negative, then they are procrastinating.
- iii) **Perfectionism:** The tendency to be perfect in everything that we do can also lead to procrastination. For example, a student is unable to start or finish any task because they feel that it is not perfect or meet their personal standard. This leads to a cycle of task avoidance while being in a continuous state of stress, leading to procrastination.
- iv) **Preference to avoid mental fatigue:** Sometimes students, in order to avoid the mental fatigue that comes with executing an academic work, like to procrastinate. Instead, they are more likely to engage in activities that are more fun and enjoyable.
- v) **Emotional Factors:** Along with the different determinants mentioned above, a person's emotions also influence how they procrastinate. A student who is always stressed or anxious or has low self-control and is unable to regulate their emotions is more likely to procrastinate.

2. Behavioural and Skill-related determinants: These determinants encompass the habits and actions of the students.

- i) **Poor Study Habits:** Students who don't have proper study habits find themselves overwhelmed in managing their study materials, often leading to procrastination. Developing an effective study habit can help the learner to escape the cycle of procrastination.
- ii) **Lack of Proper Time Management:** The ties of procrastination and time management reveal that proper time management has a positive effect on students who procrastinate. Students who have difficulty in managing their time end up delaying important tasks and assignments.
- iii) **Limited Proactiveness:** Students who exhibit limited proactiveness or personal initiative may struggle to take action on their academic assignments, often leading to procrastination.

3. Task-related and Motivational determinants: It is related to the characteristics of the tasks and the internal desires or motives of the student's efforts.

- i) **Aversion or Avoidance of Task:** Avoiding any kind of task or work that one finds boring or too tough also causes procrastination.
- ii) **Lack of Interest:** Procrastination is also caused when an individual lacks interest in any work or assignments assigned.

Consequences of procrastination on academic life

While it is important to understand the determinants of academic procrastination, it is equally essential to explore its consequences. This section delves into the wide-ranging impacts of procrastination on academic life as well as overall well-being. They are:

