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## Achievement Anxiety and Procrastination in College Students

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### ABSTRACT:

The aim of this study was to examine the presence of achievement anxiety and procrastination among college students. The study group consisted of 104 undergraduate students. The two questionnaires were used for this process are - The Achievement Anxiety Test (Alpert and Haber, 1960) and The Procrastination Assessment Scale for Students (Solomon and Rothblum, 1984). From the present study it was concluded that no significant correlation was observed between the two variables-Achievement Anxiety and Procrastination

**KEYWORDS** – Achievement Anxiety, Procrastination, Undergraduate Students

### 1. Introduction

Anxiety is an emotion characterized by feelings of tension, worried thoughts and physical changes like increased blood pressure. Achievement Anxiety is worry and emotionality in achievement situations where one's performance is under scrutiny and the acting person is aware of this evaluation. The test used to measure this variable is the Achievement Anxiety Test developed by Alpert and Haber, 1960 to measure the presence or absence of anxiety as well as its facilitating or debilitating influence on test performance. One of the prime reasons for the wide spread use of this test is its testing of achievement anxiety in 2 parts – debilitating and facilitating (Plake, B. S., Smith, E. P., & Damsteegt, D. C. (1981)). Anxiety can be positive or negative, i.e., it can be facilitating or debilitating. There are specific levels of anxiety that facilitate performance, or improve performance, this is called facilitating anxiety. This is related to the perception of the individual; in other words, when anxiety increases, performance also increases as it is thought to cause the individual to take more efforts to do well. On the other hand debilitating anxiety can have severe negative effects on the individual. They may feel like they are in extreme danger when being evaluated, or can experience intense fear, nervousness and stress (D. Ummet, 2016).

In a social anxiety discussion by Beck and Emery (1985) it was proposed that an anxious person's perception of a threat to themselves is the trigger for their anxiety response. Hence any situation that leads a performer to sense a higher threat level will automatically increase his or her anxiety while performing the task. Translating this data to a social setting, it provides an explanation for why it is often much more nerve wrecking to perform a task alone, than if we were to perform the same task as a group. Hence, performing a task alone is more anxiety provoking than performing it as a group, and in addition public performances are more anxiety provoking than private performances. Although one could argue that it must be easier to perform a task better in front of a small audience, panel proximity, their expressions and reactions to the performer are much more significant factors affecting performance, than just the number of people present. (Oxford University Press, 2002)

Procrastination is the act of delaying or putting off tasks until the last minute, or past their deadline. Some researchers define procrastination as a form of self-regulation failure characterized by the irrational delay of tasks despite the awareness of potentially negative consequences.

There are 6 different types of behavioral styles of procrastination, namely – the perfectionist, the dreamer, the worrier, the crisis-maker, the defier and the over-doer.

Most people tend to hold the notion that if someone is a Perfectionist, chances are against the odds that their attention to detail or their desire for a flawless level of performance will allow them to procrastinate. This belief has been found to be false as perfectionists often pay too much attention to a task that they would rather leave it undone than risk have done it defectively. The Dreamer works directly contrary to this. Dreamers tend to think up fancy projects and ideas but lack the ability to work out the details that will allow them to implement these plans and for this reason end up procrastinating. Neither one of these extremes are desirable, rather an ideal functioning lies in the middle of both these extremities.

Certain tasks can often be so demanding they require us to step out of our comfort zone in order to get them done. This creates a high level of anxiety and a lack of security of being in the ‘known’ or ‘the safe zone’ that the Worrier tend to leave projects unfinished so that they don’t have to face the reality of challenging situations, leading to tasks being procrastinated. On the other hand, Crisis-Makers thrive on tipping the line and toying with the adrenaline rush that comes with it. They believe themselves to function most efficiently under pressure and so put off tasks and deadlines until the very last minute until they feel enough pressure to be able to do the task well.

The Defier is concerned with living life based on schedules they create for themselves, not by following rules that have been dictated to them or are the norm. Contrary to this, we have the Over-Doer whose inability to say ‘no’ or to refuse a task leads them to taking on more than they can handle leading them to creating a situation that ends in burnout. They will readily undertake activities to help others but often end up

There are several causes that contribute to the development of procrastination. It can be a result or symptom of several disorders. For example, Depression is a negatively affective state characterized by discontent or an extreme feeling of sadness and pessimism that interferes with daily life. Procrastination can be a result of this depression as feelings of helplessness or a lack of energy make it difficult to conduct one’s self enough to start or finish given tasks, making it easier to simply procrastinate and put off the work for later.

