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Beating the Deadline: Exploring the Impact of Academic Procrastination on Academic Achievement among College Students in Sikkim

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Abstract

Academic procrastination has emerged as a significant behavioural concern in higher education, often linked to decreased academic performance and psychological distress among students. This study investigates the levels of academic procrastination and its relationship with academic achievement among college students in Sikkim, a North-Eastern state of India. The research also examines whether procrastination differs significantly based on gender and the type of institution (government vs. private colleges). A descriptive survey design was employed, and data were collected from a stratified random sample of 300 undergraduate students drawn from various colleges in Sikkim. Academic procrastination was measured using a standardized Academic Procrastination Scale, while academic achievement was assessed through students' self-reported Grade Point Averages (GPAs) or percentage scores. For the statistical analysis SPSS was used to calculate independent samples t-tests to compare procrastination levels across gender and institution type, and Pearson's correlation coefficient to explore the relationship between procrastination and academic achievement. The findings revealed no statistically significant difference in academic procrastination between male and female students or between students from government and private institutions. However, a significantly low negative correlation was found between academic procrastination and academic achievement, indicated that higher levels of procrastination are associated with lower academic performance. These results highlight the need for institutions in Sikkim to address procrastination behaviours through targeted academic counselling, self-regulation training, and time management workshops. The study contributes to the growing body of literature on procrastination by providing region-specific insights and underscores the importance of psychological and behavioural interventions to enhance student success in higher education.

Keywords: Academic Procrastination, Academic Achievement, College Students

Introduction

In the modern educational landscape, academic success is not solely a function of intelligence or knowledge; rather, it also hinges significantly on students' behavioural, emotional, and self-regulatory abilities. Among the various behavioural challenges faced by students, academic procrastination remains a persistent and pervasive problem, especially in higher education. Defined as the intentional delay in starting or completing academic tasks despite knowing the potential for negative outcomes (Steel, 2007), academic procrastination has been widely

associated with diminished academic performance, heightened stress, and compromised psychological well-being (Sirois & Pychyl, 2013).

The phenomenon of procrastination is not a recent development, but its academic implications have gained considerable attention in the past two decades, particularly with the rise of competitive academic environments and distractions caused by digital technologies. Empirical evidence suggests that between 70% and 95% of college students engage in procrastination to some extent, and nearly 50% do so chronically (Ellis & Knaus, 1977; Steel, 2007). Despite awareness of its consequences, many students repeatedly fall into the cycle of postponement, guilt, and underachievement-a pattern often explained by theoretical models grounded in cognitive-behavioural and motivational psychology.

One of the most influential frameworks explaining academic procrastination is Temporal Motivation Theory (TMT), proposed by Steel and König (2006), which integrates expectancy theory, hyperbolic discounting, and need theory. TMT posits that procrastination arises when the perceived utility of a task is low due to distant deadlines, low expectancy of success, or lack of intrinsic motivation. This explains why students often delay tasks that seem tedious or overwhelming, even if those tasks are crucial for academic success. Furthermore, procrastination has been associated with lower self-efficacy, poor time management, low conscientiousness, and high impulsiveness-factors consistently linked with reduced academic achievement (Kim & Seo, 2015).

Additionally, Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (1986) highlights the role of self-regulation and self-efficacy in learning and performance. According to this perspective, students who procrastinate may lack confidence in their academic abilities or fail to regulate their learning processes effectively. In this way, procrastination becomes a self-handicapping strategy, used to protect self-worth in the face of possible failure (Schraw, Wadkins, & Olafson, 2007). Such behaviours are particularly concerning in formative academic years, as they can develop into maladaptive habits that hinder both academic progress and personal growth.

In the context of Sikkim a state nestled in the Eastern Himalayas known for its cultural diversity and developing higher education ecosystem-academic procrastination is an underexplored yet critical issue. College students in Sikkim navigate a complex web of academic pressure, socio-cultural expectations, and infrastructural limitations that may affect their academic behaviours and performance. Although national and international studies have established a negative correlation between academic procrastination and academic achievement (Klassen, Krawchuk, & Rajani, 2008; Steel, 2007), there is a dearth of localized research that examines how this dynamic unfolds within the unique socio-academic environment of Sikkim.

