

ACADEMIC PROCRASTINATION AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA: ROLE OF PSYCHOSOCIAL FACTORS

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Abstract: The recurrent trend of undergraduate students failing to meet deadlines for required tasks has informed the need to understand how they utilize their time. Unfortunately, most undergraduate students have displayed signs of procrastinating academic activities with the attendant negative consequences. This paper seeks to investigate on some psychological and sociological factors influencing academic procrastination among undergraduate students. The factors considered in this study included self-efficacy, locus of control, gender and marital status. The correlational and ex-post facto research designs were used for the study with a sample of 235 students drawn from two universities in Rivers State. Data were collected through a researcher-developed instrument which was adequately assessed for validity and reliability. Data analysis was done using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation, the mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions, while t-test was used to test the corresponding null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. From the result obtained, it was shown that self-efficacy has a weak relationship with academic procrastination. Furthermore, external locus of control, male and married students reported a significantly higher level of academic procrastination than students with internal locus of control, female and single status. Based on this result, it was recommended that educational administrators should develop interventions to help students develop the appropriate level of self-efficacy as this has the potential of reducing academic procrastination.

Keywords: Academic procrastination; locus of control; self-efficacy; undergraduate students.

1. INTRODUCTION

The university school years is arguably the first year where students are exposed to the highest level of independence from their parents and other adults. These experiences come with their responsibilities and are often determined by the extent to which the students effectively utilize their time for competing demands including academic, social, personal and spiritual. The fact that these students are relatively independent in choosing how and when to spend their time has seen many involve in procrastination, especially in academic-related tasks.

It has been often stated that procrastination is a thief of time. The import of this statement is that procrastination makes a person lose time. Procrastination appears to make university students postpone and delay their academic work becoming self-exclusive and ignoring their academic responsibilities during the entire course of studies. It seems a common practice that university students put off their academic work: they delay in preparing & submitting their assignments and

presentations, completing projects, and even preparing for the examinations. In education and training, the term academic procrastination is commonly used to denote the deliberate delay in academic activities by a student to another time. It may be intentional, incidental and/or habitual but significantly affects the learning and achievement of university students. Academic procrastination is typically defined as an irrational tendency to delay at the beginning of an academic task. Students may have the intention of performing an academic activity within the desired or expected time frame, yet not be motivated to do so (Ferrari, 2010).

Whatever the kind of procrastination is, however, it slows down the performance of students making them careless, lazy, passive and academically stagnant and irresponsible. The damage caused by procrastination is well documented by scholars such as Hussain & Sultan (2010). These include low achievement and failure in examinations, depression, anxiety, inferiority complex, discontinuation of study and dropout. When students indulge in procrastination, it leads them to search for shortcuts, unfair means for passing examinations, hostile attitude, immoral practices, addiction and a sense of demotivation (Akinsola & Tella, 2007).

On the factors that cause academic procrastination, research has shown that most of the factors are often attributed to external causes such as illness, social problems, lack of motivation, conflicting demands, teachers' attitude, poor feedback, stress, family factors and financial difficulties (Yaakub, 2000). However, no study has investigated the extent to which psychosocial factors influence the academic procrastination among university undergraduates. This was what informed the conduct of the present study.

Psychosocial factors affect every aspect of our lives. Psychological factors that those which are internal to the functioning of the individual. There are characteristics or internal processes that shape a person's behaviour. On the other hand, social factors are socially approved pattern of thinking and acting that is accepted by a group of persons or society. Like every other action of a person, psychosocial factors interact to determine the time management practices of an individual including their academic lives. In this study, the extent to which psychosocial factors correlates with the academic procrastination of undergraduate students is explored. The psychosocial factors investigated included the self-efficacy, locus of control, gender and marital status.