Procrastination is a phenomenon well experienced by the student community world-wide. Though, it is often seen as just a trivial behavioral trait, studies indicate that while almost all students engage in procrastination once in a while, 75% consider themselves habitual procrastinators (Steel, 2007). For almost half of these habitual procrastinators, procrastination is a real and persistent problem and something they would like to tackle (Grunchel and Schopenhauer, 2015), but most do not seek help due to feelings of shame associated with procrastination (Giguere et al., 2016).

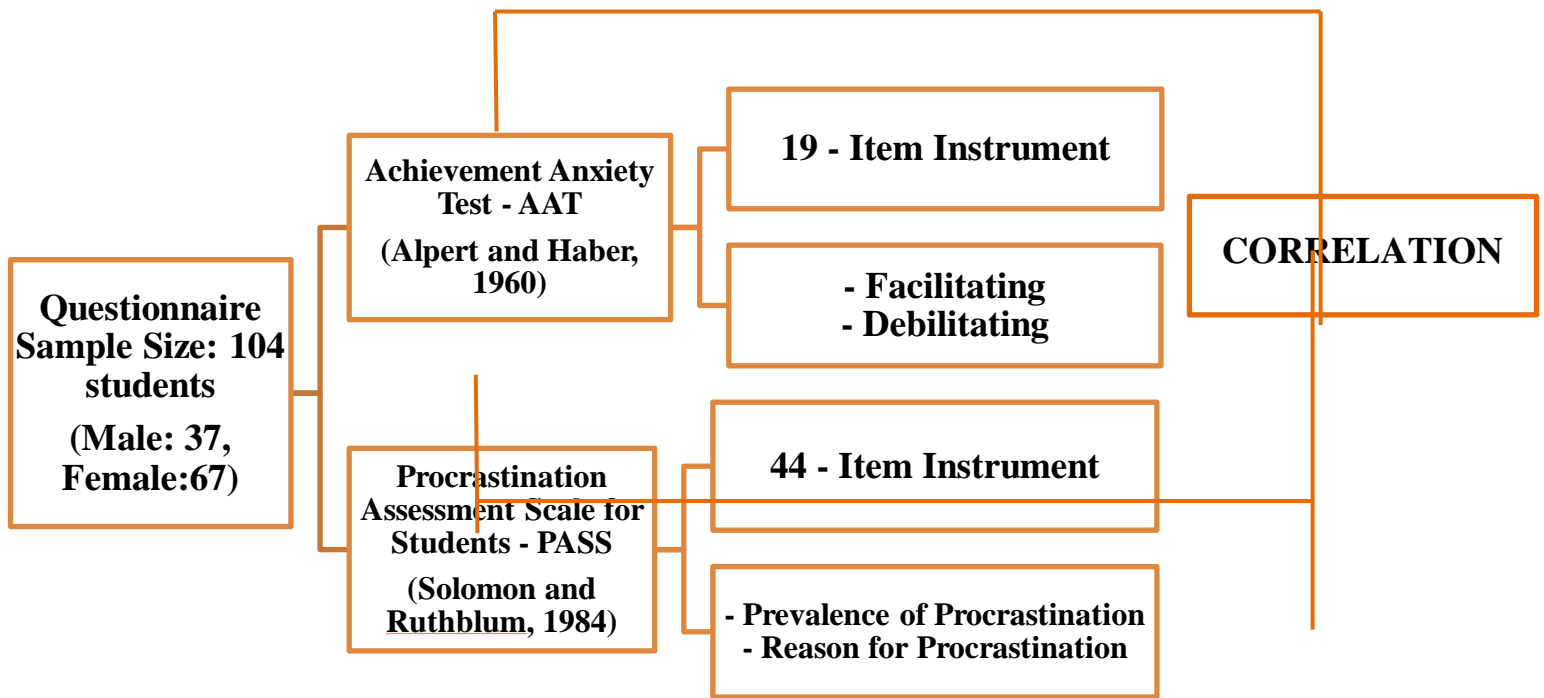
The test employed to study this variable is The Procrastination Assessment Scale for Students (PASS; Solomon and Rothblum, 1984). It is a commonly used measure of academic procrastination designed to assess procrastination in two areas – prevalence of procrastination and the reasons for procrastination (Kufiyak, 2021)

In view of this, the present study is being conducted to shed light on the relation between procrastination and achievement anxiety among college students.

