



Impact of Social Phobia and Self-Esteem on Academic Procrastination among University Students

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Abstract

Academic procrastination is intention to delay academic tasks despite awareness of potential negative consequences, is a widespread, problematic behaviour amongst higher education students. The current study investigated the impact of social phobia and self-esteem on procrastination in college students. Participants A non-probabilistic sampling of 200 undergraduate and graduate students were included in the study, through a cross-sectional quantitative study. The Social Phobia Inventory (SPIN), Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, and the Academic Procrastination Scale (APS) were used as standardized scales. The instruments exhibited excellent reliability for all of the instruments ($\alpha = .91-.96$). In the multiple regression analysis, social phobia and self-esteem were identified as significant predictors of procrastination and accounted for 34% of the variance. Social phobia had positive association with procrastination ($\beta = .39, p < .001$), indicating that individuals with higher levels of social evaluation fear were more inclined to procrastinate. On the other hand, self-esteem was negatively associated with procrastination ($\beta = -.36, p < .001$), which suggests that those with poor self-worth were at higher risk for academic delays. Gender-specific trends also showed that perception of social anxiety, trace anxiety and self-esteem in female students were more than male students, which is in line with the earlier studies.

Key Words: Social Phobia, Academic procrastination, Self-esteem, Negative consequences,



Introduction

Academic procrastination is the voluntary delay of intended some academic tasks despite foreseeable negative consequences. This has remained a pervasive challenge in higher education system. Estimates suggest that between 50% and 70% of university students regularly procrastinate on assignments, exam preparation, and other academic responsibilities (Rozenal et al., 2022). While occasional delay may have minimal consequences, chronic procrastination has been linked to reduced academic performance, heightened stress, lower life satisfaction, and an increased risk of mental health difficulties (Svartdal et al., 2020). Understanding the psychological determinants of academic procrastination is therefore essential for designing targeted interventions to support student success (Awan, Ilyas, & Amjad, 2023).

Among so many factors influencing and having association with procrastination, social phobia and self-esteem have emerged as particularly relevant in the university context (Saleem & Rafique, 2012). Most of the students having issues either due to low self-esteem or social anxiety. Social phobia is defined and characterized by an intense, persistent fear of social evaluation (Izgiç et al, 2004). The circumstances leading individuals to avoid situations where they might be evaluated, scrutinized, criticized, or disgraced (American Psychiatric Association, 2022; Szuhany, & Simon, 2022). In academic settings, these situations are often faced in class presentations, group projects, and active classroom participation tasks. These tasks require speaking, performance and public interactions. Earlier research studies indicates that students with high level of social anxiety tend to delay or avoid the aforementioned activities (Sadikaj et al, 2015). Avoidance and delay lead to mitigate perceived threats of embarrassment or failure (Sagar, & Stoeber, 2009). Students are unaware that this avoidance can temporarily reduce anxiety, reinforce maladaptive coping strategies and perpetuate procrastination cycles (Rozenal, & Carlbring, 2014). Repeated practice has made students habitual and they became shy and defensive regarding public speaking.

Similarly, self-esteem is defined as an individual's overall evaluation of their self-worth. Self-esteem has a well-established connection with procrastination (Orth & Robins, 2022). Students with low self-esteem often struggle with self-doubt, fear of failure, and diminished motivation (Braslow et al, 2012). The aforementioned activities can lead to postponement of academic tasks which are perceived as challenging for these students (Peixoto et al., 2021). Procrastination among students may further erode self-esteem by reinforcing feelings of incompetence and underachievement. These negative consequences creating a self-perpetuating cycle of procrastination (Ma, et al, 2024). On the other hand, higher self-esteem has been linked to greater academic resilience, persistence task engagement and hard work among students (Rahayu, Fachmi, & Burhanudin, 2024).

