

Research Article

Academic Procrastination Behavior among Public University Students

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Academic procrastination among university students is a common problem. The authors examined the prevalence, reasons, areas, and effects of academic procrastination in selected higher education institutions in the Amhara Region, Ethiopia. We also examined whether academic procrastination varied with respect to the institutional category and gender of the student. 323 students sampled from three universities, using a stratified sampling technique, completed the questionnaire. In a concurrent mixed-methods study, both qualitative and quantitative data are integrated starting from data collection through conclusion. The results indicate that nearly 80 percent of the students are procrastinators to varying degrees, of which half always procrastinate due to poor time management skills, lack of planning for academic activities, laziness, and stress. The results also showed that procrastination happens irrespective of gender and institutional realities and results in not only academic failure but also affects student affective and emotional behavior. Finally, it is suggested that students are expected to improve their time management practices to minimize negative effects of the delay. It is also suggested that universities shall include such activities in their student support systems as counseling and training on specific areas that students procrastinate most.

1. Introduction

Although it has been difficult to get consensus on definitions of the notion, there is still a plethora of definitions in the literature [1]. Some define academic procrastination as the knowledge that a student has to complete one or more tasks or administer any activity, such as writing a term paper, finishing a class project, completing a reading assignment, or preparing for examinations, but lacks motivation to do so within a specified time frame [2].

Procrastination is also defined as any deliberate but unreasonable delay in carrying out an anticipated course of action [3], and it commonly leads to poor academic achievement [4, 5]. Thus, academic procrastinators are students who are aware of what is required of them, are capable of doing it because the work is within their curricular experience, and are attempting to do it, but do not

accomplish it [6]. They appear to be engaged in nonacademic, generally enjoyable activities rather than the academic objectives outlined in the curriculum.

According to such definitions, some authors claim that the intentionality of delay is a critical component [7, 8], whereas other authors claim that an affective component, including anxiety-related physical symptoms that lead to task delays, is essential [1]. Others point to the difficult, unpleasant, or overwhelming nature of the academic task as a source of procrastination [9].

Thus, it is worth noting that university students' academic activities are defined by frequent deadlines to satisfy different academic and administrative obligations such as course registration, submission of individual and group assignments, and term papers [6]. Academic procrastination is the most prevalent problem in students' university lives that prevents them from meeting their educational duties [9, 10].

Many studies suggest that students who engage in academic procrastination risk a variety of negative consequences [10]. Among them, several research studies in the field of academic procrastination are correlational in nature, focusing on its impact and conceptualizing procrastination as a dispositional characteristic with cognitive, behavioral, and emotional components [6]. Self-related conceptions such as self-regulation, self-efficacy, and self-esteem have attracted the greatest attention among all factors studied in connection to academic procrastination [11]. Procrastination is associated with poor levels of academic self-efficacy and self-esteem, high levels of examination and social anxiety, stress, and sickness, and goal avoidance behavior [12]. Procrastination has also been linked to low grades [13], high boredom [14], greater ineffectiveness, poorer use of problem-solving skills, and poor class performance [15]. Though such global findings are quite prominent and the issue is universal, empirical results confirming these and associated impacts are limited in Ethiopian higher education.

According to studies, much more college students than high school students report procrastinating more frequently overall and on certain assignments [16]. Self-control and self-esteem among university students strongly predicted procrastination because parent engagement is lower at universities than in high schools and primary schools [11]. Thus, academic procrastination appears to be a serious problem among university students [17], with individuals engaging in varying degrees of this behavior [18]. Academic procrastination is frequent and most likely universal, although it is unclear how it functions as a psychological construct in different contexts [11]. One goal of this research was to assess the impact of academic procrastination in Ethiopia's higher education system.

Ethiopia's Education Development Roadmap (2018–2030) implemented a differentiated higher education system based on program offers, functional focus, institutional status, student makeup, and other factors [19]. A study commissioned by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education (MoSHE), incorporating both vertical and horizontal differentiation principles, revealed a three-tiered differentiation system comprised of research, applied, and comprehensive institutions [20]. It is expected that students who attend more established research institutions learn better than their peers in applied and comprehensive categories. Steel and Klingsieck [21] highlight antecedents related to task characteristics, teacher's characteristics, institutional conditions, and social aspects.

