



Research Article

Relationship between Gender and Academic Procrastination amongst Postgraduate Students in Anambra State

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Abstract

Objective: In Anambra State where there are two public universities that have postgraduate schools, postgraduate students have been observed procrastinating by the nature of their activities. This led to examining the relationship between gender and academic procrastination amongst postgraduate students in Anambra State in this study.

Methods: A research question and a hypothesis guided the study. The study adopted a correlational research design and was carried out at Nnamdi Azikiwe University and Chukwuemeka Odimegwu Ojukwu, Igboariam, both in Anambra State. The study population consists of 1,862 students, comprising all Masters and Doctorate students of the 2017/2018 academic session. The number of 2017/2018 postgraduate students in Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka are 1,088 while those in Chukwuemeka Odimegwu Ojukwu Igbariam is 774. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the sample, which comprises 329 postgraduate students. The instrument for data collection was Academic Procrastination Scale (APS). The instrument was an adopted instrument. McCloskey originally developed the 25-item APS in 2011. The research question was answered using mean and standard deviation, while the hypothesis was tested, using z-test.

Results: Findings indicated that there is no meaningful relationship between male and female academic procrastination of postgraduate students.

Conclusion: It was concluded that male and female postgraduate students procrastinate in their academic endeavours.

Keywords: gender, procrastination, academic procrastination, postgraduate students

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1 INTRODUCTION

Education plays one of the most important parts in helping to bring about individual students' capacities to deal with various problems in life while fulfilling their pre-set ambitions. Life's challenges get tougher as students move up educational levels from secondary school to university. Such challenges require individuals to possess certain characteristics, including high level of determination, self-monitoring as well as self-starting capacity. Mbathia^[1] opined that education can provide individuals with those characteristics as well as explicit skill sets such as developing learning strategies, self-efficacy and self-regulated learning methods, which enable them to perform specific tasks successfully and thoroughly. However, one of the issues that tend to bedevil students' abilities to accomplish set tasks is procrastination.

Procrastination is an entrapping condition that controls the mind of an individual even with their awareness. More often than not, a small degree of procrastination can be envisioned as normal. However, it becomes a problem when individuals persist with the habit, regardless of its consequences to daily functioning^[2]. Hoppe^[3] understood procrastination as a purposeful act of deferring a particular task to a later time, which may result in some negative effects, such as increasing stress to individuals, as well as depreciating the quality of task performance. In the context of this study, it could be seen putting on hold a task to a later time. Procrastination can be practiced in either the general public or student population. The type of procrastination practiced amongst students is known as academic procrastination.

Academic procrastination is the inclination to stall or delay academic chores and activities. Students procrastinate when they delay an academic task or use excuses to justify a delay in doing an academic activity. Wolters^[4] opined that it is the failure to perform an academic activity within a desired period or postponing until the last minute, activities one needs to complete. It affects students of all ages, whether they are attending grade school or aiming for some type of educational attainment or degree. When academic duties are postponed, it causes failure, academic dissatisfaction, and stress. Schraw et al.^[5] defined academic procrastination as the intentional and needless deferral or delay of academic work that must be completed, to the point of experiencing discomfort. According to Ellis and Knaus^[6], it is the postponement of academic goals to the point where optimal performance becomes highly unlikely. In the context of this study, academic procrastination is delay in the completion of academic activities within a period.

Students frequently procrastinate because they do

not see the relevance or importance of a task, do not understand the task, or just do not know how to start up. Procrastination from this angle is a combination of motivation, confidence, and comprehension. Most times, procrastination has truly little to do with laziness or indifference. Oftentimes, there are deeper issues that lead students to develop a procrastinatory habits.

Causes of academic procrastination according to Balkis and Duru^[7] and Bojuwoye^[8] Comprise:

- Lack of motivation
- Low self-confidence
- Fear of failure
- Lack of comprehension
- Absent mindedness
- Meticulousness
- Low energy level
- Unsystematic.
- Time optimization

Various ways of overcoming the problem of procrastination are recommended by many researchers^[9]. For example, prioritization of tasks allow people to cross things off their to-do lists one at a time. Quek^[10] suggested steps in minimizing the problem of procrastination which are:

Determine what you are afraid of: In fear-motivated procrastination, it is necessary to identify the fear to begin with. For example, a man or a woman that has experienced consecutive heartbreaks may have developed a fear of being heart broken and may find it difficult to trust and select a life partner. A student that has failed a course twice or more (because of lack of comprehension), might find it difficult to attend lectures on the course or take an examination reseat on that particular course because of a fear of obtaining another failing grade. Both the fear and the sources of that fear must be confronted before the behaviours expressed by procrastination can be addressed.

