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Research Paper

A Comparative Analysis of Patience and Procrastination across Generation X and Generation Z

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ABSTRACT

Patience and procrastination are important self-regulatory constructs influencing emotional control, persistence, and goal-directed behaviour. Rapid socio-technological changes have raised questions about whether these traits differ across generations. The present study aimed to compare levels of patience and procrastination between Generation X and Generation Z and to examine the relationship between these variables. A total of 112 participants (56 from Generation X and 56 from Generation Z) from Maharashtra, India, were recruited using a snowball sampling technique. The General Procrastination Scale and the Three-Factor Patience Scale were administered. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, Pearson's correlation, and independent-samples t-tests. The results showed a significant negative correlation between patience and procrastination ($r = –0.293$, $p < .01$). However, no statistically significant generational differences were found in either patience or procrastination ($p > .05$). The findings suggest that patience and procrastination are inversely related, while generational differences are minimal, reflecting shared contemporary life pressures rather than generational identity alone.

Keywords: *Patience, Procrastination, Generation X, Generation Z, Self-Regulation*

Patience and procrastination are key psychological constructs that influence self-regulation, emotional functioning, productivity, and long-term goal achievement. Patience refers to the capacity to tolerate delay, frustration, or discomfort without emotional distress while maintaining goal-directed behaviour (Schnitker, 2012). It reflects an individual's ability to regulate impulses, manage stress, and persist in challenging situations, and is closely associated with emotional regulation, resilience, optimism, and adaptive coping (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).

In contrast, procrastination is defined as the voluntary delay of an intended course of action despite awareness of negative consequences (Steel, 2007). It is widely regarded as a failure of self-regulation rather than a mere time-management problem. Ferrari, Johnson, and McCown (1995) described procrastination as a pervasive behavioural tendency involving

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task avoidance, indecision, and self-defeating delay. Research consistently links procrastination with heightened stress, anxiety, guilt, reduced performance, and lower psychological well-being (Sirois & Pychyl, 2013).

From a theoretical perspective, patience is viewed as an adaptive psychological strength that facilitates delay of gratification and effective emotion regulation. Self-regulation theory suggests that individuals with higher patience demonstrate better impulse control and emotional management, enabling them to prioritize long-term goals over immediate comfort (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007). Procrastination, in contrast, is explained by Temporal Motivation Theory, which proposes that task delay increases when rewards are distant, tasks are aversive, or impulsivity is high (Steel & König, 2006). Emotion regulation models further conceptualize procrastination as a short-term mood-repair strategy, where task avoidance temporarily reduces discomfort but leads to adverse long-term outcomes (Sirois & Pychyl, 2013).

Recent psychological research has increasingly examined generational differences in behavioural and cognitive patterns in response to rapid socio-cultural and technological change. Generational theory posits that individuals born within the same historical period share formative experiences that shape values, attitudes, and behavioural tendencies (Mannheim, 1952). Generation Z, typically defined as individuals born between 1997 and 2012, has grown up in a highly digital environment characterized by constant connectivity, social media engagement, and immediate feedback (Twenge, 2017). Such conditions may reduce tolerance for delay and increase susceptibility to distraction, potentially influencing levels of patience and procrastination.

In contrast, Generation X, comprising individuals born between 1965 and 1980, experienced comparatively less technologically saturated environments during their formative years. This generation is often characterized by independence, perseverance, and adaptability, shaped by experiences involving delayed rewards, sustained responsibilities, and gradual career progression (Smola & Sutton, 2002). These life experiences may contribute to greater patience and stronger self-regulatory capacities, possibly resulting in lower tendencies toward procrastination.

Within the Indian context, generational differences are further shaped by rapid modernization, increasing academic and occupational competition, evolving family structures, and widespread technology use. Indian research indicates that procrastination is prevalent among younger populations and is associated with academic stress, anxiety, and reduced performance (Kumar & Basu, 2020; Sharma & Singh, 2019). Conversely, patience has been identified as a protective psychological factor linked to emotional stability, stress tolerance, and effective coping (Gupta & Mehta, 2021).