The concept of self-efficacy has attracted a lot of consideration from scholars and researchers. According to Ormrod (2006), self-efficacy is the extent to which an individual assess their ability to complete tasks and reach personal goals. Self-efficacy is considered the brain-child of Albert Bandura and he defined it as people's belief about their capabilities to produce a designated level of performance and which in turn affects their lives and wellbeing (Bandura, 1994, p71). It has been generally agreed that a strong sense of self-efficacy improves human accomplishment and personal wellbeing in many ways including academically (Schunk, 2001). People with high assurance in their capabilities approach difficult activities as challenges to be mastered not threats to be avoided (Lent & Hackett, 1987). The connection between self-efficacy and academic achievement was posited by Shkullaku (2013) when he stated that self-efficacy influences the choice and commitment in a task, the energy spent in performing it, and the level of the performance. This, therefore, shows the importance of self-efficacy in life generally and academic endeavours specifically.

Another possible factor related which might be related to academic procrastination is locus of control. Locus of control is the extent to which people believe they influence the events or actions in their lives (Shapiro, 1996). Julian Rotter who laid the foundation of this concept in popular psychological discourse defined it as the degree of personal control individual believe they have over the events and outcomes that happen in their lives. Locus of control is divided into two domains; internal and external. Internal locus of control is the belief of individuals that he has control or influence over the event in their lives, while external locus of control is an individual's attribution of events to external factors of which he or she has little or no control over (Burger, 2004). Individuals with an internal locus of control believe that his/her behaviour is guided by his/her personal decisions and effort, on the other hand, individuals with an external locus of control believe that external factors such as fate, luck or some other external circumstances are responsible for their actions. Concerning academic procrastination, students who have the belief that they have a choice over their lives and the events that happen in it are less prone to blaming others for whatever situation they find themselves and are more likely to take responsibility for ensuring that tasks are done at the right time. Furthermore, they make considerable effort to carve a niche for themselves in a productive side of schools and only involve in tasks that have a direct bearing with their academic activities.

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Gender may also be identified as a factor that influences the tendency towards academic procrastination. Due to different socializing roles that males and females play in society, there is a tendency for individuals to act differently based on their gender orientation. Studies reviewed by Uriah, Ololube and Ezeigbo (2015) found out that in most culture within Nigeria, females are expected to be more reserved and less social, while males are raised to be outgoing and gregarious. Regarding academic matters, Idumange (2009) found out that female students also engaged in social activities that often encroach into their time. Ferrari (2010) also reported that among male and female students, the problem of time management was reported in the United States. This result indicated that many students may be involved in the act of procrastination in their academic lives. Finally, the result of academic procrastination has shown that among students, marital status is a significant factor that influences students' tendency to indulge in procrastination. According to Alkferi (2016), married students report a higher rate of procrastination in academic-related tasks than single students.

As seen from the above, it can be observed that there is a wide range of studies related to academic procrastination and the consequences associated with indulging in it among students. However, no study has investigated the extent to which psychosocial factors of self-efficacy, locus of control, gender and marital status correlates with academic procrastination among undergraduate students in the Rivers State, Nigeria. It was against the background that the present study is being conducted.

Statement of the Problem

University students are not only trained to excel academically but to also become future leaders in diverse sectors of the global economy. Students are expected to learn skills that have lifelong implications such as written communication, time management, stress management and relationship with others. Such skills are important for optimal functioning in today's world. However, these researchers have observed that many students are distracted from their core purpose of being in schools. Many students involve themselves in social activities that limit the time they spend on academic-related tasks. Some students also allow technological distractions to influence their core academic programmes in schools. Furthermore, the result has shown that many students experience significant anxiety and stress from not meeting up their academic obligations. This has resulted in poor academic performance and a low sense of esteem.

While effort is needed to assist such students to overcome the problem of academic procrastination, there is a need to first understand the factors contributing to this unpleasant state of affairs. Previous efforts have been directed at understanding how external factors influence academic procrastination among students, as well as the effect of procrastination among students. However, no study has investigated how psychosocial factors are related to academic procrastination among undergraduate students in Rivers State. It is, therefore, the problem of this study to investigate the extent to which the psychosocial factors of locus of control, self-efficacy, gender and marital status are related to academic procrastination among undergraduate students in the Rivers State, Nigeria.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

This study aims to investigate on psychosocial correlates of academic procrastination among undergraduate students in Rivers State, Nigeria. In specific terms, the objectives of this study included:

1. To investigate the relationship between self-efficacy and academic procrastination among undergraduate students in Rivers State.
2. To determine the relationship between locus of control and academic procrastination among undergraduate students in Rivers State.
3. To examine the influence of gender on academic procrastination among undergraduate students in Rivers State.
4. To examine the influence of marital status on academic procrastination among undergraduate students in Rivers State.

