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Academic Procrastination Among Outstanding Achievement and Non-achieving Female University Students

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Abstract: The purpose of this study was to assess the level of academic procrastination among university outstanding achievement and non-achieving students. The sample consisted of 256 students studying at the College of Education at King Khalid University, selected randomly, and the academic procrastination questionnaire was applied online. The results of this study indicated that the academic procrastination level of the outstanding and non-achieving university students was average. The results also revealed no statistically significant differences ($\alpha \geq 0.05$) due to the effect of academic achievement on academic procrastination. Also, there are no differences in academic procrastination due to the educational level, except for the negative perception of the instructor subscale that there were statistically significant differences in academic procrastination in favour of third and fourth-level students. In light of these results, the study emphasizes the necessity of counselling programs to reduce academic procrastination among female university students through strategies to increase self-confidence, educational effectiveness, responsibility, and stress coping strategies.

Keywords: academic procrastination, outstanding achieving students, non-achieving students, educational level.

1 Introduction and Theoretical Background

Academic procrastination is commonly spread in different educational environments. As a result of technological advances and accelerated digital use of smart devices and social media applications, learners are becoming increasingly distracted from their tasks, and task accomplishment is negatively influenced by delay and missing out on deadlines.

Academic procrastination refers to one's tendency to postpone accomplishing academic activities [1] and unjustified deferment of achieving highly demanded instructional assignments and tasks [2]. Academic procrastination is more commonly spread among university students in various specializations than in other education stages [3], where 70% of university students are impacted by this phenomenon [4]. Furthermore, academic procrastination can be conceptualized as an intentional act of deferring the accomplishment of assignments, although knowing that such deferment may exacerbate learning problems [5]. Thus, Academic procrastination is commonly practiced in academia, representing the last moment to start working on an assignment, and most students are inclined to academic procrastination in their academic life [6].

Academic procrastination is argumentative in different educational levels because it associates with the fact that learners lack a specific timetable to accomplish their assignments, which counteracts the quality of the teaching-learning process, and on the other side, may affect student achievement in examinations that need verbal or written responses, especially when they start working on assignments in the last moment [7]. Procrastinated decision-making may yield delayed accomplishment of significant duties, thereby dissatisfaction of employees and low morality [8]. The delayed performance of tasks and assignments that need to be accomplished on time may lead to many significant problems, whether for students or the academia [9], and ignorance of the procrastination problem might cause various psychopathological symptoms [4], and negatively affect student's academic performance, learning skills and reduced motivation [10]. In general, the problem of procrastination may also lead to other educational problems such as academic failure, low achievement, inadaptability, and poor performance [11].

There are an increasing number of studies investigating the causes of academic procrastination. Various theoretical frameworks were suggested to enhance self-efficacy and self-regulation to reduce fear of failure and prevent academic procrastination among students [12].

The ineffective dealing with academic procrastination may lead to psychosomatic and negatively affect students' academic and professional performance, such as low achievement and psychological maladjustment [4].

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El-Nawajha & Baraka [13] reported that as the major impediment to production, excellence, and high achievement, procrastination significantly counteracts the performance of a task, thereby remaining stuck between intention and action and keeping an individual in a state of self-denial, losing the sense of life meaning. Regarding causes behind procrastination related to many factors, including the low self-confidence of a student, may result in the delayed accomplishment of assignments to the last moment [14]. However, other reported factors include life demands, environmental circumstances, inability to take responsibility, stressors, and related problems.

In this context, many causes of academic procrastination among students were identified, including intricate task anxiety, low self-confidence, fearing inferiority feeling, distraction, hesitation, boring with details [15].

Many studies that addressed academic procrastination were interested in the level of procrastination and factors that influence procrastination behaviour. For instance, Akdemir [9] found that student teachers typically don't show academic procrastination behaviour. However, Kurtovic et al [11] revealed negative correlations between achievement, self-effectiveness, perfection, and academic procrastination among college students. Similarly, Ozer and Yetkin [16] showed a strong negative relationship between self-efficacy and academic procrastination behaviours. Results revealed that gender and educational level variables didn't significantly influence academic procrastination behaviour. Saracaloglu et al [17] showed differences in procrastination levels due to gender and the differences in favour of males.

On the other hand, Borekci and Uyangor [18] revealed a negative relationship between degrees of achievement and anxiety on the thinking test and academic procrastination. Korkmaz et al [19] reported a significant role of academic procrastination in the academic achievement of normal and gifted students. Finally, Balkis and Duru [20] found differences in academic procrastination levels by gender in favour of males.

