
The Impact of Procrastination on Academic Performance of EFL Learners at Jazan University

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Abstract:

There is a common tendency among university students to put off their academic tasks, and this proneness is known as academic procrastination. Procrastination has been an area of great concern for students all over the globe, particularly in the modern world, where the attractions of rapidly developing technology easily carry away learners. While a great deal of investigations has been done on the effect of procrastination on academic achievement, only a few researchers have concentrated on the level of procrastination among Saudi university students. The current study fills an existing gap in the literature as it attempts to uncover the extent of procrastination prevailing among EFL undergraduates of Jazan University and to analyze the links between academic procrastination and academic achievements. Furthermore, the research focused on identifying the correlation between academic procrastination and self-confidence. The study was implemented based on samples collected through the opinion survey from 70 undergraduate students of English major, at Jazan University aging, between 18 - 25. The study's findings revealed that students with low levels of achievement are inclined to suffer from procrastination, stress, and lack of self-confidence more often than high achievers. Academic procrastination is one of the most notable fields of study, affecting more than half the student population.

Keywords: Academic procrastination, Academic achievement, Self-confidence, Stress, Social media addiction.

1. Introduction

Procrastination is delaying or putting off the task at hand to another time. It is a behavior in which a person neglects or postpones the timely completion of a required task or assessment, unaware that it might lead to difficulty or challenges

later. The word 'procrastination' stems from the Latin verb *procrastinare*, which means putting off a task until tomorrow. 'Pro' means a forward motion, and 'crastinus' means belonging to tomorrow (Girdhar, 2020). Procrastination can be interpreted in two different ways. For example, one is the valuable habit of keeping away unnecessary tasks, and the other is the damaging habit of laziness in finishing the necessary task. It is a self-handicapping phenomenon that usually prevents us from achieving life's goals.

The most commonly prevalent and researched type of procrastination is the academic one. Academic procrastination is generally shared among students who make it a way of life; it represents the intentional delay in completing activities, projects, and exam preparations.

Procrastination is typically observed in academic activities such as term paper writing, exam preparation, and assignment completion. Studies reveal that almost 50 - 90 % of college and university students are prone to procrastination, which is increasing at an alarming rate due to the accessibility of modern gadgets such as smartphones, computers, etc. (Chehrzad et al., 2017). The existing trend, particularly among Jazan University students, necessitates the present investigation.

Furthermore, the urgency and significance of the current study dwell on the distressing fact that there is a rapid growth in the number of university students who procrastinate in the learning process due to the distractibility of the modern world. Fee and Tangney (2000) think that "procrastination is more than just a time management issue; it is a dynamic mechanism involving affective, cognitive, and behavioral components." The survey instrument used for this study and the researchers' perceptions of the learning habits of the EFL undergraduates indicate that the primary reasons behind the learners' tendency to procrastinate originate from excessive addiction to technological devices, lack of motivation, lack of self-confidence, fear of failure, boring and unpleasant tasks, and no task-oriented clarification. Additionally, various studies reveal that 20 – 30% of undergraduate students are believed to have severe academic procrastination (Kasim, 2015). Fentaw et al. (2022) think that 50 – 90 % of university students admit that they procrastinate regularly.

Moreover, Aldalham (2022) states that half of the students consistently postpone their academic tasks because they need better time management skills. The present study aims to understand the impact of procrastination on the academic performance of Jazan University students and to analyze the correlation between procrastination and self-confidence. Klassen and Kuzucu (2009) reported in their study that academic procrastination was found to be correlated with self-confidence and self-regulation. Also, Klassen et al. (2008) uncovered a connection between academic procrastination and academic achievement. The findings indicated that students with higher self-confidence had lower levels of academic procrastination, while students with lower self-confidence were easy victims of procrastination. The most important concept associated with procrastination is self-efficacy. Bandura (1997), the first to establish the relationship between procrastination and self-confidence, regarded self-efficacy as trust in one's ability to perform a task with the

expected outcomes. It is observed that academic procrastination leads to dysfunctional learning outcomes such as low educational performance, low quality of academic work, absence of knowledge, time pressure, dropout, and lengthened course of study.