Moreover, Özer et al. [1] suggested that future studies should be undertaken using samples from various institutions. As a result, researchers become interested to know whether academic procrastination, a common psychological notion, changes across the institutional status of universities in Ethiopia, Amhara Region.

According to a survey conducted in Turkey, 52 percent of undergraduates self-reported frequent academic procrastination [1]. Another survey found that most university students (83 percent) spend one hour or more each day delaying, with writing tasks being the most prone to

procrastination for both boys and girls [11]. A more recent survey discovered that around 55% of medicinal students at a university procrastinate on academic duties [22]. The literature shows that research findings on the proportion of students that procrastinate have not been constant [6]. Furthermore, the prevalence of procrastination in Ethiopian higher education contexts where institutions are differentiated depending on their goal, resulting in diverse institutions, has not yet been investigated.

Procrastination can be detrimental to students' academic achievement for a variety of reasons. The explanation and arguments stated in the literature as to why students procrastinate have been ascribed to test anxiety, decision-making difficulties, revolt against control, dread of what success would entail, perfectionism, task aversion, and fear of failure [23, 24]. One of the primary reasons why individuals postpone the duties is lack of self-confidence [25]. Students' procrastination has internal and external reasons, according to Grunschel et al. [26]. Eight categories (affective, mental and physical states, behavioral, personality, personal views, competency, prior learning experience, and perceived task features) made up the internal reasons, while three categories (external factors) were also present (individual working conditions, lecturer characteristics, and institutional conditions). Task qualities such as complexity, difficulty, being aversive, importance, time commitment, and novelty proved to be the most common causes of academic procrastination among these categories.

All areas of behavior and activity are dominated by procrastination, but academic procrastination, which takes place in academic contexts, is the most prevalent type. Students procrastinated when studying for examinations, reading assignments, and writing term papers than they did in the other three academic areas: academic administrative tasks, attendance tasks, and school activities in general [1]. Similarly, a student may procrastinate on one or more tasks or administer any activity, such as finishing a reading assignment, completing a class project, or solving a term paper, but lack the drive to do it within a certain time frame [2].

Gender comparison is another common theme in the research of academic procrastination. According to certain research, male students procrastinate on academic activities more frequently than female students [3, 27]. Others, on the other hand, discovered that female students procrastinate more than males [28, 29]. A third group of research concluded that gender had no influence on procrastination [30].

According to this brief synthesis of research, gender differences in academic procrastination are a contentious subject that may be difficult to forecast [18]. While there may be a gender difference in academic procrastination, research in the Ethiopian higher education environment is scarce. Thus, this study aimed to see whether there are statistically significant gender differences in the Ethiopian higher education system. Other research has shown contradictory results on gender-related procrastination differences [15].

Undertaking such studies will allow researchers to acquire a better understanding of students' procrastination and motivation in higher education in Ethiopia.

Furthermore, adolescent procrastination can be unpleasant for parents, teachers, and others who engage with adolescents in academic contexts since it is an unreasonable and often harmful delay of vital duties. The necessity for research on the effects, reasons, and practice of adolescent procrastination is a beneficial first step in offering academic support to adolescents [11]. Such research may aid institutions in developing better intervention techniques to increase academic attainment by lessening the impact of procrastination. This study aimed to gain a better knowledge of student procrastination, namely, its prevalence, effect, reasons, and gender and institutional differences among students in the Ethiopian higher education context, which lacks empirical evidence on academic procrastination. Furthermore, this study focuses on specific academic areas of procrastination.

To this end, the researchers raise the following research questions:

- (1) What is the prevalence of academic procrastination in higher education institutions in Amhara Region?
- (2) What are the areas of academic procrastination in higher education institutions in Amhara Region?
- (3) What are the reasons students attribute to procrastinate in higher education institutions in Amhara Region?
- (4) Are there gender and institutional-related differences in academic procrastination in higher education institutions in Amhara Region?