Get yourself an engagement book: Invest in an elaborate electronic time keeper, or photocopy reams of get-your-life together organizers readily available on the market. It is far wiser to purchase a simple engagement or schedule book, preferably one that is about the size of a small paperback that has a one week spread when the book is opened. Engagement books help to address the problems of disorganization and even poor memory.

De-chunk: Breaking a task down into tractable chunks (de-chunking) usually removes the threat of having to do a large task all at once. Sometimes, a task may be misjudged as costing extraordinarily little time and energy when it really takes up a good part of your

energies. Learn to break tasks down into fifteen minute chunks to begin with. As you get more proficient at it, increase the size of your chunks. It would be extremely helpful to use your engagement book to plan your de-chunking.

Break Free: Procrastination has a way of controlling a person's life, if not brought under control. When viewed from this angle, it can be seen as laziness. It takes a great deal of wisdom, determination and effort to break the grasps of procrastination, but the results are often worth the while. Other causes of procrastination relating the project to something of interest; generating a dedicated study space; eating healthy and getting lots of sleep; this would increase your focus and brainpower, setting clear goals.

Observations has shown that the high rates of lengthy completion of programmes and drop-outs of postgraduate students might be affiliated with the academic procrastination of the students. According to Lenker and McAndrew^[11], this troubling phenomenon is being viewed as a culture in university life and is not taken as a significant issue. When students start their academic chore late, it might be difficult to make up for lost time. The long-term effect of this procrastination on postgraduate students involves lengthy completion time or worse dropping outs years after they should have finished. This inadvertently leads to their paying excessive sum of money when they eventually complete their programme, thereby borrowing outrageous amounts of money to pay off their accumulated dues. One notable variable that has been linked to academic procrastination is gender.

Notable among students' features investigated by validity research that influence academic procrastination is students' gender. Studies by Brownlow and Reasinger^[12] revealed that men who were often extrinsically motivated and dissatisfied with the given assignments were more likely to procrastinate as compared to women that procrastinate with reasons such as the need to produce perfect work (perfectionism), and thus put off starting the assignment given in effort to protect their academic ability. If outcomes were unfavourable, women still procrastinated less than men and completed their tasks with regards to potential restitutions provided by Steel^[13] and Steel and Ferrari^[14] found procrastination more common in males than females.

Moreover, a significant difference was found between gender and procrastination that was viewed in terms of individual locus of control^[15], where men reported more procrastination behaviours than women. The researcher explained that men were more inclined

to believe that a particular situation is controlled by external factors and not oneself. Therefore, men portrayed lower perseverance in accomplishing a given chore and increased procrastination due to high external locus of control. Huang^[16] found small but significant gender effects across 187 studies with a small difference favouring males. Konovalova^[17] also found no gender differences in procrastination prevalence neither in willingness to change procrastinatory habits nor in reasons for procrastinating. However, Özer et al.^[18] specified that significantly more female students than male students reported greater academic procrastination because of fear of failure and laziness. Also, male students were reported to portray academic procrastination more than their female counterparts, because of risk taking and rebellion against control.

In Anambra State where there are two public universities that have postgraduate schools, postgraduate students have been observed procrastinating by the nature of their activities. Some after their course work, did not want to kick-start their projects for two whole years or more with less concern, moving around and getting involved in other things as if the programme is waiting for them. Therefore, a student with a registration number bearing the year 2008 is seen defending his/her thesis or dissertation in 2016, eight years after he/she has finished his course work. There is also hardly any research that has indicated whether gender relates with academic procrastination among postgraduate students. This is an existing problem. Therefore, this study seeks to determine the connection between gender and academic procrastination among postgraduate students in universities in Anambra State.

1.1 Research Questions

The following research question guided the study:

What is the nature of relationship between male and female academic procrastination of postgraduate students in universities in Anambra State?