2. Literature Review

Academic procrastination is one of the devastating student behaviors affecting almost half of the world's student population. *Text Procrastination* is a stable character trait that describes a person's tendency to delay the completion of actions at a later time, which ultimately leads to negative experiences and unfavorable outcomes. The impact of academic procrastination on academic performance has been widely researched, and many studies have repeatedly pointed out the negative associations between procrastination and academic achievement (Goroshit, 2018; Kim & Seo, 2015; Steel, 2007). Solomon and Rothblum (1984) described academic procrastination as an extensive and permanent inclination on the part of learners to put off academic activities, which is most frequently accompanied by anxiety and stress. Binder (2000) shares a similar view when he describes educational procrastination as "any academic task that is delayed or avoided as a result of the discrepancy between intention and actual behavior to the extent that it produces a negative effect on the procrastinator." Moreover, Steel (2007) reported procrastination as a "voluntary but irrational delay of an intended course of action, with non-beneficial consequences." The delay could be deliberate, incidental, or persistent but negatively influence academic success.

Furthermore, Lakshminarayan et al. (2013) identified a negative relationship between procrastination and achievement in their studies. The findings revealed that students with 'excellent' and 'perfect' grades had lower scores of procrastination, whereas the students who performed poorly in their academics showed high procrastination scores. Baumeister and Scher (1988) agreed with Lakshminarayan when they identified procrastination as a self-indulgent behavior that affected performance negatively because one ended up with less time for studies. Also, the study conducted at a Northern Spain university for 33 undergraduate students revealed that procrastination influenced negative learning performance, and time-related indicators were highly coupled with students' performance. (Paule-Ruiz, 2015).

Many research studies reveal that academic procrastination is more powerfully connected with academic achievements: lower GPA, low educational performance, low quality of educational work, and lack of knowledge (Kim and Seo, 2015). As procrastination is widespread among university students, it is indispensable to identify the reasons influencing the learner to procrastinate. Some consistent and robust predictors of procrastination are social media addiction (distractibility), lack of self-confidence and motivation, boring and unpleasant tasks, and stress (Rozental and Carlbring 2014).

Additionally, Milgram (1992) highlights that procrastination is fundamentally a modern-day problem, and it is more severe in countries where technology is advanced. In the modern world of technology and the internet, people

procrastinate all the time, as if it is more of a social norm than a discrepancy. 'social norm' is a rule or standard of conduct shared by a social group or community members. Even though procrastination is a disparity of the education norm, the students who procrastinate outnumber those who complete the assigned task on time. Delaying tactics is now a standard behavior since most social groups participate. (Adeniyi, 2019). Also, Laeus (2015) believes that procrastination is doing more pleasurable things instead of less pleasurable ones.

Another notable predictor of procrastination is a lack of self-confidence. Bandura (1997) defined *self-confidence* as students' beliefs in their abilities to perform a task on time and with the desired results. Steel (2007) further claims that self-confidence significantly contributes to academic procrastination. He believes that low self-confidence can lead to procrastination due to uncertainties about one's capacity to complete tasks successfully. Also, Tice and Baumeister (1997) opine that low self-confidence might lead to procrastination, mainly when tasks are more demanding and challenging to one's self-image. According to Gist and Mitchell (1992), "Self-esteem is usually considered to be a trait reflecting an individual's characteristic affective evaluation of self" (feeling of self-worth or self-liking). Howell, Watson, Powell & Buro (2006), Klassen et al. (2008), and Klassen et al. (2008) correlated procrastination with self-confidence, grade point average (GPA), self-regulation, as well as motivation factors. The findings showed that students with higher levels of self-confidence were less likely to procrastinate.