Until recently, various researches attributed the academic success of students to contributing factors such as their cognitive abilities of reasoning, memory or problem solving. However, more recent studies indicate that there is another spectrum of factors, such as their non-cognitive abilities to be considered in the analysis of their academic performance (Yee Von, C., Zhooriyati, S. M., & Chuan, H. M., 2022). These non-cognitive factors include their self-esteem, emotional intelligence etc. as well as their individual levels of achievement anxiety and procrastination. The individual effects of Procrastination and Achievement Anxiety on students’ performance have been well documented. However, their combined effects on performance are yet to be statistically validated.

***Hypothesis - There is a significant relationship between achievement anxiety and procrastination among undergraduate students***

## 2. Research Methodology



This particular study was carried out on a sample of 104 final year college students studying various courses of Business Administration, Commerce, Engineering, Fashion Design, Geology, Psychology and Sports in Kerala, India. Of the selected study group, 37 were males and 67 were females and data was collected from these participants via standardized questionnaires that were distributed through digitalized platforms.

To assess achievement anxiety, Alpert and Haber’s Achievement Anxiety Scale (1960) was administered which is a 19 – item instrument consisting of two separate scales - the facilitating scale, which measures the degree to which anxiety acts as a motivator, and the debilitating scale, which measures anxiety as a hindrance to performance.

To measure Procrastination, Solomon and Rothblum’s Procrastination Assessment Scale for Students (PASS; 1984) was used to assess the prevalence of procrastination among students as well as the reasons for Procrastination. This was a 44 – item instrument which covered -

- The prevalence of academic procrastination,
- The reasons for academic procrastination

The first part measures the prevalence of procrastination in six academic areas namely, writing a term paper, studying for an exam, keeping up weekly reading assignments, academic administrative tasks, attendance tasks and general school activities. The second part measures the reasons for procrastination. In addition to this the participants’ personal data were collected through an online Google Form.

The data collected from this study was statistically analyzed using the SPSS version 25. The statistical procedures used in this study were the Bivariate correlation and Pearson correlation.

## 3. Result and Discussion

Achievement anxiety is defined as worry and emotionality in an achievement situation where one’s performance is under scrutiny and where the acting person is self-aware (Schwarzer 1981). Self-evaluation and self-preoccupation are significantly responsible for the worry component of anxiety.

Achievement anxiety is a variable that reflects the fear of failure and along with it, the loss of self-esteem which hinders an individual’s learning and performance.

Procrastination in layman’s terms refers to wasting time before a deadline. The tendency to procrastinate involves putting off work that must be completed to attain a certain goal. It can also be understood as the voluntary delay of an intended or personally important activity, despite expecting potential negative backlash. Procrastination is generally characterized by: intended delay or voluntary delay (Klingsieck 2013). Procrastination lies at the heart of psychological studies of goal attainment. In order to attain a specific goal, an individual must have adequate motivation and the ability to perform the actions that are necessarily involved in satisfying those specific goals. The consequences of procrastination are almost all negative and is a difficulty that is pervasively reported in everyday setting among people.

### CORRELATIONS

SUBSCALE		AA	PA
AA	Pearson Correlation	1	.005
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.960
	N	104	104
PA	Pearson Correlation	.005	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.960	
	N	104	104

The AAT and PASS questionnaires were both successful in measuring achievement anxiety and procrastination on the sample. The results obtained from both these questionnaires were subjected SPSS analysis from which it was found that there is no significant correlation between the variables – Achievement Anxiety and Procrastination, and so the hypothesis is rejected.

### CONCLUSION

The individual effects of achievement anxiety and procrastination on students’ performance is well established. However the combined influence of both these variable have not been statistically validated. For this reason the present study was conducted on a sample of 104 undergraduate college students using the Achievement Anxiety Test (Alpert and Haber, 1960) and the Procrastination Assessment Scale for Students (Solomon and Ruthblum, 1984) both of which are standardized questionnaires. The data collected from the scoring of these tests were subject to the SPSS analysis from which it was found that there is no significant correlation between the two variables, and hence the hypothesis is rejected.

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