The review of related literature showed that many studies aimed to conceptualize academic procrastination and identify the causes, pervasiveness, and critical criteria for procrastination. Therefore, the current study aimed to assess the academic procrastination level among university students and to reveal the differences between outstanding achievement and non-achievement students in academic procrastination.

2 Methods

2.1. Participants

The survey was conducted with female undergraduate students from the faculty of education in the Special Education and Preschool Early Education departments at King Khalid University, using a random sampling method. All participants provided informed consent in this study. A total of 256 valid questionnaires were collected via an online system.

2.2. Instruments

The Ocak and Bulut's Academic Procrastination Questionnaire was used. The questionnaire includes 38 items in four dimensions: academic procrastination responsibility, perceived quality of the academic assignment, passive perception of teacher, and passive attitude to academic perfection.

The correlation coefficient of the items with the total score of the questionnaire ranged between (0.21-0.56), and the subscales ranged between (0.38-0.87). All the correlation coefficients were acceptable and significant at (0.05 and 0.01) levels. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the overall questionnaire was (0.89), and the Cronbach's alpha for the subscales ranged between (0.76-0.87) as well, as the retested coefficients for subscales ranged between (0.85-0.88) and (0.92) for the overall questionnaire.

2.3. Statistical Standard

The study used the Likert 5-point scale for correcting academic procrastination by assigning one degree for each item. The ratings: strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree were assigned the weights 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, respectively. For statistical analysis, the averages (1.00-2.33), (2.34-3.67), and (3.68-5.00) were assigned low, average, and high ratings, respectively.

3 Procedures

The current study adopts the descriptive analytical approach to measure the level of variables and find out the differences in respondent responses by educational level and achievement. The sample was selected using the formula (Steven K. Thompson), where 260 online questionnaires were sent to participants. The authors treated data collected with confidentiality. Among the questionnaires sent, 256 were returned and found valid for statistical analysis.

4 Data Analysis

The SPSS 21.0 software was used to obtain all statistical data. The measurement data showed an approximately normal

distribution after the normality test (the absolute values of Skew and kurtosis are both less than 1). The descriptive statistics of means, standard deviations, and T-test were used to measure the effect of achievement on academic procrastination. One-way analysis of variance and Scheffe's method were employed to find variance in the educational level's impact on academic procrastination. $P < 0.05$ was considered statistically significant.

5 Results:

The academic procrastination level among students at King Khaled University:

University students have an average level of academic procrastination. The results in table 1 showed that the mean scores ranged between (2.66-3.07), where the subscale "academic procrastination responsibility" was ranked top, receiving the highest mean score (M=3.07). Comparatively, the subscale "passive attitude to academic perfection" was placed in the last rank (M=2.66), and the mean score for overall academic procrastination was (M=2.84).

Table 1: Means and standard deviations of academic procrastination level among students at King Khaled University in descending order by means

Rank	No.	subscales	M	SD	Estimation
1	1	academic procrastination responsibility	3.07	.547	Average
2	4	perceived quality of the academic task	2.90	.855	Average
3	3	the negative perception of the instructor	2.71	.572	Average
4	2	passive attitude to the academic perfection	2.66	.741	Average
		overall academic procrastination	2.84	.415	Average

Differences in academic procrastination between the outstanding and non-achievement students.

The university students with outstanding achievement levels did not have significantly higher academic procrastination scores than those with non-outstanding achievement. Table (2) showed no statistically significant differences ($\alpha=0.05$) between the outstanding and non-achievement students in all subscales and overall scores of academic procrastination.

Table 2: Means, standard deviations, and t-test for the Differences in academic procrastination between the outstanding and non-achievement students

Measurements	level	N	M	SD	T value	Freedom Degrees	Significance α
Academic procrastination responsibility	Higher-achieving	149	3.02	0.524	-1.595	254	.112
	Lower-achieving	107	2.13	0.575			
Perceived quality of the academic task	Higher-achieving	149	2.69	.747	.610	254	.542
	Lower-achieving	107	2.63	.733			
A negative perception of the instructor	Higher-achieving	149	2.72	.592	.384	254	.701
	Lower-achieving	107	2.69	.545			
Passive attitude to the academic perfection	Higher-achieving	149	2.84	.818	-1.376	254	.170
	Lower-achieving	107	2.99	.901			
academic procrastination	Higher-achieving	149	2.83	.404	-.886	254	.376
	Lower-achieving	107	2.87	.430			

Differences in academic procrastination due to the educational level variable.