Lee (2005) found that motivation is among the most significant factors influencing students' procrastination. An increased level of procrastination is exhibited among students because adolescents choose the activity that brings them more pleasure and comfort at a given time and does not experience any anxiety or stress resulting from the non-completion of academic tasks. Low motivation for accomplishment does not allow the student to engage in activities wholeheartedly or "bring" the object of activity to "perfection" (Ilchenko, 2017). Furthermore, A.V. Miklyaeva et al. (2018) reveal that the prevalence of academic procrastination among students is closely connected with a lack of interest in completing academic assignments and impulsiveness, provoking the ease of shifting from academic tasks to recreational ones. Chehrzad (2017) believes that procrastination is very closely associated with the type of task assigned. It is observed that the learners often put off tedious and unpleasant tasks.

Moreover, identifying the effect of stress on learning is essential in the academic context because it potentially interferes with students' learning outcomes and achievement (Kufiyak, Samokhvalova, 2015). Stress is a state of worry a person experiences when he/she recognizes that the demands exceed their personal, mental, and social resources. For instance, pursuing a degree can be stressful for some students, negatively affecting their emotional wellbeing and academic performance (Goff, 2011). It has been observed that students experience stress due to enormous academic workload, poor grades, insufficient preparation for classes, failure to organize daily routine properly, lack of time, frustration about the future profession, inefficiency in combining work and study, fear of the future success (Seaward, 2011).

Studies have proven that people who procrastinate encounter more stress than those who do not procrastinate (Seaward, 2011). Moreover, higher perceived stress was remarkably correlated with poor performance. Even though several studies have found a limited linkage between stress and academic performance, the traditional belief is that stress does have an unfavorable effect on academic performance (Goff, 2011)

It is evident from the above review of studies that procrastination appears to be a troubling phenomenon; researchers and academicians most strongly characterized it as being wrong, harmful, and foolish. Rationalizing this viewpoint, several studies have linked it to individual performance - with the procrastinator performing unsatisfactorily; and to individual wellbeing - with the procrastinator being more miserable in the long term. At more significant levels of analysis, procrastination has been related to many organizational and societal issues (Dilmac, 2009). Ironically, Parker (2015) describes procrastinators as "human ostriches" because they impulsively stick their heads into the sand to avoid dealing with unpleasant, complicated, tedious tasks.

3. Research Questions

To identify the impact of procrastination on academic performance, the researchers primarily concentrated on inquiring into the following research questions:

- 1) What are the causes of procrastination among EFL undergraduates?
- 2) How does procrastination negatively affect academic achievement?
- 3) Is there any correlation between academic procrastination and self-confidence?

4. Research methodology

4.1. The context

The study was executed in the Department of English, Samtah University College at Jazan University, KSA, during the second semester of the 2023 - 2024 academic year. Due to cultural and religious deliberations, separate campuses are set up for male and female students, and they are being educated by male and female teachers, respectively. The teachers on both campuses are advised to stick to the course specifications and study materials approved by the university. For this reason, the data is collected only from the female students

4.2. The sample

The study's respondents constituted 70 female undergraduate students between 18 and 25 from the Department of English, Samtah University College, J U. The researchers adopted quota sampling, selecting the respondents from varying levels within the English department. *Quota sampling* is a non-probability sampling method in which the subjects are selected by the pre-planned qualities so that the total sample will have an equal division of features as the general population (Davis, 2005).

Demographical distribution of the study sample

Demographic	Distribution	Number	Percentage
Age	18 - 23	50	71.4
	23 and above	20	28.6
Marital status	Married	26	37.1
	Single	44	62.9
Academic level	Levels 4, 5 & 6	12	17.4
	Levels 7, 8 & 9	17	24.6
	Levels 10, 11 & 12	40	58

4.3. Research instrument

The instrument used for data collection was a self-developed online survey questionnaire. It aimed to investigate the extent to which the EFL undergraduates procrastinated on their academic performance and to identify the correlation between academic procrastination and academic achievement. The questionnaire consisted of 19 items, divided into four categories for convenience of study. The first category (consisting of three items) aimed to gather demographic information on the study sample. The second part (seven items) analyzed the causes of procrastination among EFL undergraduates. The third variety (five items) points out how procrastination negatively affects academic achievements. The last section (consisting of four items) was directed towards establishing the correlation between academic procrastination and self-confidence. The students' responses were calculated using a 5-point scale, ranging from 5 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree).