Despite growing interest in self-regulation and generational psychology, comparative studies examining patience and procrastination between Generation X and Generation Z remain limited in Indian psychological literature. Most existing research focuses on student samples or single age groups, restricting broader generational understanding. A comparative approach is therefore necessary to determine whether differences in patience and procrastination reflect generational context, life-stage experiences, or shared socio-cultural influences.

Accordingly, the present study aims to compare levels of patience and procrastination between Generation X and Generation Z using standardized psychological measures. By examining these constructs within an Indian socio-cultural framework, the study seeks to contribute empirical evidence to generational psychology and offer insights relevant to education, workplace productivity, and mental health interventions.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Earlier research has consistently highlighted the psychological significance of patience and procrastination across different age groups. Steel (2007), in a comprehensive meta-analytic review, identified procrastination as a self-regulatory failure strongly associated with impulsivity, stress, and poor performance across academic and occupational settings. Sirois and Pychyl (2013) further explained procrastination as an emotion-focused coping strategy, where individuals delay tasks to temporarily regulate negative emotions, often resulting in long-term psychological distress. In a generational context, Twenge (2017) suggested that younger cohorts exposed to instant gratification environments show reduced tolerance for delay, which may negatively affect patience and increase procrastination tendencies. Similarly, Schnitker (2012) emphasized that patience functions as a psychological strength linked to resilience, emotional regulation, and sustained goal pursuit.

In the Indian context, several studies have documented the prevalence and impact of procrastination and related self-regulatory traits. Sharma and Singh (2019) reported that academic procrastination among Indian college students was significantly associated with stress, anxiety, and poor academic engagement. Kumar and Basu (2020) found that excessive digital engagement and poor time management contributed to higher procrastination levels among young adults, particularly students. Gupta and Mehta (2021) highlighted patience as a protective psychological factor, noting that individuals with higher patience demonstrated better coping, emotional stability, and task persistence. More recently, Patel and Joshi (2023) observed significant generational differences in self-regulation, reporting higher procrastination tendencies among younger adults compared to middle-aged individuals.

International and national findings collectively indicate that procrastination is widespread and closely linked to deficits in patience and self-regulation, while patience serves as a buffering factor against stress and task avoidance. However, despite growing evidence, limited studies particularly in the Indian setting have directly compared patience and procrastination across Generation Z and Generation X, highlighting the need for a comparative generational analysis.

Rationale of the Study

Patience and procrastination are crucial psychological constructs that influence self-regulation, productivity, and emotional well-being. Rapid technological advancement and changing socio-cultural conditions have altered how individuals tolerate delay and manage tasks, with these effects likely differing across generations. Generation Z, raised in an environment of instant gratification and constant digital engagement, may exhibit lower patience and higher procrastination, whereas Generation X, shaped by long-term responsibilities and delayed reward systems, may demonstrate greater patience and stronger self-regulation. Despite the growing relevance of these constructs, especially in the Indian context, limited empirical studies have directly compared patience and procrastination across generations. Therefore, the present study aims to compare these variables between

Generation Z and Generation X, with the objective of contributing empirical evidence that can inform educational, organizational, and mental health interventions.

Objectives

1. To study the level of patience among Generation Z and Generation X.
2. To study the level of procrastination among Generation Z and Generation X.
3. To examine the relationship between patience and procrastination among the participants.

Hypothesis

1. There will be a significant difference in the level of patience between Generation X and Generation Z.
2. There will be a significant difference in the level of procrastination between Generation X and Generation Z.
3. There will be a significant negative relationship between patience and procrastination.