This study aims to bridge this gap by investigating the relationship between academic procrastination and academic achievement among college students in Sikkim. It seeks to explore not only the prevalence of procrastination but also how it correlates with students' academic outcomes. By applying established theoretical frameworks and grounding the study in the specific context of the higher education in Sikkim, the research aspires to contribute meaningful insights to the academic and psychological support systems in the region.

Review of Related Literature

A review of the literature highlights a consistent and significant inverse relationship between academic procrastination and academic achievement. Steel (2007) and Balkis and Duru (2017) confirm that procrastination leads to lower performance due to poor time management and lack of motivation. Similarly, Tuckman (1998) and Solomon and Rothblum (1984) emphasized that procrastination arises from psychological barriers like fear of failure and task averseness, which hinder performance. Studies by Chu and Choi (2005) and Klassen and Kuzucu (2009) explored gender and cultural differences, while Hen and Goroshit (2018) pointed to emotional intelligence and self-regulation as crucial mediators. Onwuegbuzie (2004) and Sirin (2011) also observed that procrastination correlates negatively with GPA and academic life satisfaction. These studies collectively validate the present study's findings and affirm that addressing academic procrastination is essential for improving academic outcomes across different contexts.

Research Gap

Although numerous studies (e.g., Steel, 2007; Balkis & Duru, 2017; Tuckman, 1998) have demonstrated a negative relationship between academic procrastination and academic achievement, most of this research is centred in Western or metropolitan academic contexts. There is a lack of empirical evidence from rural and semi-urban regions like Sikkim, where cultural, educational, and institutional environments differ significantly. Additionally, limited studies have investigated differences in procrastination across gender and types of institutions, such as government and private colleges. Furthermore, the existing literature often overlooks regional variations in student behaviour and motivation. This study aims to fill these gaps by providing localized data from undergraduate students in Sikkim, and by examining gender and institutional comparisons in academic procrastination and its effect on academic performance.

Need and Significance of the Study

Academic procrastination is a common issue affecting students' academic performance, yet limited research has been conducted in the context of Sikkim. Given the unique socio-cultural and educational environment, it is essential to understand how procrastination influences academic achievement among college students in this region. This study is significant as it explores differences across gender and institution type, providing localized insights that can help educators and policymakers develop targeted interventions to enhance student performance and reduce procrastination among the students.

Objectives

1. To find out the level of Academic Procrastination of college students of Sikkim.
2. To find out the difference between male and female college students with regard to the Academic Procrastination.
3. To find out the difference between Private and Government college students with regard to the Academic Procrastination.
4. To find out the relationship between Academic Procrastination and Academic Achievement of college students.

Hypothesis

$H0_1$ There exists no statistically significant difference in academic procrastination levels between male and female students enrolled in colleges of Sikkim.

$H0_2$ There exist no statistically significant difference between private and government college students with regards to Academic Procrastination

$H0_3$ Academic procrastination does not exhibit a significant statistical association with students' academic performance.

Materials and methods

This study employed a descriptive survey research design to investigate the relationship between academic procrastination and academic achievement among college students in Sikkim. The design was chosen for its effectiveness in collecting quantifiable data on students' behavioural tendencies and academic performance across diverse demographic variables such as gender and type of institution. The target population for this study comprised undergraduate students enrolled in both government and private colleges across Sikkim. A stratified random sampling technique was used to ensure adequate representation of key demographic subgroups such as gender (male and female) and institutional affiliation (government and private colleges). A total sample of 300 students were selected, with approximately equal representation from each stratum to enhance the generalizability of the findings.

The primary tool used for data collection was a standardized Academic Procrastination Scale (APS) developed by Dr. Savita Gupta and Liyaqat Bashir. The reliability of the test was determined by Cronbach's alpha coefficient with calculated value 0.76, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient is used to measure the internal consistency. Content validity was ensured to check the internal consistency of the statement. The scale comprises Likert-type items, rated on a 5-point scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree". To measure academic achievement, students' most recent semester Grade Point Averages (GPAs) or percentage scores, as recorded by the respective colleges, were collected with permission.

Analysis and Interpretation of Data

This section presents the statistical analysis and interpretation of data collected from college students in Sikkim to examine the relationship between academic procrastination and academic achievement. The analysis includes descriptive statistics, t-tests, and correlation to explore differences across gender and institution types, and to assess the strength and direction of the relationship between the key variables. The results are interpreted in light of the research hypotheses and aim to provide insights into how procrastination may influence academic performance in the local context.