5. Findings

To investigate the impact of procrastination on the academic performance of EFL learners at Jazan University, a survey was carried out among 70 undergraduates from different levels. The study's main objective was to identify the causes of procrastination, the effect of procrastination on academic achievement, and the correlation between academic procrastination and self-confidence. The responses of the study sample are illustrated below to exhibit the results of the data analysis:

5.1. What are the causes of procrastination among EFL undergraduates?

To address the first research question regarding the causes of procrastination among EFL undergraduates, the researchers calculated the percentage of responses to seven questionnaire items, as indicated in the table below. The present findings (items 1 - 7) strongly support the claims of earlier researchers who identified academic procrastination as one of the devastating student behaviors that affect almost half of the world's student population (Solomon and Rothblum, 1984; Steel, 2007; Baumeister & Scher, 1988). It is observed from the survey findings that 41.82% of the total samples procrastinate due to reasons such as social media addiction, tedious and complex tasks, unsure of the guidelines for completing the task, carelessness, and social commitments. A detailed description of the findings is demonstrated below:

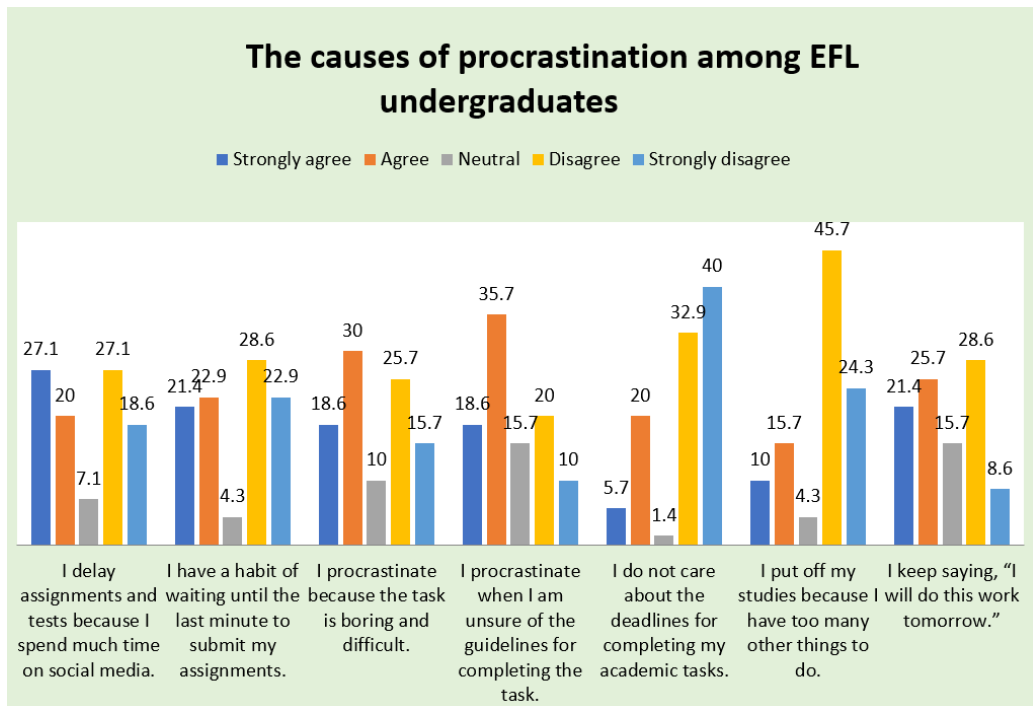


Figure 1

As shown in the figure above, in response to item one (I delay the assignments and preparations for tests because I spend much time on social media.), 27.1% of the respondents expressed strong agreement with the fact that they procrastinate due to social media addiction; In comparison, 20% chose the next strongest category. However, 7.1% were neutral in their agreement, 27.1% indicated disagreement, and 18.6% of students strongly disagreed. 47.1% (n=33) expressed agreement and 52.8% (n=37) disagreed with item one. Although the number of students who do not procrastinate outnumber those who do, it should be noticed that the variations between the two categories are tiny. In other words, nearly half the population tends to delay academic tasks owing to social media obsession.