Operational Definition

- **Procrastination**: Procrastination is operationally defined as the total score obtained on the General Procrastination Scale which objectively measures the degree of procrastination and the Procrastination Quotient (PQ) experienced by an individual.
- **Patience**: Patience is operationally defined as the total score obtained on the Three-Factor Patience Scale which objectively measures the degree of patience experienced by an individual across interpersonal, life hardship, and daily hassle dimensions.
- **Generation X**: Generation X is operationally defined as the cohort of individuals born between 1965 and 1980 who are currently residing in Maharashtra, India, at the time of data collection.
- **Generation Z:** Generation Z is operationally defined as the cohort of individuals born between 1997 and 2012 who are currently residing in Maharashtra, India, at the time of data collection.

METHOD

Research Design: Comparative and Correlational research design was adopted.

Sample

Initially, a total of 112 responses were collected from various regions of Maharashtra, India, using a mixed-gender design through a snowball sampling technique. All responses were screened for data entry errors, incomplete questionnaires, and inconsistent responses. As the collected data were complete and suitable for statistical analysis, no responses were excluded, and the final sample consisted of 112 participants.

The analysed sample included participants from both Generation X and Generation Z residing in Maharashtra, India. Generation X was operationally defined as individuals born between 1965 and 1980, and Generation Z as individuals born between 1997 and 2012. The final sample comprised 56 participants from Generation X and 56 participants from Generation Z. Participants represented both genders and came from diverse educational and occupational backgrounds across the state.

Tools

- **General Procrastination Scale (GPS)**: The General Procrastination Scale (GPS), developed by Lodha et al., demonstrates acceptable reliability and validity. Split-half reliability, corrected using the Spearman–Brown prophecy formula, yielded a coefficient of 0.711, while Cronbach's Alpha was 0.714, indicating satisfactory internal consistency of the 23-item scale. Content validity was established using Lawshe's Content Validity Ratio (CVR) method, wherein 12 psychology experts evaluated an initial pool of 65 items. Items with positive CVR values (0.10–0.80) were retained, resulting in a final 23-item scale, supporting its content validity.
- **Three-Factor Patience Scale (3-FPS):** The Three-Factor Patience Scale (3-FPS), developed by Schnitker (2012), demonstrates satisfactory reliability and validity. Internal consistency assessed using Cronbach's alpha was .80 for interpersonal patience, .70 for life hardship patience, and .66 for daily hassles patience. The scale also showed moderate test–retest reliability over a two-week interval (r = .66), indicating temporal stability.

  Construct validity was supported through exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses, which confirmed a well-fitting three-factor model (RMSEA = .054, CFI = .96). Convergent and external validity were evidenced by meaningful associations with related constructs, including positive correlations with agreeableness and well-being and negative correlations with neuroticism, confirming the scale's effectiveness in measuring multidimensional patience.

Procedure

Permission for the study was obtained from the concerned authorities of Samartha Educational Institute. The purpose of the study was explained to the participants, and informed consent was taken before data collection. Participation was voluntary, and confidentiality was assured. Participants from Generation X and Generation Z were selected using a snowball sampling technique. The General Procrastination Scale and the Three-Factor Patience Scale were administered in English using a self-report format through online and personal contacts. Clear instructions were given, and participants were requested to respond honestly.

RESULT

Table 1 Mean and Standard Deviation of Procrastination Scores among Generation X and Generation Z

Generation	N	Mean	SD
Generation X	56	58.96	12.41
Generation Z	56	60.66	11.85

The table shows the mean and standard deviation of procrastination scores for Generation X and Generation Z. Generation Z has a slightly higher mean procrastination score compared to Generation X. However, the difference in mean scores is small, suggesting that both generations show similar levels of procrastination.

Table 2 Mean and Standard Deviation of Patience Scores among Generation X and Generation Z

Generation	N	Mean	SD
Generation X	56	38.27	6.93
Generation Z	56	36.30	6.76

The table presents the mean and standard deviation of patience scores for Generation X and Generation Z. Generation X shows a marginally higher mean score on patience than Generation Z. However, the difference is minimal, indicating that both generations demonstrate comparable levels of patience.

