

## EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ACADEMIC PROCRASTINATION, ACADEMIC STRESS AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF STUDENTS STUDYING IN BS (HONS.) FINAL SEMESTER AT A PUBLIC UNIVERSITY IN GILGIT-CITY

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### ABSTRACT

*Academic procrastination and academic stress leaves decisive impact on the productivity and academic output of students. The aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between academic procrastination, academic stress and academic performance of students at university level in the context of Gilgit-Baltistan. By using stratified random sampling technique, 299 BS (Hons.) final year students were surveyed. Results indicated strong positive correlation between student's level of stress and procrastination ( $r=.654^{**}$ ,  $p=.000$ ). Results further indicated that students' final score has a moderate negative correlation with student's level of procrastination ( $r = -.30$ ,  $p=.000$ ) and a weak negative correlation with students' level of stress ( $r = -.26$ ,  $p=.000$ ). These results reveal that increase in stress causes increases in procrastination among students and vice versa. Furthermore, increase in academic stress and procrastination among students decrease their academic performance (student's final score). Future researchers can replicate this research study in the initial semesters, so the findings of the study would help the university management to gear their programs towards remedial strategies for reducing stress and procrastination in students.*

**Keywords:** Academic procrastination, Academic stress, Academic performance, Correlation, Procrastination

### INTRODUCTION

Procrastination refers to willingly postponing an intended course of action despite expecting worse results in delaying the task, and it has a negative effect on students (Rozenal, Forsstrom, Hussan, & Klingieck, 2022). Academic stress and procrastination in academic tasks are common symptoms among the students and academicians working in different disciplines (Kandemir, 2014). Academic procrastination refers to postponing the academic tasks. It is also regarded as a common act among students. Findings of studies conducted by various researchers (Balkis, Duru & Buluş, 2013; Lay & Schouwenburg, 1993; Milgram, Gehrman, & Keinan, 1992) suggested that procrastination is an important factor which effects student's quality and quantity of learning and it also increases stress among students. As a result, it effects on students' academic performance negatively. Habelrih and Hicks (2015) examined relationship between psychological well-being, active procrastination and passive (traditional) procrastination. The researchers found that psychological well-being was related positively with active procrastination and negatively to passive procrastination. Similarly, Layton

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(2016) described that academic procrastination is caused by stress which hinders the academic performance of students as well as their involvement in the academic activity. Likewise, Williams, Stark and Foster (2008) also revealed a relationship between students' procrastinating tendency and academic stress among students. Their findings revealed that an increase in self-concern helps to decrease the procrastination. Zohreyi, Erfani and Jadidiyan (2016) also found negative effects of stress and procrastination on students' academic performance.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

### **Academic Procrastination and its Effects**

Kiamarsi and Abolghasemi (2014) stated that academic procrastination is one of the main common phenomena exist among 95% of college students and approximately 50% of all students. Rothblum, Solomon, and Murakami (1986) referred academic procrastination as a behavior in which students postpone academic tasks, and neglect to do homework on time. Similarly, Ferrari, Johnson, and McCown (1995) described that procrastination leads a student towards constant delay in academic tasks, resulting failure or poor performance. In other words, academic procrastination is a factor which leads a student to postpone his/her academic duties in such a manner which causes failure, grief and academic stress among learner. Ozer and Ferrari (2011) explained that procrastination is a concept in which a person's affective, cognitive, and behavioral aspects of personalities are involved. It is not just poor time management rather a complex phenomenon. Other researchers found that parental role influence the tendency of procrastination among students (Ferrari & Olivette, 1993). In another study, it was found that academic task delays among students are associated with low self-esteem, self-regulation, and self-efficacy (Pychyl, Coplan, & Reid, 2002).

Other researchers such as Kiamarsi and Abolghasemi (2014) consider academic procrastination as a psychological weakness among students and it is directly linked to self-efficacy. The reasons stated was that due to academic procrastination, either due to poor time management, students indulge in troubling situation and that effects on the self-efficacy of the students. Likewise, Zohreyi, Erfani, and Jadidiyan (2016) also considers procrastination as a behavioral feature in which students postpone a given academic task. They further emphasized that procrastination in academic duties is a worst habit existing in students to achieve their educational objectives. Moreover, academic procrastination is an act of delaying academic duties in such a manner where students cannot perform their responsibilities and results in poor outcomes and this behavior can be controlled by determining its reasons (Kandemir, 2014).