Moving to the second item (I have a habit of waiting until the last minute to submit my assignments.), it is noticed that 21.4% of the subjects strongly agreed that they wait until the eleventh hour to submit their assignments, and 22.9% pointed agreement, while 4.3% of students were not sure of the answer and chose the third category; 28.6% expressed disagreement, and 22.9% strongly disagreed. Out of the 70 survey participants, 44.3% (n=31) submitted their assignments in the nick of time, and 55.8% (n=39) did not habitually delay the task.

Furthermore, the third item in the table above (I procrastinate because the task is tedious and difficult.) revealed that 18.6% of the participants strongly agreed that they procrastinate because it is uninteresting and challenging. In comparison, 30% indicated agreement in choosing the next strongest category. However, 10%

opted for the third category, 25.7% chose two, and 15.7% chose one, which indicated that the reason for procrastination does not result from task difficulty. All in all, 48.6% (n=34) showed agreement, and 51.4% (n=36) strongly disagreed with item three.

In response to the fourth item (I procrastinate when I am unsure of the guidelines for completing the task), 18.6% of the sample chose the first category, and 35.7% selected the second category, which revealed that more than half the respondents (54.3%) consider lack of clear instructions on assignments is one of the major causes for the delaying tactics. On the other hand, 15.7% are unsure, 20% indicated disagreement, and 10% reported strong disagreement. This showed that an average of 45.7% do not seem to accept a 'lack of clear guidelines' as a reason for delaying academic activities.

It is evident from the responses to item five (I do not care about the deadlines for completing my academic tasks) that only 5.7% of the sample indicated strong agreement with the above statement, while 20% agreed, selecting the fourth category. Nonetheless, 1.4% of participants expressed neutral agreement, 32.9% showed disagreement, and 40% indicated strong dissatisfaction. More specifically, 18 out of 70 do not care about academic deadlines, whereas 52 are serious about educational achievement.

Almost a similar trend as item five can be noticed in response to item six (I put off my studies because I have too many other things to do), where only 10% of the sample give more importance to social commitments than the scholastic ones; 15.7% reported almost the same view, selecting the following most robust agreement. Among the remaining respondents, 4.3% were unsure of the answer choice, 45.7% indicated disagreement, and 24.3% vehemently opposed item five. Considering the responses to items five and six, it is observed that 74.3% of the learners are firmly committed to their academic responsibilities. On the contrary, 25.7% were found to be unconcerned.

The last item asked the students to specify the degree to which they kept saying, "I will do this work tomorrow." In response, 21.4% of students selected five, indicating substantial agreement, followed by 25.7% of learners who chose four, agreeing. Of the remaining students, 15.7% selected three, 28.6% selected two, and 8.6% selected one, showing that they never finished their tasks for the next day. The findings reveal that 47.1% of students keep keeping the tasks; however, 52.9% of stop students elicited positive responses

5.2. How does procrastination negatively affect academic achievements?

To investigate the effect of academic procrastination on the academic achievements of the EFL undergraduates of Jazan University, the researchers applied descriptive analysis of five items on a five-point scale. A detailed data analysis revealed that 50.58% of the learners are victims of academic procrastination. The findings are relatively consistent with several earlier studies which claim that there is a strong negative association between procrastination and academic achievement, which is very often coupled with anxiety and stress (Goroshit, 2018; Kim & Seo,

2015; Steel, 2007; Binder, 2000; Baumeister & Scher, 1988). A comprehensive report of the findings is presented below