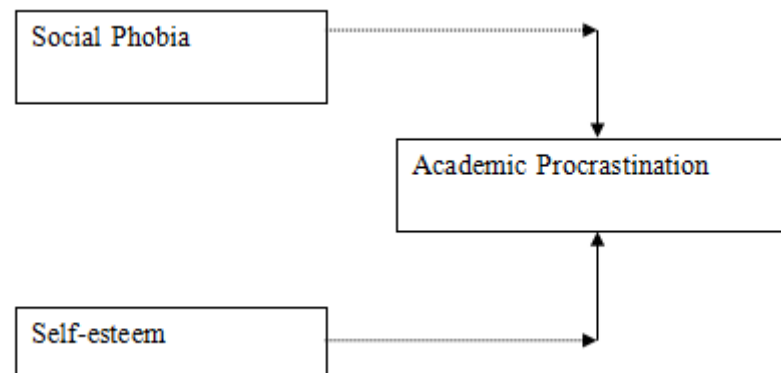
Few studies reported that social phobia and self-esteem independently predict academic procrastination. Social phobia can undermine self-esteem through chronic self-criticism and negative self-appraisal, which may in turn increase susceptibility to procrastination (Aderka et al., 2012; Rodebaugh et al., 2014). This suggests a potential mediating or compounding effect, where the presence of both high social anxiety and low self-esteem significantly heightens the risk of procrastination (Batool, Khursheed, & Jahangir, 2017). Yet, existing research in this area is limited, particularly in non-Western educational contexts where sociocultural factors, academic pressures, and stigma surrounding mental health may influence these relationships differently (Awan, Ilyas, &



Amjad, 2023). Another important factor is the university environment itself. It presents some more unique stressors that may amplify these psychological vulnerabilities. These stressors include increased academic workload, competitive peer environments, and the need for independent time management (Nordmo, & Samara, 2009). The mentioned stressors may exacerbate procrastination tendencies, particularly among students already struggling with anxiety or self-worth issues (Goroshit, & Hen, 2021).

The current study addresses this gap by investigating social phobia and self-esteem as predictors of academic procrastination in university students. By analyzing the relative contributions of each factor, this research aims to clarify whether social anxiety or self-esteem exerts a stronger influence on procrastination tendencies, and how these constructs may overlap in explaining academic delays. Insights from this study have both theoretical and practical implications. From theoretical perspective, they advance understanding of the psychological mechanisms underlying procrastination while, practically, they inform the development of targeted interventions such as cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) for social anxiety, self-esteem enhancement programs, and peer support initiatives tailored to the academic context.

Conceptual Model



Theoretical Background

Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Theory

Rosenberg (1965) emphasized that self-esteem is based on individuals' perceptions of themselves and is influenced by social interactions and external validation. Positive reinforcement from family, peers, and society fosters high self-esteem, whereas criticism and rejection contribute to low self-worth (Cast, & Burke, 2020).

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Maslow (1943) included self-esteem as a crucial level in his hierarchy of needs. He argued that self-esteem arises from achievements, recognition, and social acceptance. Individuals with high self-esteem strive for self-actualization, while those with low self-esteem may experience insecurity and lack of motivation (Poston, 2009).

Sociometer Theory

This theory suggests that self-esteem functions as a social barometer, reflecting one's perceived level of social acceptance and rejection. Higher self-esteem indicates social inclusion, while lower self-esteem signals exclusion, leading to social withdrawal and avoidance behaviors (Leary, 2012).



Methodology

The current study is quantitative in nature and utilizes a cross-sectional survey research approach. The data was acquired from undergraduate university students using the method known as purposive sampling. This approach was chosen to specifically target students who met the inclusion criteria relevant to the study objectives. The use of a survey method allowed for the collection of data in a systematic manner, ensuring reliability and comparability across participants. Moreover, the cross-sectional design provided a snapshot of the variables under investigation at a single point in time. Data was collected through following instruments.

Measurement Scales

The Social Phobia Inventory (SPIN)

The Social Phobia Inventory (SPIN), developed by Connor et al. (2000), is a 17-item self-report questionnaire designed to assess the presence and severity of social anxiety disorder (social phobia). It evaluates three key domains: fear, avoidance, and physiological discomfort in social situations. Each item is rated on a 5-point Likert scale (0 = *Not at all* to 4 = *Extremely*), with total scores ranging from 0 to 68. The SPIN is widely used in both clinical and research settings for screening, diagnosis, and monitoring treatment outcomes in individuals with social anxiety.