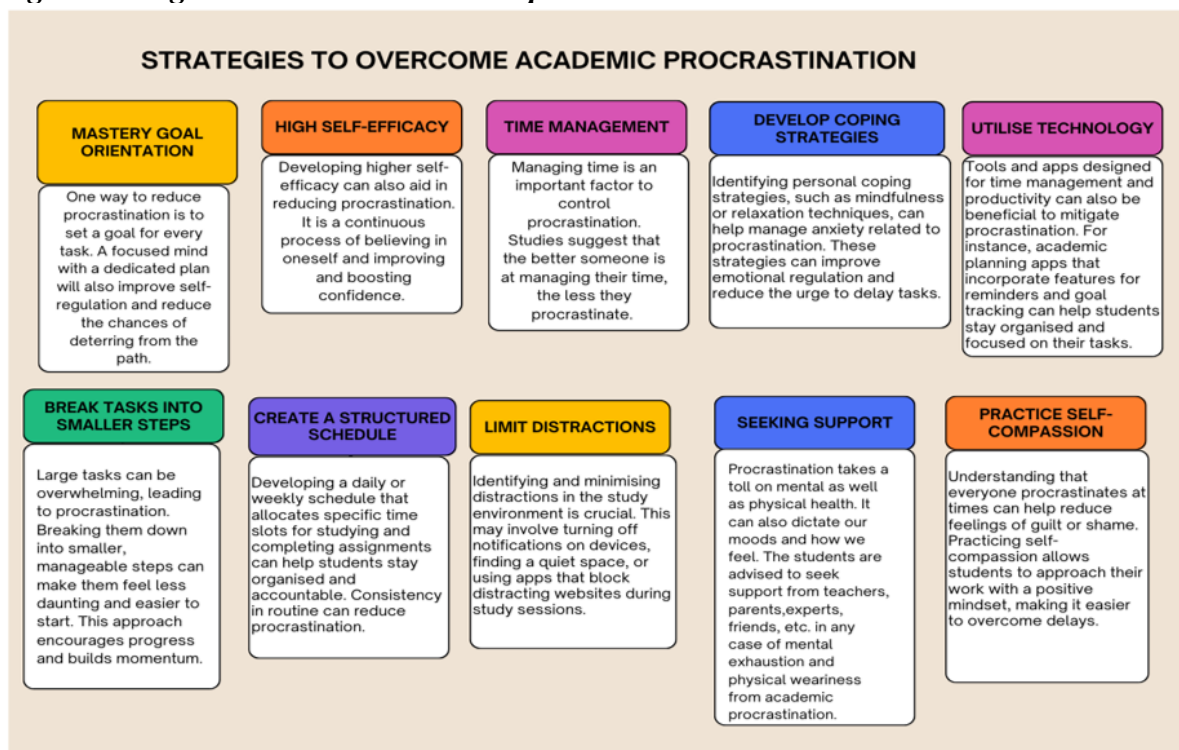
- i) **Mental and Physical Health:** Procrastination can lead to a rise of unpleasant emotions like anxiety, stress, regret, and low self-esteem among students. These can have a detrimental effect on both mental and physical health, leading to an overstressed body and mental burnout. These symptoms may further trigger the body to be more vulnerable to health issues like constant headaches, intestinal failure, and a low immune system.
- ii) **Continuous delay of tasks:** Procrastination is characterised as a vicious cycle that can trap anyone once they start. The pattern commences when the students fail to finish their task in time, resulting in negative emotions. Those troubling emotions worsen the procrastinating behaviour, keeping the students stuck in its vicious cycle. This results in continuous delay of tasks, which in turn fuels more procrastination.
- iii) **Loss of credibility:** A chronic procrastinator who consistently engages in the habitual delay of responsibilities and tasks faces a significant risk of experiencing loss of credibility within their respective field. If the learner persistently shelves the completion of their assigned tasks and obligations, it is highly likely that their friends and teachers will lose confidence in their abilities, leading to a situation where they are no longer entrusted with important projects and responsibilities, ultimately resulting in a complete erosion of trust in their personal and academic capabilities.
- iv) **Hidden loss:** The immediate financial effects of procrastination are possible to determine, but with careful examination and computation, the effects are, in fact, rather significant. The lost time of any student who yielded to procrastination prior to a deadline is irretrievable and gone forever, resulting in a permanent loss in productivity and efficiency. Moreover, there are a plethora of lost possibilities that would have provided personal development, skill improvement, and the opportunity to pursue future job options.

Determinants of Academic Procrastination and Its Consequences on Academic Life

Strategies to overcome academic procrastination

Academic procrastination is complex behaviour, and in order to overcome it, some strategies have been suggested by different scholars. It may be so that some procrastinators may be able to lessen their procrastinating behaviour with one strategy, while some may need to apply a combination of various strategies.

Fig. 2. Strategies to overcome academic procrastination.



Role of teachers

Teachers play a pivotal role in mitigating the issues of the students. When a student is chronically procrastinating, they can step in and offer various ways of support to help curb and resolve chronic procrastination in students. Some of the strategies to follow are-

- i) **Understanding academic stress:** Teachers can identify the sources of academic stress, like difficulty of task, anxiety of evaluation, fear of failure, etc. By understanding those sources, the teacher can extensively aid the students.
- ii) **Create a safe and supportive learning environment:** The teachers can create a space where the students get sufficient support and are free from judgement. They should encourage the students to confront their fears associated with procrastination and overcome it.
- iii) **Implementing effective teaching techniques:** The teacher can employ innovative teaching methods that cater to individual levels. They can assign customised tasks on the basis of their learning so that the factor of task aversion can reduce.
- iv) **Provide Feedback:** The teacher can track the progress of the student and provide personalised feedback so that they can improve where they are lacking.