Table 3 Correlation between Procrastination and Patience (N = 112)

Variables	N	R	Sig. (p)
Procrastination × Patience	112	–0.293	.002

The table shows the correlation between procrastination and patience. The result indicates a significant negative relationship between the two variables (r = –0.293, p = .002). This suggests that individuals with higher levels of procrastination tend to exhibit lower levels of patience.

Table 4 Independent-Samples t-Test for Procrastination Scores between Generation X and Generation Z

Variable	Generation	N	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig. (p)
Procrastination (GPS)	Generation X	56	58.96	12.41	–0.74	110	.461
	Generation Z	56	60.66	11.85			

The table shows the results of the independent-samples t-test comparing procrastination scores between Generation X and Generation Z. Although Generation Z obtained a slightly higher mean procrastination score than Generation X, the difference was not statistically significant (t = –0.74, p = .461). This indicates that both generations exhibit similar levels of procrastination. The effect size was small (Cohen's d = 0.14), indicating a negligible practical difference in procrastination levels between Generation X and Generation Z.

Table 5 Independent-Samples t-Test for Patience Scores between Generation X and Generation Z

Variable	Generation	N	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig. (p)
Patience (TFPS)	Generation X	56	38.27	6.93	1.52	110	.132
	Generation Z	56	36.30	6.76			

The table presents the independent-samples t-test results for patience scores between Generation X and Generation Z. Generation X showed a slightly higher mean patience score compared to Generation Z. However, the difference was not statistically significant (t = 1.52, p = .132). This suggests that both generations demonstrate comparable levels of patience. The effect size was small (Cohen's d = 0.29), suggesting a slight but practically limited difference in patience levels between Generation X and Generation Z.

DISCUSSION

The present study was undertaken to examine generational differences in patience and procrastination between Generation X and Generation Z, and to explore the relationship between these two psychological constructs. The findings revealed that although there were slight variations in mean scores, the independent-samples ***t***-test showed no statistically significant differences between the two generations for either patience or procrastination. Consequently, the hypotheses proposing significant generational differences in patience and procrastination were not supported. However, the study found a significant negative

correlation between patience and procrastination, thereby supporting the hypothesis that higher levels of patience are associated with lower levels of procrastination.

The absence of significant generational differences suggests that patience and procrastination are relatively stable self-regulatory traits that may not be strongly influenced by generational categorization alone. While Generation X and Generation Z differ in age, developmental stage, and sociocultural upbringing, both groups operate within a shared contemporary environment characterized by time pressure, performance demands, and technological immersion. These shared conditions may exert a stronger influence on behavioural regulation than generational identity, resulting in comparable levels of patience and procrastination across groups.

This finding can be justified through the lens of contextual and environmental influences on self-regulation. Both generations face increasing occupational expectations, financial responsibilities, and constant cognitive demands arising from digital connectivity. Such conditions are known to tax self-control resources, thereby affecting an individual's capacity to tolerate delay and persist in goal-directed behaviour. As a result, generational differences may become less pronounced when individuals are exposed to similar stressors and lifestyle demands.

Although the difference was not statistically significant, Generation Z demonstrated marginally higher levels of procrastination**.** This trend may be attributed to greater exposure to digital distractions, multitasking environments, and a culture of instant gratification. Research suggests that continuous engagement with smartphones, social media, and fast-paced information processing reduces attention span and increases avoidance behaviour (Rosen et al., 2013; Sirois & Pychyl, 2013). These factors may undermine sustained effort and increase task delay among younger individuals, even if the effect size is insufficient to produce significant group differences.

In contrast, Generation X exhibited slightly higher patience scores, which may be associated with greater life experience, repeated exposure to delayed reward systems, and long-term responsibility management. Older adults often develop coping strategies and tolerance for frustration through repeated engagement with complex life roles. However, the lack of a significant difference suggests that these potential advantages may be offset by midlife stressors, such as career pressure, caregiving responsibilities, financial obligations, and work–life balance challenges. Steel (2007) emphasized that chronic stress can impair self-regulatory capacity across all age groups, thereby reducing the expected benefits of experience and maturity.