Self-esteem Scale:

It is developed by Rosenberg (1965). A 10-item scales that measures global self-worth by measuring both positive and negative feelings about the self. The scale is believed to be unidimensional. All items are answered using a 4-points Likert scale format ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Items 2, 5, 6, 8, 9 are reverse scored. Give "Strongly Disagree" 1 point, "Disagree" 2 points, "Agree" 3 points, and "Strongly Agree" 4 points.

Academic Procrastination Scale:

Academic Procrastination Scale developed by McCloskey in 2011. It is a 25 Item scale. Items are rated on a five-point Likert self-assessment scale. It ranges from 1 to 5 in which 1 = Disagree and 5 = Agree. The scores are computed by calculating the total of scale responses. The APS exhibited greater reliability and internal consistency, $\alpha = .94$, as compared to the four other scales. The APS also exhibited ample convergent validity and was significantly correlated with the other scales (Tuckman Procrastination Scale, General Procrastination scale).

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Variables	Categories	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	90	45.0
	Female	110	55.0
Age	18-20	29	14.5
	21-23	151	75.5
	24-26	20	10.0
Program	Undergraduates	179	89.9
	Graduates	20	10.1



Field of study	Natural sciences	14	7.0
	Social sciences	175	87.5
	Health sciences	11	5.5
Marital status	Single	185	92.5
	Married	15	7.5
Residence	Urban	40	2.0
	Rural	160	80.0

Table 1 shows frequency and percentage of students with respect to gender, age, current degree, field of study, marital status and residence among universities students.

Table 2: Psychometric Properties of Study Variables

Variables	N	M	SD	a	Range		Skewness	Kurtosis
					Potential	Actual		
SP	200	61.21	14.93	.96	0-68	21-85	-.775	.112
SE	200	24.02	1.02	.91	10-40	23-27	.074	1.72
AP	200	78.41	17.07	.98	25-125	41-109	-.150	-.84

Note. SP = Social Phobia, SE= Self Esteem, AP= Academic Procrastination

Table 2 presents the psychometric features of the study variables. The reliability study indicates that the alpha coefficients for university students varied from .96 to .91, with a minimum of .89, for the measures utilised in the current research, encompassing Social Phobia, Self-Esteem, and Academic Procrastination. The kurtosis values range from less than +1 to greater than -1. The levels of skewness and kurtosis indicate that data normality is not an issue.

Table 3: Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Academic Procrastination

Predictor Variable	B	SE B	β	t	p
Constant	45.32	4.28	–	10.59	.000
Social Phobia	0.42	0.08	.39	5.25	.000
Self-Esteem	-0.67	0.12	-.36	-5.58	.000

Table 3 reports the results of multiple regression analysis which revealed that both social phobia and self-esteem significantly predicted academic procrastination among university students. Social phobia was found to have a significant positive effect on procrastination ($\beta = .39$, $p < .001$), indicating that students with higher levels of social anxiety were more likely to delay academic tasks. Conversely, self-esteem had a significant negative effect on procrastination ($\beta = -.36$, $p < .001$), suggesting that students with lower self-worth were more prone to procrastination behaviors. The overall model accounted for 34% of the variance in academic procrastination ($R^2 = .34$), which demonstrates a substantial explanatory power in psychological research.

Discussion

The present study examined the influence of social phobia and self-esteem on academic procrastination among university students. The demographic analysis (Table 1) indicated that the sample was diverse in terms of gender, age, and academic fields, with a slightly higher proportion of female students. These demographic distributions are consistent with prior research in South Asian university contexts, where female participation in higher education has been increasing steadily (Ghosh, & Kundu, 2021). Importantly, demographic characteristics provide a contextual understanding of how social and psychological factors may operate differently across subgroups. For instance, the gender distribution foreshadowed potential differences in social anxiety and self-esteem, which were later



reflected in the findings. The descriptive statistics and psychometric properties of the study variables (Table 2) revealed that social phobia, self-esteem, and academic procrastination were measured with high internal consistency (α ranging from .91 to .96). The skewness and kurtosis values further confirmed the normality of the data, allowing for robust parametric analyses. The mean levels suggested that students reported moderate-to-high levels of social phobia and procrastination, alongside average levels of self-esteem. These results resonate with existing literature showing that academic procrastination is a common challenge among students worldwide, often linked with both anxiety and self-evaluative processes (Svartdal et al., 2020; Rozental et al., 2022).