### **Academic Stress and its Effects**

According to Kandemir (2014), stress refers to a person's response towards a challenging task or situation to adapt in that. Wheeler (2007) defined stress as a physical word means the amount of force applied on an object as in human's life many issues create a force on individual's mind, where many of these forces or pressure created by the environment lead a person in a state of worry and fear. The causes and effects of stress on individual's personalities and achievements are more focused areas addressed by researchers nowadays, where stress caused serious issues regarding individuals' mental and physical health like, cardiovascular disease, to gastrointestinal problems, to muscle-related disorders, to allergic reactions and to decreased productivity (Kohn & Frazer, 1986). However, Balkish and Duru (2017) pointed out that sometimes stress help individuals to improve their practices and they feel that without any stress their lives will be boring. Owusu and Essel (2017) mentioned that stress is a process in the result of which an individual reacts upon a particular challenge. The researchers additionally claimed that stress has direct effect on the brain and the whole anatomy of the body as such failure to adapt to a stressful condition can result in brain malfunction, physiological problem and also many areas of psychological challenge in the form of depression, anxiety, pain and burnout. Stress is an uncertain reaction of an individual on internal and external factors as some times a positive or many times a negative response to stimuli (Pargman, 2006). Shastri and Veena (2016) mentioned that sometimes stress is good because it helps a student to face the challenges of life and help to increase their ability to learn, but excessive stress is harmful which may cause serious problems. Similarly, Lin and Chen (2009) stated that stress in itself is not bad, because sometimes stress is a source of motivation in university students to improve their performance. Lin and Chen (2009) divided stress into four types:

a) overstress, b) under stress, c) Good stress, and d). distress. Whereas, Essesl and Owusu (2017) stated the following major types of stress:



**Figure 2.1: Types of stress defined by Owusu and Essesl (2017)**

According to Layton (2016), fear is a common aspect of human emotions where brain reacts on stressful stimuli with fast heart beating, which is also known as the fight or flight responses. May (2015) defined anxiety as response of a person on any stressful condition. Thus, anxiety is an outcome of stress that how a person reacts in a particular situation. Burnout is a situation where a person loses his/her eagerness and motivation in a result of both external and internal factors. Worry causes distress as a result of constant thinking and fear about upcoming situation (Owusu & Essel 2017). Distress is a state of physical and mental suffering which results in the inability to handle or facing a challenging situation. There are many factors which lead a person in a state of high stress, and these factors according to Lin and Chen (2009) are not only negative stimuli but it can be both negative and positive. Negative stress is called distress showing many negative or bad impacts on individuals and positive form of stress can cause some good or positive impacts.

#### **Relationship between Academic Procrastination, Academic Stress, and Academic Achievement**

Procrastinating behavior of students is a behavioral trait in which students postpone the academic tasks, thus, creating academic stress and career problems (Kandemir, 2014). Academic procrastination affects students' academic performance. These effects can be both external and internal. Tukman, Abry and Smith (2002) in their empirical study on procrastination described that procrastination affects students both externally and internally. By internal effects, the researchers mean negative effects such as tension, regret and self-blame. While, external effects, the researchers mean losing best opportunities, anxious relations, and also poor academic and vocational progress. A number of researchers addressed academic procrastination in recent years (Hussain & Sultan, 2010; Kandemir, 2014; Shaked, & Altarac, 2022). These researchers show that students who procrastinate in their academics could face many negative results because of this behavior (Kandemir, 2014; Yuen & Yan, 2015). The same concept is addressed by a number of other researchers (Ferrari, Johnson & McCown, 1995; Ferrari & Olivette, 1994; Knaus, 2010). Accordingly, procrastinating behavior of students' result failure, and very poor performance of students in the classroom activities. Similarly, Rothblum, Solomon & Murakami (1986) stated that procrastinating behavior of students may lead towards constant absences' and finally dropping out from school. Other researchers termed procrastination in educational affairs a very common phenomenon. Accordingly, 70% of the university students are reported or being characterized as procrastinators while performing their academic activities (Schouwenburg, Lay, Pychl & Ferrari, 2004).