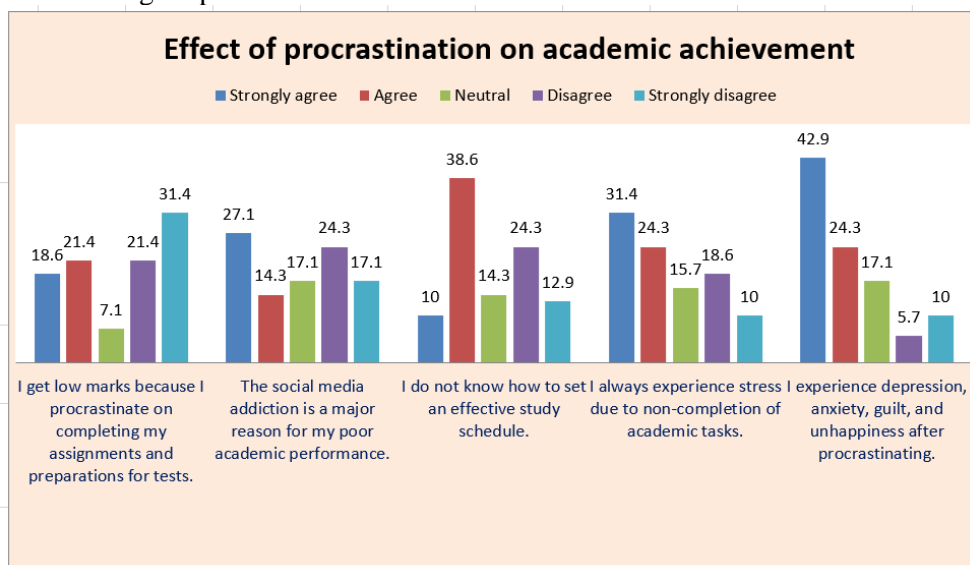


Figure 2

In response to the first item, as shown in the figure above (I get low marks because I procrastinate on completing my assignments and preparations for tests), 40 % (n = 28) of the survey respondents agreed to choose the first and second category, which specify the correlation between academic procrastination and academic achievement. On the contrary, 60% (n=42) expressed disagreement in choosing the third, fourth, and fifth categories, pointing to the fact that they do not suffer from procrastination. More or less similar, similar responses were obtained while analyzing the second item of the survey (Social media addiction is a significant reason for my poor academic performance). It is observed that 41.4% (n = 29) of the sample reported low educational outcomes due to social media addiction, while 58.5% (n=42) were unaffected by social media and achieved better results. Although the sample reported a moderate level of academic procrastination with a mean of 2.92, it is a significant figure to conclude that they had a low level of procrastination.

Additionally, the responses to item three (I need to learn how to set an effective study schedule.) revealed that 48.6% (n = 34) need to be more competent in utilizing time effectively, which leads to procrastination and educational performance. However, 51.5% (n=36) are punctual in their study matters and score well on tests. Furthermore, the findings of item four of the survey (I always experience stress due to non-completion of academic tasks) showed that 55.7% (n=40) undergo high levels of stress resulting from non-completion of academic tasks, which ultimately suggests poor academic outcomes in comparison, 44.4% (n=30) of students are academically successful because they do not procrastinate. Moving to the last element (I experience depression, anxiety, guilt, and unhappiness after procrastinating), 67.2% (n=47) of Jazan University English primary students are

involved in delaying tactics. Hence, it is to be concluded that academic achievement negatively correlates with anxiety, guilt, and unhappiness. Only 32.8% (n=23) are academically well-disciplined and successful. It is visible from the analysis of the above survey items that academic performance is positively associated with self-discipline and self-control but negatively correlated with stress, anxiety, guilt, and unhappiness.

5.3. *Is there any correlation between academic procrastination and self-confidence?*

To address the third research question, the researchers utilized a self-developed online survey questionnaire consisting of four items on a five-point scale. The investigation aimed to discover whether there is a correlation between Jazan University EFL undergraduates' academic procrastination and their self-confidence. The findings are presented in the figure below:



Figure 3

As evident in the above statistics, in response to the first statement (I always get good grades because I am well-organized and have an effective study schedule), 40.6% (n = 28) of the respondents agreed in choosing the first and second category, which reveals their confidence in their abilities to perform a task on time and with the expected outcomes. However, 59.4% (n=42) indicated partial or strong disagreement, which reflects a lack of self-confidence. Furthermore, 42.4% (n =29) indicated agreement with the second statement (I do not trust myself to do a good job, so I wait until my classmates complete their tasks). In comparison, 11.4% (n = 8) chose three, 30% (n = 21) chose two, and 17.1% (n = 12) chose one, respectively, signaling their disagreement. In other words, nearly half the survey participants (42.4%) delay academic tasks due to a lack of confidence, and 58.5% are confident in themselves. The findings of the third and fourth items demonstrate a significant correlation between self-confidence and academic achievement. An average of 37.4% (n=28) of

the study samples are not keen on timely submission of assignments or academic preparations since they are unsure of their success. However, 63.1% (n=42) are optimistic about their achievement and do not delay academic tasks.