CONCLUSION

Procrastination is a complex human behaviour that is widespread among the student population, frequently referred to as academic procrastination. It is the irrational and unnecessary delay in academic activities. The paper explored the origin, meaning, nature,

Determinants of Academic Procrastination and Its Consequences on Academic Life

and various forms of procrastination, with a focused analysis on the causes and consequences of academic procrastination. Additionally, it offered a compilation of various strategies to help in overcoming procrastination, highlighting the role teachers can play in mitigating student procrastination. Although teachers may assist students through specific interventions, the most effective way to counteract procrastination is to cultivate effective self-regulation skills, develop time management skills, and seek help when needed.

It is also important to acknowledge certain limitations of the paper. It primarily relies on existing literature and secondary sources without the inclusion of any primary data. As such, it may not fully capture the full range of individual procrastinating behaviour. Despite these limitations, the insights offered in the paper can serve as a valuable foundation for understanding academic procrastination, its causes, and its consequences for the students.

REFERENCES

- Afzal, S., & Jami, H. (2018). Prevalence of academic procrastination and reasons for academic procrastination in university students. *Journal of Behavioural Sciences*, 28(1), 51-69.
- Anthony, J. O. (2004). Academic procrastination and statistics anxiety. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 29(1), 3-19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0260293042000160384>
- Burka, J. B., & Yeun, L. M. (2008). *Procrastination: Why you do it, what to do about it now* (2nd ed.). Da Capo Lifelong Books.
- Duru, E., & Balkis, M. (2014). The roles of academic procrastination tendency on the relationships among self-doubt, self-esteem, and academic achievement. *Egitim Ve Bilim*, 39(173).
- Ferrari, J. R. (1996). *Procrastination and task avoidance: Theory, research, and treatment*. Springer
- Jaffe, E. (2013). Why Wait? The Science Behind Procrastination. *Association for Psychological Science*. <https://www.psychologicalscience.org/observer/why-wait-the-science-behind-procrastination>
- Johansson F, Rozental A, Edlund K, et al. (2023). Associations Between Procrastination and Subsequent Health Outcomes Among University Students in Sweden. *JAMA Network Open*. 2023;6(1):e2249346. doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2022.49346
- Kandemir, M. (2014). Reasons of academic procrastination: Self-regulation, academic self-efficacy, life satisfaction, and demographics variables. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 152, 188-193.
- Klassen, R. M., Krawchuk, L. L., & Rajani, S. (2008). Academic procrastination of undergraduates: Low self-efficacy to self-regulate predicts higher levels of procrastination. *Contemporary educational psychology*, 33(4), 915-931.
- Nábělková, E., & Ratkovská, J. (2015). Academic procrastination and factors contributing to its overcoming. *The New Educational Review*, 39, 107-118.
- Oxford Learner's Dictionaries. (n.d.). *Procrastination*. In *Oxford Learner's Dictionary*. <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/procrastination>
- Pychyl, T. A. (2010). *The procrastinator's digest: A concise guide to solving the procrastination puzzle*. T.A. Pychyl.
- Sirois, F. M. (2022). *Procrastination: What it is, why it's a problem, and what you can do about it*. American Psychological Association.
- Steel, P. (2007). The nature of procrastination: A meta-analytic and theoretical review of quintessential self-regulatory failure. *Psychological Bulletin*, 133(1), 65.

Determinants of Academic Procrastination and Its Consequences on Academic Life

Steel, P., & Klingsieck, K. B. (2016). Academic procrastination: Psychological antecedents revisited. *Australian Psychologist*, 51(1), 36-46.

Qian, L., & Fuqiang, Z. (2018). Academic stress, academic procrastination, and academic performance: A moderated dual-mediation model. *Journal on Innovation and Sustainability RISUS*, 9(2), 38-46.

Acknowledgment

The author(s) appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article: Tayeng, M. & Nayak, S.K. (2026). Determinants of Academic Procrastination and Its Consequences on Academic Life. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 14(1), 697-704. DIP:18.01.065.20261401, DOI:10.25215/1401.065