2. Methods

2.1. Research Design. Researchers used a concurrent mixed-methods research design. Mixed-methods research provides a way to harness strengths that offset the weaknesses of both quantitative and qualitative research studies [31, 32]. The concurrent mixed-methods design involved the simultaneous collection, processing, and interpretation of both qualitative and quantitative data strands. Accordingly, data collection and analysis focused on the major reasons, areas, and factors related to academic procrastination and institutional and gender-related differences in the degree of academic procrastination in the context of Ethiopian higher education system.

2.2. Participants. The research was carried out at universities in the Amhara National Regional State. This region is home to more than thirteen universities. A sample among these universities was drawn that included Bahir Dar, Debre Markos, and Woldia. Universities and participants were chosen using a stratified random sampling method. Because procrastination is considered lower in established or research institutions than in applied or comprehensive ones, the study includes three universities classified by the differentiation reform, one from each group. The sample was stratified for “university category” and gender.

The study included 323 undergraduate students (155 male and 168 females). The participants’ average age was 21.60 years (SD = 1.78 years), with a range of 17 to 28 years.

These participants were undergraduate students from various university categories enrolled in various departments. The students were divided into three groups: 158 (49%) from research universities, 95 (29%) from applied universities, and 70 (22%) from comprehensive universities. Appropriate clearances and consent were obtained from the students, resulting in a participation percentage of more than 95 percent.

Table 1 shows that 323 students were chosen for this study. A sample size estimator (G*Power 3.1) was used to calculate the number of sample students. This is the estimated minimum sample size based on a 95% confidence interval and a 10% nonresponse rate.

2.3. Measures

2.3.1. Questionnaire. Questionnaires were used to collect data from research participants. These questionnaires are divided into five sections: demographic information, academic procrastination, areas of procrastination, reasons for procrastinating, and the influence of procrastination on learning scores.

2.3.2. Academic Procrastination. “The researchers partly adapt Tuckman’s [33] procrastination scale and partly build their own questionnaire based on a survey of related literature.” Tuckman [33] stated that the academic procrastination scale had strong internal consistency, with a Cronbach alpha coefficient of .85. After testing and evaluating the questions, as well as calculating the association of each question with the entire set of questions, 12 were chosen as the best questionnaire for academic procrastination. The Cronbach alpha coefficient in the current research was .89. The items were rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The summated score of all 12 measures ranging from 12 to 60 was used to assess procrastination. The higher the score, the greater the procrastinator’s tendency. A score of less than 24 suggested a reduced tendency of procrastination, while a score of more than 25 indicated a strong procrastination tendency. There were items that were mentioned negatively, and these negative items were reversed before the scores were totaled.

2.3.3. Areas of Academic Procrastination. The PASS scale [34] and other areas of academic procrastination, which were reviewed from literature, were used to collect academic procrastination in six areas of academic functioning. This scale consists of 18, which are classified into six dimensions: (a) writing an assignment, (b) oral presentation, (c) studying for an examination, (d) performing group work, (e) performing academic tasks in general, and (f) doing library work. Each of these six areas contains three items rated on 5-point Likert scales. Items of the scale are in a statement, which has 5 options: from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Therefore, the higher score on the scale suggests dominant academic areas of procrastination and vice versa.

TABLE 1: Sample size estimate.

No.	Category of university	University	Population	Sample
1	Research university	Bahir Dar University	18,886	158
2	Applied university	Debre Markos University	11,300	95
3	Comprehensive universities	Woldia University	8,305	70
Total			38,491	323

2.3.4. Reasons for Academic Procrastination Scale. This scale consists of 19 items, and each item shows one's reason for academic procrastination (e.g., delay academic activities due to social media addiction and poor time management). This reason for academic procrastination scale was developed from different research on this topic. Respondents rated each reason from strongly disagree with one's reasons for academic procrastinating (1) to strongly agree (5). Therefore, the higher score on the scale implies reasons for procrastination and vice versa.