The significant negative relationship between patience and procrastination represents one of the most important findings of the study. This result provides empirical support for Self-Regulation Theory**,** which posits that individuals with higher patience are better equipped to regulate impulses, tolerate discomfort, and persist in goal-directed tasks (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007). Patience enables individuals to delay gratification and remain engaged in challenging activities, thereby reducing the likelihood of procrastination.

Similarly, Temporal Motivation Theory (Steel & König, 2006) explains procrastination as a function of low delay tolerance and heightened sensitivity to immediate rewards. According to this model, individuals who struggle to tolerate delay are more likely to postpone tasks in favour of short-term mood repair. The observed negative correlation between patience and

procrastination aligns closely with this framework, reinforcing the theoretical validity of the findings.

From a cognitive behavioural perspective, procrastination can be conceptualized as an avoidance response driven by low frustration tolerance, a core concept within Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy (Ellis, 1994). Individuals with limited patience may hold irrational beliefs such as "I cannot tolerate discomfort" or "I must feel motivated before starting a task," which lead to avoidance and delay. The present findings are consistent with earlier research demonstrating that low frustration tolerance is a key cognitive factor underlying procrastination (Sirois & Pychyl, 2013; Schnitker, 2012).

Developmental and psychosocial explanations further strengthen the interpretation of the results. Although Generation X and Generation Z differ chronologically, both groups are actively engaged in goal pursuit, performance evaluation, and role fulfilment**.** According to Erikson's psychosocial theory, such life stages involve challenges related to competence, productivity, and identity, all of which place demands on self-regulatory processes. These shared developmental pressures may contribute to similar levels of patience and procrastination across adulthood.

Moreover, contemporary cultural shifts may have reduced psychological distinctions between generations. Twenge (2017) argued that rapid technological and societal changes have created more homogeneous behavioural patterns across age groups, particularly in relation to attention, impulse control, and time management. This perspective supports the present findings by suggesting that generational labels may no longer capture meaningful psychological differences in self-regulation.

Overall, the findings indicate that patience and procrastination are not generation-specific phenomena, but rather reflect broader psychological challenges shaped by modern lifestyles. The non-significant generational differences should therefore be interpreted not as a limitation, but as evidence that self-regulatory difficulties are widespread across age groups. This underscores the importance of developing universal interventions focused on enhancing patience, frustration tolerance, and time-management skills rather than targeting specific generations.

CONCLUSION

The present study concludes that Generation X and Generation Z do not differ significantly in their levels of patience or procrastination**,** leading to the rejection of the first two research hypotheses. However, a significant negative relationship was found between patience and procrastination, supporting the third hypothesis. These findings indicate that individuals with lower patience are more likely to procrastinate, regardless of generational group. The findings have implications for educational institutions and workplaces in designing self-regulation and time-management interventions applicable across age groups.

Inclusion Criteria

1. Participants belonging to Generation X (born between 1965–1980) and Generation Z (born between 1997–2012)**.**
2. Participants aged 18 years and above at the time of data collection.
3. Participants who can read and understand English.
4. Participants who provide written informed consent for participation.

5. Participants who are currently studying or employed**,** ensuring exposure to task-based responsibilities relevant to patience and procrastination.
6. Participants with normal cognitive functioning**,** capable of understanding and responding to self-report psychological scales.

Exclusion Criteria

1. Individuals belonging to generations other than Generation X or Generation Z (e.g., Millennials, Generation Alpha).
2. Participants below 18 years of age**.**
3. Individuals with a diagnosed psychiatric disorder or currently undergoing psychological/psychiatric treatment**,** as it may influence patience and procrastination levels.
4. Participants with a history of neurological disorders or severe medical conditions affecting cognitive or emotional functioning.
5. Participants who provide incomplete or inconsistent responses to the questionnaires.
6. Individuals who do not give informed consent.

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Conflict of Interest
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