Research Questions

The following research questions were answered to guide the conduct of this research:

1. To what extent is self-efficacy related to academic procrastination among undergraduate students in Rivers State?

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2. To what extent is locus of control related to academic procrastination among undergraduate students in Rivers State?
3. What is the influence of gender on academic procrastination among undergraduate students in Rivers State?
4. What is the influence of marital status of students on academic procrastination among undergraduate students in Rivers State?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of statistical significance to further guide the study:

1. There is no significant relationship between self-efficacy and academic procrastination among undergraduate students in Rivers State.
2. There is no significant relationship between locus of control and academic procrastination among undergraduate students in Rivers State.
3. There is no significant difference in the extent to which gender influences academic procrastination among undergraduate students in Rivers State.
4. There is no significant difference in the extent to which marital status influences academic procrastination among undergraduate students in Rivers State.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant to a wide array of stakeholders in the education sector and the society at large such as students, teachers, parents, university administrators, counsellors and government agencies.

Firstly, students would through this study identify the factors influencing academic procrastination, especially from a psychological perspective. Through this realization, there would be able to identify how these factors can be controlled and used for beneficial purposes which are directly related to their academic progress and development. Lecturers would through this study identify the best approach of correcting their students when they do something wrong and instil in them a sense of discipline that is necessary for academic progress. This is important because the way some students are scolded when they err makes them uninterested in schooling and academic matters. Also, lecturers would find this study useful as it would enable them to appreciate some of the challenges students go through in their academic lives and how best to assist them to become better at managing their time and resources.

School administrators would through this study understand the importance of providing different learning experiences for their students. This would make students choose their preferred path in their educational development. Also, school administrators would find this study useful in building a vibrant community of support and assistance to a specific population of students who might be suffering from habitual procrastination. Finally, the findings of this study will aid students to take advantage of academic resources that can help them succeed in their academic journey as provided for by institutions. Finally, this work would be of immense benefit to future researchers in the area of academic procrastination, self-efficacy, locus of control, as well as the effect of academic procrastination. This study is likely to provide a very useful basis for the conduct of conceptual and empirical review in future studies in related fields.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Procrastination: Procrastination is a common trait among all humans, but for some, the problem is very serious. These individuals procrastinate across most of life situations (Klingsieck, 2013). Factors influencing procrastination have been categorized into internal and external factor, yet much remains to be established on the specific dynamics responsible for the unexplained and habitual procrastination common in many people. Previous studies have implicated diverse personal, cognitive, emotional, and motivational factors that offer explanations for these constructs (Rebetez, Rochat, & Van der Linden, 2015). While conflict remains about the cause of procrastination, research has shown that discomfort and a desire to change this behaviour is a common thread among various procrastinators (Steel, 2007). One area in which procrastination tends to be a problem is among students who have been termed academic procrastination.

Academic procrastination is a serious problem among the student population with about 70% of students reporting that they indulge in it regularly. (Rabin, Fogel, & Nutter-Upham, 2011). A straightforward definition of academic

procrastination according to Steel (2007) is that it is the tendency for students to delay academic-related tasks, although this delay might result in negative consequences and discomfort later. This tendency is very common among various demographics of students, including undergraduate and graduate students, irrespective of gender and ethnicity. Some task in which students procrastinate includes writing term papers, preparing for examinations, and keeping up with required readings (Onwuegbuzie & Jiao, 2000). Some consequences of academic procrastination include missed deadlines for submitting assignments, delaying the taking of quizzes, claiming test anxiety, and receiving low course grades (Hen & Goroshit, 2014). Academic procrastination is also negatively related to health, wealth and happiness (Steel, 2007). It was also further shown that procrastination is characteristic of individuals high on conscientiousness, impulsiveness, self-efficacy, and need for achievement as well as the task characteristics of aversiveness and delay were most strongly associated with procrastination (Steel, 2010)