2.3.5. Effect of Academic Procrastination Scale. This scale consists of 10 items, and each item may reflect the influence of academic procrastination on academic work (e.g., because of delay or postponing my academic tasks, I get a low score, fear of examination). Items in this scale were developed from the literature on this topic. Respondents rated effects of academic procrastinating ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree.

2.3.6. Pilot Study. The researchers conducted a pilot study before collecting actual data from the target group to confirm that the instruments satisfied the minimum psychometric criteria. The questionnaire was tested at Wollo University, an applied university. Following the pilot research, essential corrections were made to each item; thus, items were disregarded, rewritten, or amended as necessary. Subsequently, the Cronbach alpha reliability value was $r = 0.89$ for both the academic procrastination scale and the areas of academic procrastination, $r = 0.86$ for the cause of academic procrastination, and $r = 0.84$ for the effect of academic procrastination scale.

2.3.7. Focus Group Discussion. Focus group discussions are the second data collecting approach (FGDs). The reasons, areas, and elements that contribute to students' procrastination were explored using focus groups. Furthermore, the qualitative analysis findings were utilized to go deeper into the processes and causes of procrastination and why such behaviors occur. This will substantiate the essential features of procrastination and solutions to reduce the influence of procrastination on student learning. Thus, focus group talks from each institution category were held to acquire insight into the causes, consequences, and areas of academic procrastination.

2.4. Data Analysis Methods

2.4.1. Descriptive Statistics. Firstly, to describe the prevalence or level of academic procrastination, the researchers

used mean and standard deviation. Moreover, the areas that students most procrastinate with are also described via mean, standard deviation, and percentages.

2.4.2. Multiple Regression and ANOVA. Second, two-way ANOVA was performed to examine whether there are statistically significant variations in procrastination across gender and university categories, as it is often hypothesized that students at research institutions have less academic procrastination than their colleagues at applied and comprehensive universities. Besides, multiple regression analysis is employed to explain the academic areas that students procrastinate the most.

Inductive analysis is used to analyze qualitative data gathered from focus group discussions regarding the causes, areas, and effects of procrastination. During the discussion, an attempt is made to combine the data from both qualitative and quantitative strands.

3. Results

3.1. Levels of Academic Procrastination. The overall mean for academic procrastination was 42.18 (SD = 4.84). Among the 323 undergraduate students, 19% of them were categorized as non-procrastinators, whereas 81% of the students were procrastinators. In particular, 20% of students procrastinate seldom, while another 22% procrastinate almost usually, as well as a higher number, 39%, always procrastinate to academic tasks. Figure 1 illustrates the degree to which students procrastinate on different academic areas.

3.2. Areas of Academic Procrastination. Students' procrastination differs depending on the type of task. As a result, students mostly procrastinate on presentation, with an average score of 3.94 and 68.7 percent agreeing that they nearly always or always procrastinate on presentation. Preparing for examinations is the second most common area in which students delay, with a mean score of 3.80 and 64.4 percent of students agreeing that they postpone nearly usually or always. The third area in which students procrastinate is general academic activity, which has an average of 3.80 and 59.4 percent of them say they procrastinate nearly usually or constantly. Other areas in which university students procrastinate include library work (62.5 percent of students and a mean score of 3.68), writing assignments (51.4 percent of students and a mean score of 3.80), and group work (52.3 percent of students and a mean score of 3.39).

Table 2 highlights the six common areas to explain the variance in academic procrastination. The models account for 35.2 percent of students' academic procrastination.

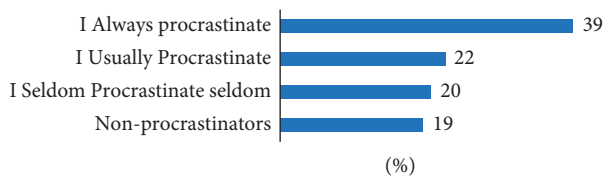


FIGURE 1: Levels of academic procrastination.