Objective 1

To find out the level of Academic Procrastination of college students of Sikkim.

To assess the distribution of academic procrastination (AP) among college students, raw scores were converted into standardized **z-scores** and categorized into seven interpretive levels. The

table below summarizes the range of raw scores, their corresponding z-score ranges, number of respondents, and percentage distribution across the AP levels.

Table No. 1

Distribution of Respondents by Academic Procrastination Levels

Range of raw score	Range of z-score	Responses	Level of AP
119 & above	+2.01 & above	0 (0%)	Extremely high
108-118	+1.26 to +2.00	9 (3%)	High
97-107	+0.51 to +1.25	36 (12%)	Above average
82-96	-0.50 to +0.50	105 (35%)	Moderate
71-81	-1.25 to -0.51	105 (35%)	Below average
59-70	-2.00 to -1.26	45 (15%)	Low
58 & below	-2.01 & below	0 (0%)	Extremely low

Note: n = 300; AP = Academic Procrastination

As shown in Table 1, the majority of students (70%) reported procrastination levels within the moderate (35%) and below average (35%) ranges. A smaller proportion of students fell into the above average (12%), high (3%), and low (15%) categories. Notably, no students exhibited either extremely high or extremely low levels of academic procrastination. This distribution suggests that procrastination is a common experience among the student population, but extreme forms of procrastination are rare in this sample. The results indicate a general tendency toward moderate behavioural delay, with implications for targeted academic support interventions.

Objective 2

To find out the difference between male and female college students with regard to the Academic Procrastination.

$H0_1$ There exists no statistically significant difference in academic procrastination levels between male and female students enrolled in colleges of Sikkim.

An independent samples *t*-test was conducted to examine whether there is a significant difference in academic procrastination between male and female college students. The results are presented in Table No. 2.

Table No 2

Independent Samples t-Test Comparing Academic Procrastination Scores by Gender

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t (298)	*p*
AP	Male	120	84.34	12.31	0.51	.60
	Female	180	83	12.82		

Note: *n* = sample size; SD = standard deviation; *t* (298) = t statistic with 298 degrees of freedom; *p>.05*

The analysis from the above table No. 2 revealed no statistically significant difference in academic procrastination scores between male (M = 84.34, SD = 12.31) and female students (M = 83.00, SD = 12.82), *t* (298) = 0.51, *p* = .60. This indicates that gender does not play a significant role in influencing levels of academic procrastination among the college students in the sample. Hence, the hypothesis that there exists no statistically significant difference in academic procrastination levels between male and female students enrolled in colleges of Sikkim is retained. These findings suggest that both male and female students experience procrastination at similar levels, and interventions to address procrastination can be designed without gender-specific differentiation in this context.

Objective 3

To find out the difference between Private and Government college students with regard to the Academic Procrastination.

$H0_2$ There exist no statistically significant difference between private and government college students with regards to Academic Procrastination

An independent samples t-test was conducted to examine whether there is a significant difference in academic procrastination (AP) between students studying in government and private colleges. The results are summarized in Table 3.

Table No. 3

Independent Samples t-Test for Academic Procrastination by Type of Institution

Variable	Institution	N	Mean	SD	t (298)	*p*
AP	Government	200	84.86	13.1	0.93	.35
	Private	100	82.52	12.1		

In the table no. 3 an independent samples t-test was conducted to compare academic procrastination scores between students enrolled in government colleges and those in private colleges. The mean score for government college students (M = 84.86, SD = 13.10) was slightly higher than for private college students (M = 82.52, SD = 12.10). However, this difference was not statistically significant, t (298) = 0.93, p = .35. These results suggested that there is no significant difference in academic procrastination based on the type of institution attended. Thus, institutional affiliation whether government or private does not appear to play a meaningful role in influencing students' tendency to procrastinate academically. Hence, the

hypothesis that there is no significant difference in academic procrastination based on the type of institution is retained.

Objective 4

To find out the relationship between Academic Procrastination and Academic Achievement of college students.

$H0_3$ Academic procrastination does not exhibit a significant statistical association with students' academic performance.

Table No. 4

Correlation between Academic Procrastination and Academic Achievement

VAR	Mean	Std. deviation	r (298)	*p*
AP	83.69	12.51	-.22	.028
AA	63.37	12.95		

Note. *N* = 300. AP = Academic Procrastination; AA = Academic Achievement. Correlation is Pearson's *r*.