One-Way ANOVA was used to compute statistical differences between means, and table (5) shows the results. Table (4) shows significant differences in the means of academic procrastination due to the education level groups. The results in Table (5) indicated no statistically significant differences at ($\alpha=0.05$) due to the educational level in all subscales and the overall academic procrastination except for the "The negative perception of the instructor" subscale. Scheffe's test for post hoc comparisons was used to demonstrate the direction of differences. The results in Table (6) showed significant statistical differences at ($\alpha=0.05$) between educational level groups in favor of third and fourth-year students.

Table 3: Means and standard deviation of academic procrastination due to the educational level variable

Measurements	Educational level	N	M	SD
Academic procrastination responsibility	2 nd Year	55	3.07	.582
	3 rd Year	62	3.09	.403
	4 th Year	139	3.05	.590
	Total	256	3.07	.547
Perceived quality of the academic task	2 nd Year	55	2.63	.632
	3 rd Year	62	2.64	.761
	4 th Year	139	2.69	.775
	Total	256	2.66	.741
A negative perception of the instructor	2 nd Year	55	2.55	.589
	3 rd Year	62	2.80	.480
	4 th Year	139	2.73	.593
	Total	256	2.71	.572
Passive attitude to the academic perfection	2 nd Year	55	2.78	.735
	3 rd Year	62	2.76	.837
	4 th Year	139	3.00	.897
	Total	256	2.90	.855
Overall academic procrastination	2 nd Year	55	2.77	.348
	3 rd Year	62	2.84	.417
	4 th Year	139	2.88	.437
	Total	256	2.84	.415

Table 4: One-way analysis of variance ANOVA of the effect of the educational level variable on the academic procrastination

Measurements	Source	Total Squares	Freedom Degrees	Mean Squares	F	Significance α
Academic procrastination responsibility	Intergroup	.070	2	.035	.115	.891
	Intragroup	76.290	253	.302		
	Overall	76.359	255			
Perceived quality of the academic task	Intergroup	.166	2	.083	.151	.860
	Intragroup	139.728	253	.552		
	Overall	139.895	255			
A negative perception of the instructor	Intergroup	2.080	2	1.040	3.234	0.41
	Intragroup	81.345	253	.322		
	Overall	83.424	255			
Passive attitude to the academic perfection	Intergroup	3.418	2	1.709	2.362	.096
	Intragroup	183.061	253	.724		
	Overall	186.479	255			
Overall academic procrastination	Intergroup	.440	2	.220	1.280	.280
	Intragroup	43.509	253	.172		
	Overall	43.949	255			

Table 5: Scheffe's test results for post hoc comparisons between educational level groups

Measurements	Groups	M	2 nd Year	3 rd Year	4 th Year
Negative perception toward the instructor	2 nd Year	2.55			
	3 rd Year	2.80	.26(*)		
	4 th Year	2.73	.18(*)	.07	

(*) statistically significant at ($\alpha=0.05$)

6 Discussion:

The current study's results indicate average academic procrastination among university students. Steel and Klingsieck [21] referred that academic procrastination pervades university students more than other students (Gropel, Steel, 2008). In the same context, Goroshit and Hen [22] revealed that pervasiveness is high that one-fifth of university students cannot pursue their assignments. This result may be due to teachers' traditional teaching method that encourages procrastination. Students may even delay studying until the last night before the exam, so they find summaries, booklets, and preliminary

questions helpful. On the other hand, the specialties offered at the Faculty of Education are naturally demanding and need a great deal of memorization and mental effort when studying for the semester or final exams or performing the assignments.

The recent development in communication and information technology, increased dependence on smart mobiles, and engagement with social media reinforced the procrastination behaviour among students. The easy access to huge information online has reflected in students' learning behaviour by delaying working on assignments believing that knowledge is easily accessible at any time, so procrastination is justifiable. This result can also be interpreted according to the fear of failure and escaping unpleasant tasks, so they find working on academic assignments on time uneasy. Some college students pursue their specialties with the slightest interest for different reasons so that they may practice procrastination behaviour.

Steel and Klingsieck [21] indicated that procrastination is commonly practiced in academia, especially among university students, where about 50% to 95% of college students reported regular practice of procrastination. Mayson et al [14] found average procrastination among university students. As for academic achievement, results found no statistically significant differences at ($\alpha=0.05$) due to the effect of academic achievement on all subscales and the overall academic procrastination. This result may be attributed to the observation that the students at the Faculty of education mainly were recruited from somewhat similar socioeconomic statuses, so how they deal with the academic assignments is expected to be the same level. Also, the teaching process at the university is greatly homogeneous; students may follow the same level of behaviours due to the genre of courses they study at the college, as well as the stable social and psychological environment in dealing with the problems they face. In addition, the campus community, including positive relations among students and being free from stressors, may help students adopt positive strategies in dealing with academic procrastination. This result is also may attributed to the observation that students in the faculty of education, irrespective of achievement, were recruited from the same social backgrounds. Such characteristics were free from the achievement differences among Faculty of Education students with high or low achieving levels.