Presentation ($\beta = 0.315$, $p < 0.01$) was found to be the only significant predictor of academic procrastination, according to the results of multiple regression analysis. Other categories of academic procrastination, however, had no substantial effect on academic procrastination. This explanation of 35.2 percent variance in academic procrastination by writing assignments, presentation, examination, studies, group work, general academic activity, and library work suggests that there are some other areas that play a role in predicting academic procrastination, which are not investigated in this study.

3.2.1. Reasons for Academic Procrastination. There are numerous factors that emerged from the data, some of which may be related. Poor time management skills are a key cause of academic procrastination. Due to poor scheduling skills, students appear to make inefficient use of their time by engaging in social media, leisure, social events, and overlapping academic obligations. Furthermore, they engage in a significant number of actions that are unplanned. “We are being absorbed by emergent campus activities, both academic and nonacademic.” Another reason for academic procrastination is a lack of learning tools such as handouts and reading materials, as well as a broad content covering. A third sort of procrastination explanation appears to be an emotive component. Some students procrastinate because they are lazy and sleep excessively, while others are stressed. “I cannot complete the assignment in the time allotted because I’m stressed.” “I interpret modest academic challenges as complex/large ones and repeatedly revise the same task.”

3.3. Gender and Institutional Differences in Academic Procrastination. Focus group participants mentioned the availability of learning tools as one of the reasons for academic procrastination. The availability of learning resources differs across research, applied, and comprehensive universities. Due to the established nature of research institutions, students have ready access to replicated course materials such as handouts, but such resources are very limited in comprehensive universities. As a result, students contend that several institutional elements influence student procrastination of academic activities.

Table 3 shows the results of the two-way ANOVA used to determine whether there are variations in procrastination between males and females, as well as whether students learning in resourceful research universities experience procrastination differently. A 2 (gender) 3 (university type) analysis of variance revealed no statistically significant

differences. The interaction impact of gender and university type was not statistically significant, with $F_{(3,323)} = 1.033$ and $p = 0.378$. There was no statistically significant main effect for university type, with $F_{(3,323)} = 0.208$ and $p = 0.0891$, and no statistically significant main effect for gender, with $F_{(1,323)} = 0.871$ and $p = 0.351$.

3.4. Effects of Academic Procrastination. Focus group participants reported that procrastination leads to low academic accomplishment, inadequate preparation for subsequent academic assignments, stress, lower self-confidence, cheating, despair, and boredom. Students who postpone academic activity encounter a variety of academic problems, including having studying, copying and plagiarism, lower academic scores, examination anxiety, and the development of a sense of inferiority.

4. Discussion

Since 2008, the Ethiopian higher education system has used a modular approach to curriculum development. The curricula are designed with the student load in consideration, including time estimates for class attendance, presentations, library work, individual and group work, and project work. As a result, it is necessary for every student to spend time wisely and without delay to achieve the expected curricular requirements. On the contrary, one of the most common problems in Ethiopia’s higher education system is that students postpone or fail to complete academic activities on time. In this study, the researchers examined academic procrastination in various university categories and gender of university students. As a result, this research found that the prevalence of academic procrastination is higher (81 percent) when compared to non-procrastination, which is consistent with other similar studies conducted in other settings [1], where the majority (three-fourths) of the students are procrastinators. Although there are differences in the degree of procrastination in Ethiopian higher education, four students of five procrastinate. The study found that, while the degree to which students delay academic activities varies, approximately 40% of the students reported that they procrastinate all time. This finding is similar to findings from past research in which high percentages of students reported almost always or always procrastinating [35] and at least 50% of students continuously and problematically procrastinate [9].

Students’ procrastination differs from academic activity to academic activity, but they mainly procrastinate when presenting a specific material in front of an audience. In our study, students procrastinate the most on presentations, followed by examination preparation, library work, writing assignments, and the least on group projects. Most students procrastinate on presentations due to insufficient preparation of presentation themes. While some studies show that students procrastinate more with writing projects, followed by daily homework and studying [11], others found that students procrastinate the most with examination preparation, followed by reading assignments and then writing

TABLE 2: Regression analysis results for the area of procrastination.

Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients		t
	β	Std. error	β		
Constant	1.992	0.0115			17.285*
Writing assignment	0.028	0.038	0.050		0.726
Presentation	0.170	0.036	0.315		4.758*
Study for examination	0.085	0.044	0.150		1.927
Group work	0.073	0.038	0.145		1.902
Academic activity	0.026	0.047	0.048		0.553
Library work	0.003	0.036	0.006		0.085
R square	0.352				
F	30.162				
p	0.00				

TABLE 3: Two-way ANOVA on the influence of institutional category and gender on level of academic procrastination.

Type III sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Gender	54.069	1	54.069	0.871 0.351
University	38.716	3	12.905	0.208 0.891
Gender * university	192.400	3	64.133	1.033 0.378
Total	568045.600	323		

term papers [1]. Presentation emerged as the most common area prone to procrastination within the context of the universities studied, although writing tasks are at the top in the studies mentioned above.

Students in universities explain why they procrastinate on academic responsibilities. According to participant students, the reasons include the following: (i) poor time management skills, as they spend the majority of their time engaging in social media, leisure, and social activities; (ii) a significant number of activities that students do without planning as students are taken up by emergent campus activities that are spontaneous; and (iii) institutional factors such as a lack of learning resources such as handouts and reading materials, as well as a wide range of content that requires great deal of time to cover; (iv) laziness and sleeping too much; and (v) being stressful that results in failure to do the academic task within the time required. Some of these findings are comparable to those published in the Learning Commons Fastfacts Series [36], which said that (i) there is always a vast quantity of work to accomplish, and (ii) for most students, just a few hours per day are spent in class and laboratories. (iii) There is typically something more interesting to do than study in a residential university environment. One of the reasons students attribute to academic procrastination is poor time management. This finding is similar to the findings of Fee and Tangney [37], who demonstrated that procrastination is more than merely a time management issue [4].

The institutional category in the Ethiopian higher education system, described as research, applied, and comprehensive universities [19], is one of the reasons that students attribute to their procrastination habits. However, the availability of learning resources in research universities

is neither supported by the literature nor statistically significant. As a result, academic procrastination is more subjective than institutional, and students postpone on academic work despite the availability of learning aids such as handouts and reading materials. A similar study on academic procrastination on Turkish students indicated fear of failure, risk taking, laziness, and rebellion against control as reasons to procrastinate [1], which shares some findings with this study, such as laziness. Furthermore, despite the study's initial hypothesis that academic procrastination differs by gender, there was no statistically significant difference in procrastination between male and female students. Procrastination was observed to differ between male and female university students in certain studies [11]; however, in others, academic procrastination was found to be the same regardless of gender. As a result, the findings are mixed as to whether males and females have significantly different procrastination habits.

This research found a variety of effects of academic procrastination, including low academic accomplishment, insufficient preparation for later academic tasks, stress, lower self-confidence, cheating, hopelessness, and boredom. These findings are consistent with findings from a variety of studies that found many effects of procrastination, such as low self-confidence [38], poor academic performance [13], and tardiness [12], as well as high levels of anxiety, stress, and illness [11].

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

This study found that more than 80% of students frequently engaged in academic procrastination, particularly presentation, studying for examinations, followed by library work, writing activities, and the least to group work. They procrastinate due largely to inadequate time management skills, lack of academic activity planning, laziness, and stress. Procrastination occurs regardless of gender or university type since it is more personal than institutional. In this regard, this study has significant implications for counselors and educators.

As a result, the current findings may provide significant data for university counselors and instructors who should be aware of students' procrastination levels on academic activities. The impacts shown here are negative consequences

of procrastination, and future research might look at both positive and negative effects while also reconceptualizing a framework to better comprehend academic procrastination. Based on these results, it is suggested that students improve time management skills through training and practice. Moreover, universities shall include activities to reduce procrastination in student support systems such as counseling services. Moreover, these institutions shall organize training to help students raise the implications and effects of academic procrastination and their lives and academic performance too. Support should be given to the students on the most procrastinating areas such as presentation in the form of training and making effective presentations.

Data Availability

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors disclosed that there are no possible conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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