STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING ACADEMIC PROCRASTINATION AMONG STUDENTS IN NIGERIAN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS

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Abstract

Procrastination is a widely spread phenomenon which is very common in all facets of life. Many individuals involve in procrastination at one time or the other in their lifetime.. The common type among students is Academic procrastination. Academic procrastination affects Students emotionally, morally and socially. It is against this background that this study examine strategies for managing Academic Procrastination among Tertiary Institution Students in Nigeria .It presents the conceptual, causes and consequences of academic procrastination on students academic achievement and Strategies such as using Pomodoro technique, disconnecting from the internet, eliminating distractions, developing good study skills etc that can be used to manage academic procrastination. Suggestions such as establishment of Counselling Centers in all tertiary institutions across the Nation, organizing seminars for students and lecturers on causes, effects and ways of managing academic procrastination were given.

Keywords: Academic procrastination, strategies, Nigerian tertiary institution

Introduction

Academic procrastination has become a source of major concern to counsellors, Educational psychologists, mental health practitioners, lecturers, researchers and other stake holders involved in the education of students in tertiary institution in Nigeria. Academic procrastination has been studied as a sub-field of procrastination focusing specifically on students' issues. In education and training, the term academic procrastination is commonly used to denote the deliberate delay in academic activities by a student to another time. It may be intentional, incidental and/or habitual but significantly affects the learning and achievement of students. Academic procrastination is typically defined as an irrational tendency to delay at the beginning of an academic task. Students may have the intention of performing an academic activity within the desired or expected time frame, yet not be motivated to do so (Ferrari, 2010). Academic procrastination is defined, with delays in starting or finishing a task, such as an academic assignment which an individual intends to do, but for doing so, it cannot be sufficiently

motivating (Sepehrian, 2012). According to Solvingprocrastination.com (2021) Academic procrastination is a phenomenon where people—particularly students—unnecessarily postpone academic assignments, such as studying for a test or writing a paper. This phenomenon is very common, and can lead to serious issues, such as worse academic outcomes and increased stress Vargas (2017) noted 90% of college students engage in academic procrastination. Klassen et al. (2010) found that 57% of one group and 59% of another group of the undergraduate participants in their research "reported spending three hours or more per day in procrastination" (p. 372). Knaus (2010) emphasized that the primary trigger of procrastination loops is individuals' ways of thinking. Long exposure to stress may lead to depression and anxiety, which have been reported to affect roughly 30% of college students (Ibrahim, et al., 2013) and are highly correlated with procrastination (Klibert ,et al., 2011).

Hussain and Sultan (2010) found procrastination to cause higher stress, low self-esteem, depression, plagiarism, higher use of alcohol, cigarettes and caffeine and to decrease ability to maintain healthy self-care habits like exercise and eating. Many students of tertiary institution are adults who are facing a lot of challenges, ranging from difficulty to assimilate, poor time management. This situation is also triggered by environmental stressors, such epileptic power supply, family crisis, pressure from place of work and other job-related factors. There can be high expectations of success from peers, parents, and spouses. Socially, in a attempt to satisfy friends and relations there may be need to attend some ceremonies which can lead to delay in academic tasks. Financially, there may be insufficient funds to pay up the necessary fees and acquire learning materials. Some students involve themselves in social activities that limit the time they spend on academic-related tasks. Many are addicted to social networking; hours that should be used studying are used chatting with friends, watching films online. Online environment increases the tendency to procrastinate and its prevalence is detrimental to student learning and performance (Rakes & Dunn, 2010). In an effort to proffer solutions to these challenges, many have resulted into several negative behaviours, such as academic procrastination.

Academic procrastination is a common problem among school and university students (Gargari, Sabouri & Noezad, 2011). It has led some tertiary education students ignore their academic responsibilities during part or the entire course of studies, delay and postpone their academic work. They Commonly delay preparing for the examinations, preparing and submitting their assignments and presentations and completing projects. The damage caused by procrastination is well documented by scholars such as Hussain & Sultan (2010). These include low achievement and failure in examinations, depression, anxiety, inferiority complex, discontinuation of study and dropout. When students indulge in procrastination, it leads them to search for shortcuts, unfair means for passing examinations, hostile attitude, immoral practices, addiction and a sense of demotivation (Akinsola & Tella, cited in Tandi & Oyintonyo, 2019).

Academic procrastination as a problem behaviour with negative consequences on students. The extent of this academic epidemic among tertiary education students, its negative impact on their academic goal achievement and life in general requires more attention, this lead to writing on strategies for Managing Academic Procrastination among Students in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions.

Concept of Academic Procrastination

Academic procrastination is a special form of procrastination that occurs in the academic settings. It involves knowing that one needs to carry out an academic task or undertake an

academic activity, such as writing a term paper, studying for examinations, finishing a school related project, or undertaking the weekly reading assignments, but, for one reason or another, failing to motivate oneself to do so within the expected time frame (Ackerman & Gross, 2005).According to Özer, Demir and Ferrari (2013) there is no universally accepted definition, academic procrastination can be defined as the postponement of academic goals to the point where optimal performance becomes highly unlikely, resulting in a state of psychological distress .It has also been found that procrastination behaviour results in not only loss of time, but also some psychological and mental problems like a decline in self-respect and self-efficacy, anxiety, stress and depression academic procrastination might cause frayed nerves (Thomas 2014).