Psychological effects of procrastination include emotional instability, student's lack of belief on their capabilities and about themselves, and mental stress. Habitual delay on academic tasks creates academic and career problems by affecting student's grades and performance. Due to constantly delaying the tasks if academic duties start mounting, it creates a sense of distress among students which prevent them to achieve their desired goals and set objectives (Saleem & Rafiq, 2012). Furthermore, the effects of the procrastinating behavior of students could be seen on their personalities, education, and achievement in all levels of academic life. Similarly, Woolfolk (2009) mentioned that anxiety and stress played a significant role in student's motivational level which gradually influences their academic performance.

A number of researchers (Balkis, Duru & Buluş, 2013; Lay & Schouwenburg, 1993) described that students who procrastinate have poor academic performance. The reason stated was that such students delay academic assignments, and rush to prepare for examinations at the very last stage. A number of other researchers (Balkis, 2013; Duru & Balkis, 2014; Kim & Seo, 2015; Richardson, Abraham & Bond, 2012; Steel, 2007) found that students' academic performance was inversely related

to their academic procrastination. The more the students procrastinate, their academic achievement also decreases and vice versa.

On the other hand, a meta-analysis carried out by Steel (2007) to examine the relationship between academic performance, academic stress and academic procrastination also found that academic performance was negatively and moderately related to procrastination. Similarly, Ojokuku and Kehinde (2011) also found similar findings. Accordingly, procrastination was inversely correlated with academic performance. These findings are further supported by Kim and Seo (2015). For Kim and Seo, self-reported procrastination was strongly correlated with academic performance as compared to externally assessed procrastination. Furthermore, procrastination is strongly correlated with younger people's academic performance as compared to older people, and that procrastination is inversely correlated to students' performance in western and individualistic societies than in collective societies.

Kandemir (2014) stated that there is a strong relationship exists between academic procrastination and academic stress and vice versa. Further, the researcher assumed that sometimes procrastination may cause stress among students and sometimes stress may cause procrastination among students. Wheeler (2007) defined stress as a physical word means the amount of force applied on an object as in human's life many issues create a force on individual's mind, where many of these forces or pressure created by the environment lead a person in a state of worry and fear. The causes and effects of stress on individual's personalities and achievements are more focused areas addressed by researchers nowadays, where stress caused serious issues regarding individual's mental and physical health like, cardiovascular disease, to gastrointestinal problems, to muscle-related disorders, to allergic reactions and to decreased productivity. Sometimes stress help individuals to improve their practices and they feel that without any stress their lives will be boring. Essel and Owusu (2017) also mentioned that stress is a process in the result of which an individual reacts upon a particular challenge. The researchers additionally claimed that stress has direct effect on the brain and the whole anatomy of the body as such failure to adapt to a stressful condition can result in brain malfunction, physiological problem and also many areas of psychological challenge's in the form of depression, anxiety, pain and burnout (Kandemir, 2014).

Stress is an uncertain reaction of an individual on internal and external factors as some time a positive or many times a negative response to stimuli (Pargman, 2006). Other researchers such as Shastri and Veena (2016) mentioned that sometimes stress is good because it helps a student to face the challenges of life and help to increase their ability to learn, but excessive stress is harmful which may cause serious problems. Similarly, Lin and Chen (2009) stated that stress in itself is not bad, because sometimes stress is a source of motivation in university students to improve their performance. Academic Stress and procrastination in academic tasks are common symptoms among the students, academicians and theoreticians working in different disciplines (Layton, 2016). Many of the researchers reported that, stress has been a major cause of academic procrastination which hinders the academic performance and work of the people involved in academic activity. Other studies have reported procrastination as main cause of stress among students as a result of which students may perform poorly in their academic career (Layton, 2016). Williams, Stark and Foster (2008) investigated the relationship between students' procrastinating tendency and their academic stress. Results revealed that an increase in self-concern help to decrease the procrastination. Similarly, Zohreyi, Erfani and Jadidiyan (2016) also found negative effects of stress on students' academic performance. These findings are also supported by Thompson, Davidson, and Barber (1995). Accordingly, a negative relationship exists between level of ego identity and procrastination. As a result, students' confidence reduces and their task completion remains incomplete. Steel (2007) described that procrastination may lead towards unhealthy sleep, dietary issues and effect on exercise habits. Similarly, Sirois and Pychyl (2002) described that procrastination may cause stress. As a result, student tendency towards higher rates of smoking, digestive ailments, insomnia, cold and flu symptoms may occur.