The literature is replete with various explanation for why students indulge in academic procrastination. Schraw, Wadkins, and Olafson (2007) findings suggested that academic procrastination has both adaptive including managing their time more efficiently and work more efficiently, as well as for maladaptive purposes such as to reduce boredom. Also, they found that students sometimes procrastinated intentionally to improve the overall quality and efficiency of their lives, even though it added stress and tension late in each semester for relatively short periods. They explained that students did so because added stress and tension were necessary components in the procrastination cycle that enabled them to perform at peak efficiency. The adaptive function of academic procrastination has also been found in the study conducted by Choi and Moran (2009). Conversely, Klingsieck et al. (2013) contend that academic procrastination cannot have any adaptive positive contribution with academic success.

Furthermore, from the interview of 36 students, Grunschel, Patrzek, and Fries (2013) findings showed that both internal and external accounts for students' procrastination. Some of these internal factors were categorized into eight categories (affective, mental and physical states, behavioural, personality, personal beliefs, competence, previous learning experience, and perceived task characteristics) and three external reasons (individual working conditions, lecturer characteristics, and institutional conditions). Some consequences of academic procrastination included time pressure, sleep-related problems, lengthened study course, and a restricted future perspective particularly were some consequences of procrastination.

Klingsieck (2013) provided four broad perspectives for explaining the problem of academic procrastination. These are the differential psychology perspective, motivational and volitional psychology perspective, clinical psychology perspective, and situational perspective. The differential psychology perspective explores academic procrastination as a personality trait linking it to other traits and trait-like variables. The perspective of motivational and volitional psychology operationalizes procrastination as motivation failure, while the clinical psychology perspective focuses on the clinical exploration of procrastination, and associating it with anxiety, depression, stress, and personality disorders. The situational and contextual aspects seek to investigate procrastination as a function of domain-specific factors such as teachers and task characteristics. The psychological perspective was used to explore the various personality and social factors that are related to or influences academic procrastination in the current study

Previous Research related to Academic Procrastination

Hussain and Sultan (2010) investigated the factors influencing procrastination and the effect of procrastination among university students. A sample of 500 students and 40 teachers of the Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Pakistan were used for the conduct of their studies. The result from the study showed that academic procrastination negatively affects the academic performance of students by reducing their classroom learning and participation in academic-related activities such as submission of assignments, preparing for examinations. The result further showed that the number and difficulty of assignments and poor time management by the students contribute towards academic procrastination.

Akinsola, Tella and Tella (2007) investigated on the correlates between academic procrastination and mathematics achievement among the university mathematics undergraduate students in Nigeria using a sample of 150 from both the University of Ibadan and University of Lagos, in South-West Nigeria. Findings from the study showed that there was a significant negative correlation between academic procrastination and academic achievement among the students. The result further showed that both male and female students reported a similar level of academic procrastination.

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Islak (2011) investigated the extent gender predicts academic procrastination among gifted and talented college students. The study consisted of 35 honour college undergraduate students enrolled in a large urban university in Texas. The results of the t-test analysis for the sample indicated that gender was not a significant predictor of academic procrastination among gifted and talented students.

Similarly, Alkferi (2016) conducted a study which examined the prevalence of academic procrastination among students in the Faculty of Education at the University of Hail, using a sample of 360 female during the 2014/2015 academic year. The findings of the study showed that an average level of procrastination was reported among the students. However, no difference in academic procrastination was found among students based on their marital status. Finally, Balkis and Duru (2017) examined the gender differences in relation to academic procrastination, academic performance and academic life satisfaction among 441 undergraduate students. The results revealed that academic procrastination was negatively related with academic performance and academic life satisfaction, with male students having a higher level of academic procrastination and lower level of academic performance and academic life satisfaction compared to female students.