1.2 Hypothesis

There is no meaningful relationship between male and female academic procrastination of postgraduate students in universities in Anambra State?

2 METHODS

This study investigated the relationship between gender and academic procrastination amongst postgraduate students in Anambra State. One research question and one hypothesis served as a guide in the study. The study adopted correlational research design and was conducted in Nnamdi Azikiwe University and Chukwuemeka Odimegwu Ojukwu, Igboariam, both in Anambra State. The population of the study consisted

Table 1. Mean and SD Response on the Nature of Relationship between Male and Female Academic Procrastination of Postgraduates in Universities in Anambra State

Gender	Number of Students	Academic Procrastination	
		Mean	SD
Male	185	65.80	8.165
Female	144	65.57	7.602

Table 2. Summary of mean, SD and Z-test Analysis of Male and Female Academic Procrastination of Postgraduate Students

Gender	Number of Students	Academic Procrastination				
		Mean	SD	T-test	Alpha Level	Decision
Male	185	65.80	8.165	0.302	0.05	Sig.
Female	144	65.57	7.602			

of 1,862 which comprises all Master's and Doctorate students of 2017/2018 academic section. The number of the 2017/2018 postgraduate students in Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka is 1,088 while those in Chukwuemeka Odimegwu Ojukwu Igbariam is 774. Purposive sampling technique was used to select a sample of 329 postgraduate students. The instrument for data collection was Academic Procrastination Scale (APS). The instrument was an adopted instrument. The 25-item APS was originally developed in a study by McCloskey^[19] using 86 undergraduate college students and was based on six different characteristics of procrastinators. The research question was answered using mean and standard deviation (SD), while the hypothesis was tested using z-test.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Research Question One

What is the nature of relationship between male and female academic procrastination of postgraduates in universities in Anambra state?

Table 1 above shows that male student obtains an academic procrastination mean score of 65.80 and 8.165 for SD while their female counterparts obtained a mean score of 65.57 and 7.602 for SD.

3.2 Hypothesis One

There is no meaningful relationship between male and female academic procrastination of postgraduate students in universities in Anambra State?

Table 2 above shows that the computed Z value of 0.302 was less than the Z critical value of 1.960 at 0.05 alpha level. Therefore, the null hypotheses stated earlier is retained. This means that there is no meaningful relationship between male and female academic procrastination of postgraduate students in universities in Anambra State.

4 DISCUSSION

The result from the tables indicates that there is no meaningful relationship between male and female academic procrastination of postgraduate students. The finding was in agreement with the work of Konovalova^[17] who found that there are no gender differences in procrastination prevalence neither in willingness to change procrastinatory habits nor in reasons for procrastinating. The findings is contrast with the work of Hampton^[15] who opined that a significant difference was found between gender and procrastination, where it was reported that men exhibited more procrastination behaviours than women. The researcher explained that men were more inclined to believe that a particular situation is controlled by external factors and not oneself. Therefore, men portrayed lower perseverance in accomplishing a given task and increased procrastination due to high external locus of control. Also, Steel and Ferrai^[14] examined the relationship of education and gender with procrastination. The findings revealed that procrastination is more common in males than females. However, Özer et al.^[18] specified that significantly more female students than male students reported greater academic procrastination because of fear of failure and laziness. Also, it was reported that male students procrastinated more than their female counterparts in their academics because of risk taking and rebellion against control.

5 CONCLUSION

The study was conducted with a view of revealing the relationship between academic procrastination and gender among postgraduate students in universities in Anambra State. What instigated this study was the observation by the researcher of the lengthy completion of programme and dropouts of postgraduate students which among other things was their academic procrastination behaviour which always led to a decrease in their academic self-efficacy. It was concluded that

male and female postgraduate students procrastinate in their academic endeavours.

6 RECOMMENDATION

The study recommended the procedures as the following:

1. Postgraduate supervisors should motivate and encourage their supervisees on the need to finish their thesis or dissertation in record time.
2. Postgraduate schools should set up a reward system for postgraduate students who complete their thesis or dissertation on time.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declared no conflict of interest.

Author Contribution

All the authors contributed to the conceptualization and methodology; all the authors contributed to original draft preparation, review and editing. The manuscript was read by all the authors and agreed to be published.

Abbreviation List

APS, Academic Procrastination Scale
SD, Standard deviation

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