Similarly, Hoover (2005) stressed that procrastination affects the achievement of goals by creating anxiety. Agreeing with outcomes of previously stated studies, Akinsola, Tella, and Tella (2007) in their study on effects of procrastination mentioned that procrastinating behavior may cause several problems: First of all, it can cause higher stress, low self-esteem, depression, cheating, plagiarism, increased consumption of cigarette and caffeine and decreases the ability to maintain healthy self-care habits like exercise and healthy eating in students. Moreover, different physical, emotional and mental problems appear to be associated with procrastination resulting in creating academic stress (Hussain &

Sultan, 2010). Stress in academic settings create negative effects on students mental and physical health (Pascoe, Hetrick, & Parker, 2020).

Stress affects a person in many ways, physically, mentally and emotionally. Physically, in stress, the heart starts to pump fast and causes high blood pressure and palpitation. It may cause many other health issues as stated by Sirois and Pychyl (2002) that it yields to higher rates of smoking, digestive ailments, insomnia, cold and flu symptoms which indicates high level of stress among students. Mentally, too much stress may affect our thinking ability, messy and confusing situations and negative thoughts create problems in decision making. Similar factors are discussed by Lin and Chen (2009) that mostly teachers ignore student's emotions and emphasizes on knowledge acquisition only, as a result student may feel nervous, unfamiliar and low confident and this situation ends up with poor academic performance.

### **Main Sources of Stress in Students**

Abouserie (1994) described that there are two major areas which are closely associated with high levels of stress among students, namely academic expectations like good grades and social factors like adjustment in society. Factors associated with stress are defined by many researchers in the literature and these factors are called stressors (Essel & Owusu, 2017; Lin & Chen, 2009; Sirois & Pychyl, 2002). These stressors are basically any academic demands which may either be environmental, social or internal that influence students to adjust their behaviors accordingly (Lin & Chen, 2009). While Shastri and Veena (2016) argued that new learning environment, the pressure to perform well, excessive homework and career choice relationships are those factors which cause stress among students. Rahardjo, Juneman and Setiani (2013) found that students' failure to get targeted goals in educational life may cause stress among them. Sometimes stress may be caused because of parents' high expectations regarding their children's achievements. Kandemir (2014) also identified some stressors such as excessive homework, examination, presentation and assignments, where students are bound to complete these tasks in a limited span of time.

A number of researchers identified a number of factors causing stress in students. These factors are, personal (Thoits, 1995), peer related (Wurm, Anniko, Tillfors, Flink, & Boersma, 2018; Flack, Salmivalli, & Idsoe, 2011), stress related to studies (Layton, 2016; Sirois & Pychyl, 2002; Prabu, 2015), stress related to parents and home (Sing, Anshu, Mathur, & Mahananda, 2014; Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey, & Sandler; 2007; Pressman, Sugarman, Nemon, Desjarlais, Owens, & Schettini-Evans, 2015; Eunkyung & Mijin, 2013; Liao, Ying, & Zhou, 2021; Thoits, 1995), and stress related to poor time management (Banfield, Paul, & Rebecca, 2011; Lipi & Lipi; 2008; Ojokuku & Kehinde, 2011; Tracy, 2014).