3. METHODOLOGY

Research design: The correlational and ex-post facto research designs were used in the present study because the researchers collected data from a sample of university undergraduates in order to identify the relationship between the selected psychosocial variables of self-efficacy and academic procrastination as well as determine the extent to which locus of control, gender and marital status influences academic procrastination.

Sample and Sampling Technique: A sample of 235 undergraduate students were drawn from two universities (one federal and one state) in Rivers State. The sample was drawn using convenience and purposive sampling techniques. Convenience sampling technique was used to administer the instrument on any available undergraduate, while the purposive sampling technique was used to administer the instrument on any undergraduate that has stayed in the university beyond one academic session. This was to ensure that students chosen in the sample have experienced university life and the nature of the experiences involved.

Instrument for Data Collection: The instrument for data collection is a researcher-developed instrument titled *Psychosocial Correlates of Academic Procrastination Inventory (PCAPI)* aimed at eliciting the response from students on academic procrastination and the selected psychosocial variables. The instrument is divided into four major sections: A, B, C and D.

Section A of the instrument provides spaces for respondents to indicate their demographic characteristics such as gender, marital status and religion. Section B of the instrument is made up of 20 items that seek to assess academic procrastination among the students. This section is constructed on a four-point Likert scale of Regularly, Sometimes, Rarely and Never which were scored 4, 3, 2 and 1 points respectively. Respondents are expected to respond to the items according to the perceived regularity in which they exhibit the actions represented in the items. Section C of the instrument contains 10 items meant to assess the self-efficacy of the respondents. This section is constructed on a four-point Likert scale of Strongly Agree (A), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD), with a corresponding value of 4, 3, 2 and 1. Section D of the instrument is a 20-item researcher-developed scale to assess the locus of control of individuals. It is constructed on a 4-point Likert scale of Strongly Agree (A), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD), with a corresponding value of 4, 3, 2 and 1.

Validity of the instrument was established by giving the instrument, along with the objectives and research questions of the study, to two experts in educational assessment to evaluate the instrument on item content, relevance, comprehensiveness, clarity, and literacy demand. Their suggestions, corrections and modifications were incorporated into the final version of the instrument before administration. The test re-test technique was utilized for establishing the reliability of the instrument. The instrument was administered twice to 30 students in a public university not used in the present study. Scores from the two administrations were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The correlation coefficients of 0.70, 0.73 and 0.81 were obtained for sections B, C, and D which indicated that the instrument possesses suitable reliability for its use.

The instruments were administered using the direct delivery method where the researcher, with the support of two assistants, who gave the selected respondents the instrument during their lecture period. The instruments were collected

immediately on the spot after completion. Research question one were answered using Pearson Product Moment Correlation, while the corresponding null hypotheses were tested using t-test associated with Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The remaining research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation.

4. RESULT PRESENTATION

Table 1: Factors influencing Academic procrastination among undergraduate students

Factors	Variables	Mean (SD)	N	df	r/t	p
SE	Self-Efficacy	23.04 (3.91)	235	234	0.21	0.001
AP	Academic Procrastination	51.54 (6.39)				
Locus of Control	Internal	50.03 (4.94)	69	233	3.57	0.000
	External	53.05 (7.85)	166			
Gender	Male	53.00 (7.88)	105	233	4.89	0.000
	Female	49.24 (3.42)	130			
MS	Married	52.87 (7.57)	76	233	3.50	0.000
	Single	49.97 (4.98)	159			

From the result displayed in Table 1, it can be observed that there is a weak positive relationship between self-efficacy and academic procrastination among undergraduate students in Rivers State, $r(234) = 0.21, p = 0.001 < 0.05$. Also, the result showed that regarding the influence of locus of control on academic procrastination, students who reported internal locus of control had a mean response of 50.03 (SD = 4.94), while those who reported external locus of control had a mean value of 53.05. Furthermore, when these results were tested using independent samples t-test, a t-value of 3.57 was obtained with a corresponding p-value of 0.000 at 233 degrees of freedom. This result, therefore, suggests that students with external locus of control had a significantly greater tendency towards academic procrastination than those with internal locus of control.