Considering the average of responses to items 1 - 4, it is evident that 39.4% of students are in the habit of delaying academic tasks because they do not trust themselves to do a good job, while 69% indicated positivity and do not procrastinate. The study showed that the students with higher levels of self-confidence were less likely to procrastinate, thereby drawing a correlation between academic procrastination and self-confidence. Thus, the present findings resonate with several earlier studies that self-confidence significantly contributes to academic procrastination (Bandura,1997; Steel, 2007; Tice & Baumeister,1997; Howell et al., 2006; Klassen et al., 2008).

6. Discussion

A close examination of the descriptive statistics indicated that 45.15% of the EFL undergraduates of Jazan University who sampled this study are prone to academic procrastination. Analysis of the most prominent causes of procrastination revealed that the learners postpone tasks due to social media addiction, tedious and challenging tasks, unclear guidelines, stress, and avoidance resulting from a lack of self-confidence. It has been observed that low-performing students are more inclined to procrastinate than high-performing ones. It acts as a coping mechanism in the fight against discontent with one's progress and achievements. In line with the results obtained, academic procrastination among students indicates academic decline. (Elena, 2021)

Furthermore, while examining the impact of academic procrastination on academic achievement, a strong negative link between the two has been shown, with an average of 50.58% (Mean 3.15) of the respondents obtaining lower scores. The current study's findings agree with several researchers who believe that the overall postponement of tasks to be done profoundly impacts academic performance (Goroshit, 2018; Kim and Seo, 2015; Steel, 2007). The delay in submission of assignments and other academic activities affects students' academic performance pessimistically, especially the poor performers. Moreover, the results of this study are by Day, Mensink, & O'Sullivan (2000), who claimed that more than half of students regularly put off their academic tasks. Also, it is frustrating to note that 48.6% of the sample are typically disorganized and need better time-management skills. Similar findings were reflected in scholars' studies (Howell & Watson, 2007; Lay & Schouwenburg, 1993; Steel, 2007).

Additionally, while attempting to investigate the correlation between academic procrastination and self-confidence, it is observed that 44.17% of the participants delay their educational activities due to a lack of belief in their abilities. The above findings and the findings of various other studies draw our attention to the fact that there is a significant inverse relationship between procrastination and self-esteem on educational achievements (Beck et al., 2000; Ferrari & Tice, 2000; Solomon & Rothblum, 1984; Bandura, 1997). It is evident from the learners' responses that those with low self-efficacy avoid initiating or completing tasks, while

those with high self-efficacy initiate and complete tasks on time despite the challenges and difficulties. A similar pattern was found in Chow (2011) and Steel (2007), who reported that procrastination has a strong direction and an inverse relationship with self-confidence.

7. Recommendations

In agreement with the findings of the study, the following recommendations are put forward to encourage and guide EFL undergraduates of JU who are habituated to academic procrastination:

1. Provide awareness-raising activities and training programs emphasizing academic procrastination, self-confidence, self-regulation, time management, and handling stress.
2. Organize curricular and extra-curricular activities that can boost the confidence of procrastinators because procrastination decreases when confidence increases.
3. Students must be educated about the negative impact of academic procrastination on educational achievements.
4. Work individually with students who often procrastinate.

8. Recommendations for further research

The study's sample size was limited to only one Saudi University (Jazan University), which might have impacted the accuracy of the findings and arriving at more detailed and solid conclusions. Hence, there is a need for further studies with larger samples, more diverse demographics, and involving participants from several Saudi Universities to have a more comprehensive understanding of the extent of procrastination among the learners and to explore in detail the specific challenges they encounter.

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