By personal factors, the researchers mean students' personal life routines such as sleeping routines due to workload, deadlines, and exams bound to result in stress, responsibilities, patterns, habits, adjustment of students in new cultures, and coping with conflicting ideas in and outside the classroom are some examples. By peer related factors, the researchers mean adjusting in new environments when students come to universities, personal choices like music, dressing, study habits are some examples. By stress related to studies, the researchers mean excessive homework, assignments, presentations and exams, time pressure, demands of good performance, exam phobia, maintaining good grades and showing good performance are some examples. By stress related to parents and home, the researchers mean good and poor relationship with parents, poor economic status of parents, parents educational background and socio-economic status are some examples that create stress among students. Finally, by stress related to poor time management, the researchers mean the worst use of time, mismanagement of time, wasting time on less important works may cause further stress in students.

### **Theoretical Framework**

As described earlier, this research study intended to explore relationship between academic procrastination, academic stress and academic achievement of university level students in Gilgit-Baltistan. The major theoretical contribution towards the idea of procrastination largely comes from the Temporal Motivation Theory. Temporal Motivational Theory provides a good summary of why we procrastinate. There can be numerous reasons such as *low self-efficacy*, and *feeling of incompetence* can be the major reasons of why people procrastinate. It also suggests that people who are more distractible, impulsive, and have less self-control tend to procrastinate more (Ellis, 1973). Another major work published by American Psychological Association is titled as the nature of procrastination. The primary

culprits of Procrastination mentioned in this theory are Anxiety, Fear of Failure and Perfectionism. Cao (2012) described that people procrastinate based on a number of reasons. First, people procrastinate when the given task is stressful. Secondly, people procrastinate due to irrational beliefs or thoughts.

Stress can be categorized under three theories. These included response, stimulus, and transaction theories. In the response theory, stress is caused due to external pressures such as meeting the deadlines. Whereas, in the stimulus theories, stress is caused due to an impact on the emotions of an individual. For example, natural disasters, chronic and other life threatening activities. In transactional or process theories, stress is caused due to the complex nature of interactions between the person and his/her surroundings (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

### **Research Objectives**

The main objective of this research study was:

- To explore the relationship between academic procrastination, academic stress, and academic performance of BS final semester students at a public sector university in Gilgit city.

### **Research Question**

What relationship exists between academic procrastination, academic stress and academic performance of BS final semester students studying at a public sector university in Gilgit city?

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This research study examined existing relationship between academic procrastination, academic stress and academic performance of students studying in BS final semester at a public sector university in Gilgit city. So to fulfill the requirements of this research, the researcher had conducted a survey, where a cross-sectional survey design was used because it was helpful to investigate attitudes, opinions, behaviors or characteristics of a population from a large number of samples (Creswell, 2012; Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

### **Population and Sampling**

The population of this study was 481 students studying in BS (Hons.) final semester (8<sup>th</sup> semester) at a public university located in Gilgit city. The nature of the current study was a cross-sectional survey. Keeping in view the above description the population included final semester students studying in four faculties i.e. Faculty of Social Sciences, Faculty of Life Sciences, Faculty of Natural Sciences, and Faculty of Arts and Humanities. There were total 18 departments at the time of data collection fall under these four faculties. The researcher has used proportional stratified random sampling to obtain the desired number of sample for data collection because this procedure was very helpful, when the characteristics of entire population was the main concern of study (Ary, Jacobs & Sorensen, 2010). A total of 299 students were finally taken as a sample representing 62% of the total population.

### **Data Collection Tools**

For the purpose of data collection, the researcher used two questionnaires, the first scale was PASS (Procrastination Assessment Scale for Students) developed by Solomon and Rothblum (1984). PASS is a widely used scale to assess academic procrastination). The PASS is developed to analyze the level of procrastination in six areas of academic functioning and has exhibited a high reliability,  $\alpha = 0.80$  for the 12 item scale (Steel, 2007). Stress scale for university students (SSUS) was developed by the researcher, under the supervision of the research supervisor. This scale also shown a high reliability of  $\alpha = 0.873$  for 32 scale items. Academic performance of the students was measured on the basis of students' CGPA (cumulative grade points average) in 7<sup>th</sup> semester.

