

Academic Procrastination and Motivation of Adolescents in Turkey

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Turkish proverb: *Bugünün işini yarına bırakma*
(Don't leave today's job until tomorrow)

Procrastination as a psychological construct

Definition: The voluntary yet irrational delay of an intended course of action (Steel, 2007), and frequently results in unsatisfactory performance and emotional upset (Ferrari, O'Callaghan, & Newbegin, 2005)

Incidence: "Almost universal in undergraduates" (Steel, 2007); *problematic* in 50% of undergraduates; *chronic* in 20% of adults (in western settings)

Research questions

- What are the relationships among procrastination and motivation variables in adolescents in a Turkish secondary school?
- On what tasks do participants most often procrastinate, and how much do they report procrastinating each day?
- Are there gender differences in levels and patterns of procrastination?

Method

- Participants: 508 Turkish secondary students from central Turkey (49% female; mean age 15.74; grades 9-11)
- Measures:
 - **Procrastination** (Tuckman 1991): e.g., “I needlessly delay finishing jobs, even when they’re important”
 - **Self-efficacy** (MSLQ): e.g., “I am confident I can understand even the most difficult readings in my classes”
 - **Self-efficacy for self-regulation** (Zimmerman et al.): e.g., “How well can you organize your coursework?”
 - **Self-esteem** (Rosenberg): e.g., “On the whole, I am satisfied with myself”
 - **3 descriptive questions**

Results

- Correlation between Proc. and SESR $r = .60$; with self-efficacy $r = .35$; with self-esteem $r = .30$; with Turkish grade $r = -.15$
- No gender differences for procrastination, but girls rated their self-efficacy for self-regulation significantly higher than boys
- Path analysis showed academic self-efficacy to be a stronger predictor of procrastination for girls
- About 25% of participants procrastinated more than 3 hours per day (no sex differences)
- Students procrastinated most on writing tasks, followed by studying
- “Replacement activities” varied by gender

When you procrastinate, what kinds of things do you do?

Boys:

1. Play computer games
2. Go online for web-surfing
3. Get something to eat or drink

Girls:

1. Read books or magazines
2. Talk with friends
3. Get something to eat or drink

Conclusions

- Procrastination strongly associated with students' self-efficacy for self-regulation, but not as strongly with school grades – similar to findings in other settings
- Procrastination is a failure not just of self-regulation, but of *confidence* to self-regulate
- Procrastinating behaviours vary by gender

Directions for practitioners and researchers

- Telling adolescents to be more self-regulated will not likely result in lower levels of procrastination; helping adolescents by building the sources of their self-efficacy to regulate their own learning may pay richer dividends
- Future research examining psychological, not just academic, costs of procrastination (anxiety, depression)
- Cross-cultural explorations comparing patterns of procrastination across settings