The regression analysis (Table 3) provided direct support for the hypothesized relationships, showing that both social phobia and self-esteem significantly predicted academic procrastination. Specifically, social phobia was positively associated with procrastination ($\beta = .39, p < .001$), highlighting that students with higher social anxiety were more likely to postpone tasks. This finding aligns with cognitive model of social phobia, which emphasizes avoidance of evaluative situations as a key maintaining factor of anxiety (Hodson et al, 2008). In academic contexts, such avoidance translates into procrastination on activities like presentations, group projects, or exam preparation (Tras, & Gökçen, 2020). These results are also consistent with earlier empirical studies that identified social anxiety as a strong predictor of academic delay (Brook, & Willoughby, 2015; Ko & Chnag, 2019). On the other hand self-esteem was negatively associated with procrastination ($\beta = -.36, p < .001$), indicating that lower self-worth increases vulnerability to academic delays. This supports Rosenberg's (1965) self-esteem theory, suggesting that individuals with low self-esteem are more prone to self-doubt, fear of failure, and motivational deficits, which in turn contribute to procrastination. These results echo findings from Orth and Robins (2022) and Peixoto et al. (2021), who reported that students with diminished self-worth are more likely to engage in self-handicapping behaviors as a way of protecting themselves from possible academic failure. Conversely, high self-esteem appears to serve as a protective factor, fostering persistence, resilience, and task engagement (Owens & Newbegin, 2000).

Together, social phobia and self-esteem accounted for 34% of the variance in procrastination, a substantial proportion for psychological research. This suggests that while other factors such as motivation, time management, and family expectations may also contribute to procrastination (Balkis & Duru, 2016), psychological vulnerabilities remain central predictors. Importantly, the negative correlation observed between social phobia and self-esteem (Table 2) supports the notion of a compounding effect, whereby students who are socially anxious may also internalize negative self-appraisals, leading to diminished self-esteem and heightened procrastination (Rodebaugh et al., 2014). Gender differences observed in the descriptive data also provide meaningful insight. Female students reported higher levels of social phobia and slightly lower self-esteem, consistent with international findings that women are nearly twice as likely to experience social anxiety disorder (Bano, Ahmad & Ali, 2011). In collectivistic settings, traditional gender norms and heightened expectations of female modesty and social compliance may further intensify fears of social evaluation, placing women at higher risk of procrastination.

Conclusion

The study highlights that social phobia and low self-esteem are significant predictors of academic procrastination among university students. Findings revealed that higher social



anxiety leads to avoidance behaviors, while diminished self-worth weakens motivation, both reinforcing procrastination cycles. Gender differences showed that female students experience greater social phobia, whereas male students reported higher self-esteem. These results emphasize that procrastination is rooted in deeper psychological processes rather than mere time-management issues. Targeted interventions focusing on social anxiety reduction and self-esteem enhancement can play a vital role in improving students' academic success

Limitation

This study has certain limitations that must be acknowledged. Reliance on self-report surveys may have introduced response biases, suggesting the need for incorporating objective behavioral measures in future research. The single-university sample restricts generalizability across diverse cultural and institutional contexts. Additionally, the cross-sectional design prevents causal conclusions, underscoring the importance of longitudinal studies. Expanding future research to larger, more varied populations can provide deeper insights into these relationships.

Recommendations

Future studies should employ longitudinal designs and incorporate behavioral measures to strengthen causal understanding of procrastination. Expanding research across multiple universities and cultural contexts would improve generalizability. Additionally, intervention-based studies focusing on self-esteem enhancement and social anxiety reduction are recommended to promote academic resilience.

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