### **Key Findings**

In order to find the existing relationship between academic procrastination, academic stress and academic performance of BS (Hons.) final semester students at a public sector university in Gilgit, city, the researcher applied Pearson product moment correlation test. The following table indicates that there is an inverse correlation between stress and students' final score (academic achievement) with a significant  $p$  value ( $r = -.259, p = .000$ ). It means that when stress increases, academic achievements decrease. Findings also revealed that when procrastination increases, academic achievement decreases as there is an inverse correlation between students' academic achievement and their procrastination ( $r = -.301, p = .000$ ). Findings further indicated a strong positive correlation between procrastination and stress ( $r = .654, p = .000$ ). It means that increase in procrastination causes increases in stress and vice versa.

**Table: Correlation between Academic Procrastination, Academic Stress and Academic Achievement of BS Final Semester Students**

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Students' final score</i>	<i>Students' stress</i>	<i>Students' Procrastination</i>	<i>p</i>
Students final score	1	-.259**	-.301**	0.000
Students stress	-.259**	1	.654**	0.000
Procrastination	-.301**	.654**	1	0.000

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed), Total N = 298.

## DISCUSSIONS

This study found an inverse correlation between students' academic achievement and students' academic stress as well as an inverse correlation between students' academic achievement and students' academic procrastination. Furthermore, the study found a strong positive correlation between students' academic procrastination and their academic stress. These findings are supported by Shokeen (2018). In his research, the researcher found a positive correlation between academic stress and academic procrastination and a negative correlation between academic achievement and academic procrastination as well as academic stress. These findings revealed that high level of stress and procrastination among students may lead them towards low academic achievement. Likewise, a number of other researchers (Ferrari et al., 1995; Milgram, Gehrman & Keinan, 1992) also found procrastination as a strong impediment to academic achievement because it decreases quality and quantity of learning and also increases students stress. Furthermore, Ashraf, Malik and Musharraf (2019) also found a positive correlation between academic stress and academic procrastination in their empirical study. Likewise, Saqib and Rehman (2018) found a significant impact of stress on students' academic performance. Above mentioned findings supported the idea that both academic stress and academic procrastination are strong impediments which negatively affect student's performance and also provide strong proof that academic stress and academic procrastination are correlated with each other. Many researchers (Zohreyi, Erfani, & Jadidiyan 2016) found that procrastination causes stress among students and concluded that stress could be reduce with a drop in their procrastination. Above mentioned findings strengthens the idea that both academic procrastination and academic stress are responsible predictors for better academic performance of students at university level and also that when these two behaviors exist among students it may lead them towards bad consequences in educational life. Qian and Fuqiang (2018) also found in his recent study that procrastination plays a mediating role between academic stress and academic performance, additionally he proposed the "Moderating effect of academic self-efficacy", between academic stress and academic performance which can reduces students' procrastination. But in this study the researcher found that both variables "academic stress and academic procrastination" are directly associated to each other and both are (academic stress and academic performance) responsible for negative change in student's performance.

## CONCLUSION

This study was designed to investigate the relationship between academic procrastination, academic stress and their effect on academic performance of students of BS 8th semester. In this study the researcher has examined the relationship between academic procrastination, academic stress and academic performance of students. Results revealed an strong relationship exists among student's level of stress and student's procrastination. The research also found a negative correlation between academic stress and academic procrastination with academic performance. Further analysis of the data revealed that student's hesitation, parental involvement, difficult content, work load, poor time management and lack of concentration are strong stressors highlighted by the participants. Factors which increases procrastination among students are, task confusion, overburdening, less information on task, procedural delay, laziness, and social engagements. Results based on correlational matrix shows a direct correlation between academic stress and academic performance and also it shows a negative correlation between stress and procrastination with academic performance. The researcher found no significant difference between male and female students level of stress but male students shows higher level of procrastination as compare to female students.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

This study is the base line study in the context of Gilgit-Baltistan, so the researcher suggest further studies needed to conducted on these psychological aspects of students which are mostly ignored by the teachers, but resultantly it shows negative effects on student's academic performance and behavior.

Students are recommended to reduce their inclination towards procrastination in academics through self-regulation, self-awareness and also by developing emotional tolerance among them. It is recommended to educationists and policy makers to frame some policies and introduce such teaching methods which help the teachers to get rid of procrastinating behavior and stress of students.

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