In the above table no. 4, a Pearson product moment correlation was conducted to assess the relationship between Academic Procrastination (AP) and Academic Achievement (AA) among college students (N = 300). The results revealed a significant negative correlation, r (298) = –.22, p = .028. This indicated that students who exhibited higher levels of academic procrastination tended to have lower academic achievement. The correlation, although small in magnitude, was statistically significant at the 0.05 level, suggesting that academic procrastination is a relevant factor affecting academic outcomes. As such, the null hypothesis (H_{04}) which stated that there is no significant relationship between academic procrastination and academic achievement was rejected.

Major Findings

The study aimed to explore the relationship between academic procrastination and academic achievement among college students in Sikkim. The findings revealed that a substantial proportion of students (35%) exhibited a moderate level of academic procrastination, while another 35% fell into the below-average category. Very few students reported high levels of procrastination (3%), and none were categorized under the extremely high or extremely low levels, indicating that most students fall within average to below-average procrastination tendencies.

No statistically significant difference was found in academic procrastination between male (M = 84.34, SD = 12.31) and female students (M = 83.00, SD = 12.82), $t(298) = 0.51$, $p = .60$. This suggests that gender does not significantly influence procrastination behaviour among the students. Similarly, the comparison between government (M = 84.86, SD = 13.10) and private

college students (M = 82.52, SD = 12.10) showed no significant difference, $t(298) = 0.93$, $p = .35$, implying that the type of institution does not affect students' procrastination levels.

Importantly, a significant negative correlation was observed between academic procrastination and academic achievement, $r(298) = –.22$, $p = .028$. This indicates that students who exhibit higher levels of academic procrastination tend to perform lower in their academic pursuits.

Discussion

The present study aimed to explore the relationship between academic procrastination and academic achievement among college students in Sikkim. The findings revealed a statistically significant negative correlation between academic procrastination and academic achievement ($r = –.22$, $p = .028$), indicating that higher levels of procrastination are associated with lower academic performance. This outcome aligns with existing literature, where procrastination has been widely recognized as a detrimental behavioural pattern in academic contexts (Steel, 2007; Balkis & Duru, 2017).

The negative correlation found in this study supports the meta-analytic findings by Steel (2007), who emphasized that procrastination is a form of self-regulatory failure that often leads to poor academic outcomes. Similarly, Balkis and Duru (2017) highlighted that procrastination disrupt effective study habits, resulting in decreased academic satisfaction and lower achievement levels. These parallels reinforce the assertion that academic procrastination is not merely a time-management issue but a complex psychological construct with direct implications for academic performance.

Interestingly, the study also found no statistically significant difference in academic procrastination between male and female students. This result is consistent with the findings of Özer, Demir, and Ferrari (2009), who reported that both genders tend to procrastinate at comparable levels, suggesting that procrastination is a universal issue among students, not bound by gender differences. This contradicts earlier research that identified males as more prone to procrastination (Klassen & Kuzucu, 2009), suggesting that cultural or regional factors may influence such behaviours differently.

Furthermore, no significant difference was observed between students from government and private institutions in terms of procrastination. This finding suggests that institutional type may not significantly affect procrastination tendencies, and individual-level factors such as personality traits, motivation, and academic self-regulation may play a more critical role. Chu and Choi (2005) argued that both personal and situational variables influence procrastination, but the present study emphasizes the dominance of personal over contextual variables in the context of the colleges of Sikkim.

Taken together, these findings underline the need for interventions targeting procrastination across all student groups, regardless of gender or institutional affiliation. Educational institutions could consider implementing workshops on time management, goal-setting, and cognitive-behavioural strategies to mitigate procrastinatory behaviour and enhance academic success.

Recommendations

Based on these findings, it is recommended that institutions implement time management and self-regulation workshops to help students develop skills that minimize procrastination. Psychological counselling services should also be made available to assist students in managing anxiety, low self-confidence, or other emotional factors that may contribute to procrastination. Furthermore, integrating study and planning skills into the academic curriculum particularly for first-year students may foster more proactive learning habits. Since gender and institutional differences were not significant, intervention programs should be designed to be universally applicable across student groups. Finally, awareness campaigns highlighting the negative academic effects of procrastination could encourage students to adopt more effective and timely academic behaviours.

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