Regarding the influence of gender, the result showed that male students had a mean rating of 53.00 (SD = 7.88) while female students had a mean rating of 49.24 (SD = 3.42). Using independent samples t-test, the result showed that $t = 4.38(233), p = 0.000 < 0.05$. This result, therefore, indicates that male undergraduate students reported a significantly greater tendency towards academic procrastination than female students. Finally, the result on the influence of marital status on academic procrastination showed that married undergraduate students had a mean value of 52.87 (SD = 7.57), while single students reported a mean value of 49.97 (SD = 4.98). This result suggests that married students indulge more in academic procrastination than single students. Further testing using independent samples t-test showed that the t-value obtained, 3.50, at 233 degrees of freedom with a corresponding p-value of 0.000 was significant. This result, therefore, indicates that married students reported a significantly higher level of academic procrastination than single students.

5. DISCUSSION

The result of the study showed that there is a weak but positive relationship between self-efficacy and academic procrastination. This result implies that students who have a high level of self-efficacy are not likely to be chronic procrastinators. This result further indicates that some of the students with moderate self-efficacy might indulge in academic procrastination which may serve the adaptive pattern of procrastination as proposed by Schraw et al (2007). The adaptive pattern of procrastination help students with high self-efficacy to intentionally determine when it is best to take up on some task. This helps them effectively manage their time as well as direct their attention to more pressing matters.

From the second result of the study, it was shown that students who reported a high level of external locus of control reported a higher level of academic procrastination than those with internal locus of control. This result indicates that students with internal locus of control might display greater diligence and promptness on academic tasks than those who exhibit external locus of control. This result is not surprising but expected as internal locus of control helps a person take charge of his/her life without making excuses. On the other hand, people with external locus of control can easily make excuses for delay in academic tasks using external factors. This result corroborates the findings of de Laat (2016) who found out that employees with external locus of control are less engaged on the job than those with internal locus of control.

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From the third research question and corresponding null hypotheses, the result showed that male students engage more in academic procrastination than female students. This result might have been obtained due to the high level of socialization that male students engage in. In most schools, including in Rivers States, male students involve more in social activities than female students. This may, therefore, be responsible for the huge discrepancy between them and female students who are expected to be more reserved. This result is in agreement with Balkis and Duru (2017) who found out that male students similarly get involved in academic procrastination than female students.

Finally, the result showed that marital status was a significant determinant of academic procrastination. According to the obtained result, it was shown that married undergraduate students reported a significantly higher level of academic procrastination than single students. This result might have been obtainable because single students do not have many domestic chores to attend to as much as married students. For most married students, there is always a family-work life conflict which prevents them from maximum commitment to their academic activities. The finding of this result is contrary to that obtained by Alkferi (2016) who found out that marital status did not significantly influence the level of academic procrastination among undergraduate students in Saudi Arabia.

6. CONCLUSION

The conclusion drawn from the study is that self-efficacy has a weak but significant relationship with academic procrastination, while individuals with external locus of control are more prone towards academic procrastination than those with internal locus of control. Furthermore, male students and those who are married have a greater tendency towards academic procrastination than female and single undergraduate students respectively.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the result obtained, the following recommendations are made:

1. Educational administrators should develop interventions to help students develop the appropriate level of self-efficacy as this has the potential of reducing academic procrastination.
2. Orientation and counselling services should be provided for students to understand that external locus of control, which gives birth to excuses are detrimental to the optimal functioning and achievement among them. Therefore strategies for improving students' belief in themselves and the ability to deliver on academic tasks should be developed.
3. Undergraduate students, especially the males, should be assisted to develop effective time management practices, as this has the potential of improving their capacity to meet academic deadlines which can negatively affect their performances.
4. Effort should be made to give students adequate time for academic tasks, taking into consideration their ability and task difficulty. This is likely to reduce incidences of academic procrastination.
5. School administrators should take note of students who are habitual procrastinators by submitting their assignments late and provide needed interventions and motivations to guide them.

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