Outstanding and non-achievement students at the Faculty of Education were self-conscious due to perceived time management skills, so their perceptual and cultural level did not influence their achievement. In addition, the social and behavioural characteristics of the faculty of education students, both outstanding and non-achievement students, contribute to this result. The nature of educational specialties pursued by female students provides them with high-order thinking skills that encourage them to use their cognitive, analytical, and deductive skills in problem-solving. Students with high achievement and averages may have the same level of feelings with the stress of academic overload, so students will be impacted by the academic stress caused by the academic overload. Recently, such stress was excessive by the COVID-19 pandemic. Further, high-achieving and average students may have academic procrastination due to their academic perfection

This result is consistent with Korkmaz et al [19], that revealed a negative relationship between procrastination and achievement. Notably, that study involved school students, but the current study involved students from the Faculty of Education at the university level, so the cognitive and personal characteristics expected to vary between school and college students may have affected the result.

As for the educational level, results indicated no statistically significant differences at ($\alpha=0.05$) attributed to the educational level variable on all domains and the overall instrument, excluding the third subscale, "passive perception toward the teacher." Female students at the Faculty of Education may be acquired an adequate level of studying skills during their university years, as the specialties offered by the Faculty of Education, including Preschool Early Childhood, and Special Education, learning difficulties are attractive for female students with high expectations of employability rate and challenging career for female students to succeed with such populations. Dealing with academic procrastination demands effective studying skills with a great deal of self-control, self-regulation, and positive attitudes towards the task they work on, and to exert greater effort with psychological stability and adjustment vis-à-vis procrastination.

The social-psychological climate is characterized by stability and accessible treatment of the problems encountered. The observation can explain this result that students at the Faculty of Education were recruited from the same social environment that they deal with the tasks demanded with flexibility due to the nature of courses in the syllabus. In addition, with its positive relations and the least amount of anxiety and stress, campus life may encourage adopting positive instruction strategies to prevent procrastination. This result can also be because students at the faculty of education, regardless of their Year of study, were from a similar social environment. Hence, their characteristics were free from the differences in educational level.

Results indicated statistically significant differences in "negative attitudes toward the instructor." As shown by table (6), differences were statistically significant at ($\alpha=.05$) between second-year students and third and fourth-year students, where differences were in favour of third and fourth-year students.

This result can be explained by the fact that participants in the current study were second, third, and fourth-year students at the Faculty of Education. The latter had a set of personal characteristics such as motivation, perseverance, and hardworking, which are among the salient personality traits of students.

The academic climate positively affects the teaching strategy employed with students by offering them positive experiences and improving their skills. The responsibilities of university life, including attending lectures and exams with the accompanying anxiety and stress of the social and academic overload, may reinforce negative feelings toward instructors due to assignment overload demanded from students leading students to express the problems and pressures they are facing, especially in the fourth year of students. This result is consistent with Saracaloglu et al [7], which revealed differences in academic procrastination levels by gender and chronological age, where differences were in favour of older teachers.

7 Conclusions

The results indicated an average level of academic procrastination among King Khalid University students. Also, there are no differences in academic procrastination due to the educational level, except for the negative perception of the instructor subscale that there were statistically significant differences in academic procrastination in favour of third and fourth-level students. And also, there are no differences between outstanding and non-achievement students in academic procrastination.

8 Limitations and Future Directions:

This study has several limitations, the first of which is that it is a descriptive survey that examines the differences in academic procrastination. Also, female students only studied, not males, and students of the College of Education at King Khalid University did not study academic procrastination among students of other colleges. Also, this study did not investigate the relationship of academic procrastination with psychological or social variables and the factors that predict the phenomenon of academic procrastination among university students. These limitations highlight the need for many studies in the future to reveal the factors that predict academic procrastination among university students and to study procrastination among students of other colleges and specializations, as well as among male students. Academic procrastination can also be investigated using experimental or qualitative research designs.

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10 Ethics approval and consent to participate:

All methods were carried out with relevant guidelines and regulations, and informed consent was obtained from all subjects.

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13 Author Contributions:

The author contributed to the study conception and design, material preparation, data collection and analysis, and the first draft of the manuscript.

14 Data Availability:

All data about the current study is available in this manuscript, and there is no more data.

15 Conflict of interest

The author declares that there is no conflict regarding the publication of this paper.

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