

Academic procrastination in the context of meaning structures of personality: why is it important for the formation of sustainable behavior

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Abstract. In this article, the author tries to draw attention to academic procrastination issue. The author gives a definition of the phenomenon, due to the lack of a generally accepted one in the scientific field. The relevance of the study is determined by the prevalence of academic procrastination in the educational environment, a student's insufficient immersion in the educational process in order to obtain skills important for their specialty, the loss of opportunities to gain additional knowledge (additional courses, trainings, etc.), the loss of potential opportunities provided by the university (competitions, grants, participation in student scientific societies, etc.), the procrastinator's influence on their inner circle and teachers, as well as the lack of a reliable method of coping with academic procrastination. The novelty of the study lies in the consideration of academic procrastination as an integral part of the meaning structure of one's personality.

1 Introduction

In the academic environment, there is a certain joke among students: "I wrote my diploma (thesis) in two weeks". The problem lies in the fact, that for many students it is a reflection of the harsh reality. For them there is no way to start the task earlier, and as a result they often find themselves struggling with the paper right "before" or "behind" the deadline.

A course paper, a diploma, is designed for a student to devote themselves to it for a whole year, and in the process acquire the necessary skills. However, will they acquire these skills if they finish this work in a week? In addition, as a feeling the pressure of work piled up, a student is unlikely to pay attention to the activities offered by their university, such as additional courses, scientific conferences, etc.

Research supervisors and teachers also have to deal with these delayed-by-many papers that have been handed by deadline. A teacher forced to work in such conditions will not

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receive emotional and stress release in their free time, because they spend this time checking and scoring. That is, the quality of education will also begin to decrease.

The phenomenon of postponing behavior in the scientific community is considered as "academic procrastination." And, since there is no generally accepted definition, we offer our own:

Academic procrastination is the systematic postponement of academic tasks, accompanied by negative emotions and strong inner tension, and can lead to poor academic performance [1].

This concept is not something unfamiliar to students, and this is supported by data on the prevalence of this phenomenon in academic field: from 60 to 95% of students, and an upward trend can be observed [2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8].

Traditionally, it is common to fight procrastination itself, with the help of tougher deadlines, self-efficacy training, time management, etc. And in this way procrastination is back again.

In our opinion, presented previously in the form of The High Procrastination Wall Theory [1], the reason for the systematic nature of procrastination is that it is woven into the meaning structures of the personality. That is, postponing behaviour is a defence mechanism that protects one's personality from engaging in activities that have no life meaning. According to D. A. Leontiev, the meaning-forming elements of the personality structure include: personal values, meaning attitude, meaning disposition, and meaning construct [9]. In our previous work, we discovered that academic procrastination manifests itself through the "barrier" influence of a meaning attitude. At the current stage of work, we have focused our attention on how academic procrastination is reflected in meaning disposition and meaning construct of activity. In this case, it was made on the example of the process of writing a course paper.

A meaning disposition can be defined as a stable belief determined by the role and place of the object of belief in the life of a person [9]. A meaning disposition will necessarily manifest itself in the situation associated with this belief. For example, if a student is convinced that the process of writing a course paper is an extremely difficult, time-consuming, and pressing occupation, then it will be harder to deal with it under the burden of obligation than for a student without this disposition.

To simplify the assessment of the state of the surrounding world, in the deep meaning structure of a person a certain scale (**a meaning construct**) can be placed, the categories of which are used in this assessment [9]. For example, activities can be put on scales: "difficult-easy"; "interesting-uninteresting", etc.

Thus, in order to study the presence of academic procrastination at the level of meaning disposition and meaning construct, a process of writing a course paper was taken and the study was conducted.

2 Methods

The empirical objective of the study was young people ($n = 93$) between 18 and 25 years of age, studying at universities and currently having the task of "course paper". The research was taken place from 10 to 30 May. All students participated voluntarily.

The methodological tools were:

- The "Procrastination Scale, For Student Populations" test C. Lay (1986) [10];
- The questions № 15, 18, 19, of the author's questionnaire presented below:

№ 15. Please describe your attitude to a course paper as a task.

№ 18. Please, describe "What is a course paper?" as if you were talking about it to a teacher, research supervisor.

№ 19. Please, describe "What is a course paper?" as if you were telling a friend about it.

Data processing was carried out using quantitative analysis and content analysis.

3 Results

Data on the expression of the level of academic procrastination in students are presented in Figure 1.

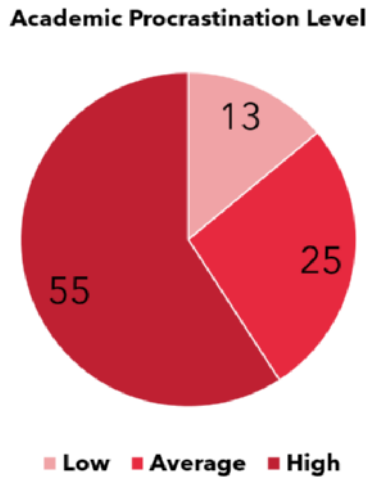


Fig. 1. Academic procrastination levels obtained using the "Procrastination Scale, For Student Populations" (n = 93) [10].

The data obtained from the The "Procrastination Scale, For Student Populations" test indicates that a significant proportion of students (55) have a high level of academic procrastination, an average level is observed in 25 students, and a low level is present in only 13 students. There are no respondents in the sample whose academic procrastination is not expressed.

Observing the mean values within the levels (Fig. 2), one can note that the average level mean is in the range between 20 and 45 points, and the low level mean is at 39,6.

The conducted content analysis allowed one to identify the following categories (Table 1).

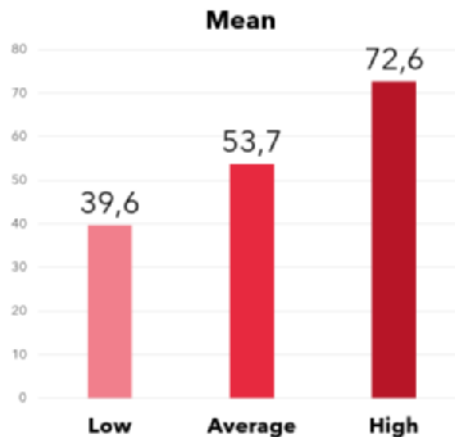


Fig. 2. Mean values within each academic procrastination level (n = 93).**Table 1.** Identified content analysis categories determining the content of the meaning disposition of a course work.

Content analysis category	Number of units in category
Direct attitude to the task:	27
responsible (22.2%), negative (22.2%), neutral (18.5%), positive (18.5%), like (11.1%), normal (7.4%)	
Emotional states associated with the work process:	15
fear (33.3%), anxiety (26.7%), tension (20%), feel pressured (13.3%), satisfaction (6.7%)	
Value content:	18
helps (33.3%), of little meaning (22.2%), assessment (22.2%), important (11.1%), self-realization (11.1%)	
The task characteristics:	65
interesting (30.8%), formality (15.4%), do not know how (10.8%), complex type of task (7.7%), requires effort (7.7%), it is not clear for what purpose (6.2%), good task (6.2%), easy (4.6%), requires discipline (4.6%), stressful (3.1%), outdated (3.1%)	
The work process characteristics:	15
useless (33.3%), tedious (20%), hard (20%), time-consuming (20%), interesting to read (6.7%)	

Students treat writing course papers mostly responsibly, while, in general, there is a small percentage of positive ratings for this type of assignment (30% in the category).

The process of writing a course paper causes mainly negative emotions and states, among which fear, anxiety, and tension are the lead ones.

Students believe that writing a course paper can improve their skills, but at the same time they find it of little meaning.

Coursework is considered an interesting type of task, but, at the same time, the formal shade of its writing, the resource-intensiveness of its implementation, and the overall laboriousness of this task are mentioned. The process of writing it is characterised as useless and tedious.

Based on the data obtained on the questions, it seems possible to distinguish the following scales for assessing the course work (the number of choices is marked in brackets): «interesting (7) – uninteresting (6)»; «informal (0) – formal (18)»; «optional (0) – mandatory (10)»; «independent (16) – dependent (2)»; «demonstrating (11) – hiding (0)»; «small (1) – big (12)»; «developing (11) – retarding (0)».

4 Discussion

The data obtained on the "Procrastination Scale, For Student Populations" test allow us to confirm earlier results of the studies in this area. In the educational environment, academic procrastination remains a phenomenon of extreme prevalence, even the same number of 60% is present [2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8]. Moreover, a large number of mean scores within each level also confirms the upward trend.

According to the meaning construct, it is almost equally rated as interesting and uninteresting, which reflects the presence of different levels of procrastination in the sample. It is also rated as a formal, obligatory type of assignment with a large volume. A

student performs it on their own, because this type of work is designed to demonstrate the level of their skills acquired in the process of working on the course paper.

In addition, in their responses, students often stated that course papers can be of interest only to those who want "to do science", while for the rest it is, in their words, just a "hard labor". Others have said that being too formal destroys creativity in problem solving.

5 Conclusions

Based on the study, we can draw the following conclusions:

1. Academic procrastination remains widespread in the educational environment;
2. Students treat writing course papers mostly responsibly, while there is a small percentage of positive assessments of this type of assignment;
3. The process of writing a course paper causes mostly negative emotions and states;
4. Students realize that writing course papers can improve their skills;
5. A course paper is considered as an interesting type of assignment, but at the same time, the formality of its writing, the resource-intensiveness of its implementation, and the overall laboriousness of this task are mentioned.
6. The process of writing a course paper is generally rated as useless, tedious, hard, and time-consuming.

It seems appropriate to continue the study of academic procrastination in the context of the meaning structures of personality. In particular, it is important to answer the following questions: "To what extent is a student aware of the value of these skills?", and "To what extent does the value of these skills justify the process of obtaining them by a student?". Answers can be obtained by studying the reflection of academic procrastination at the level of personal values.

Our work is designed to shift the focus of attention from the fight against academic procrastination to the study of the meaning content of the work that students delay most often. Academic procrastination, in our understanding, is much broader than the inability to plan one's time. It is more complex and needs to be covered more thoroughly.

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