In the word of Steel and Klingsieck (2016) academic procrastination is a delay in tasks or activities related or dependent on learning and studying. Moonaghi and Beydokhti (2017) pointed out that Academic procrastination occurs when students postpone completion of activities, projects, and assignments unnecessarily. It can be understood from the above that academic procrastination involve wasting of precious time that a student should use for academic tasks for other activities that can make attainment of their academic goals impossible or achieve them lately

Basic Types of Procrastination

Various definitions of different types of procrastination could be found in literature. Ferrari and Scher (2000) grouped procrastination into “situational procrastination” and “trait procrastination” according to them, the situational procrastination, makes people usually tend to procrastinate in order to avoid tasks that they find unpleasant or too difficult while Situational procrastination occurs dependently on the nature and context of a task and is related with certain parts of one’s life. Kims (2015) identified two types of procrastination that are particularly common as: beavioural and decisional procrastination. Behavioural procrastination is a self-sabotage strategy that allows people to shift blame and avoid action, for example: a student may do poorly in an exam and use procrastination as an excuse. The decisional procrastination strategy is to put off making a decision when dealing with conflicts or choices. People who practice high level decisional procrastination tend to be afraid of errors and are likely to be perfectionists.

Academic procrastination is widely discussed in literature as a sub form of situational procrastination (Odacı, 2011).Trait procrastination is defined as people’s predispositions to delay or postpone tasks (Anna et al., ,2013). That is, unlike academic procrastination, trait or dispositional procrastination is not related with characteristics of the situation or the task. Instead, trait procrastination occurs depending on the personality traits of the individuals who continuously and chronically procrastinate. Academic procrastination is a specific kind of procrastination, the manifestation of procrastination in learning. it is commonly seen among middle-school, high-school, graduate and postgraduate students (Krispenz et al., 2019).procrastination is more viewed as a generalized personality trait rather than being situational (Kims,2015).Some researchers classify procrastinators in two main types: passive and active procrastinators. Passive procrastinators: Delay the task because they have trouble making decisions and acting on them. Active procrastinators: Delay the task purposefully because working under pressure allows them to "feel challenged and motivated

Causes of Academic Procrastination

Various reasons are captured in the past studies that lead to academic procrastination among students. According to Sue (2014) procrastination can be the result of emotional and psychological factors, such as stress, depression, low self-esteem, poor time management. Ojo (2019) identified the following as reasons why academic procrastination occur among students.

Lack of clarity about the desired outcome*:* When students are confused by an assignment, or don't know exactly what is expected of them, they often put off the assignment in hopes that they will understand it better later. This is especially problematic for students who are uncomfortable with uncertainty or unknown situations. Unfortunately, when they look at it the night before the deadline, they usually have no more information than they did before and no time left to ask their teacher for clarification.

Optimistic time estimates. Optimism is a wonderful quality in most situations. But when it comes to estimating how much time it will take to complete an assignment, optimistic time estimates can create big problems. Students commonly overestimate the amount of time they have left to complete assignments, and underestimate the amount of time it will take to complete them. Consequently, they fail to leave themselves enough time to complete the work.

Overly-lenient deadlines: When teachers/lectures don't enforce deadlines and allow students to turn in late work without a penalty, students learn that deadlines aren't meaningful and cease to take them seriously. Without meaningful consequences, external deadlines can start to feel as arbitrary as internal dead lines, which while helpful are not as effective at discouraging procrastination.

Not knowing where to start*.* When students think of papers or projects as a whole, rather than as a series of steps, they can seem overwhelming and they don't know where to begin. So, they end up putting the whole project off, until it's so close to the deadline that their worry about not knowing the "right" place to start is overshadowed by their fear of not having enough time to complete the work at all.

Poor study routines. Students' after-school routines tend to be fairly habitual. Once they are established, these behaviour patterns are followed automatically, with very little conscious thought. For example, students sometimes will start watching TV as a break after school, which automatically leads to procrastination because it's hard to turn it off. Or, students will have a pattern of leaving their most difficult work, their studying, or their long-term projects until the end of their homework time, when they have the least energy and the smallest amount of willpower. These habits can cause students to procrastinate automatically, without even thinking about it.

Distractions: Sometimes students set aside time with the intention of completing their work, but end up distracted with other things. These distractions can be external (Face book, text messages, etc.) or internal (their own thoughts and impulses). Either way, this results in them spending time that had been budgeted for their work in other ways. If a student's phone is glued to his face, he probably engaged in a displacement activity or procrastination in disguise. Procrastinators recognize the short-term harm of their actions, but they're unable to suppress their emotional impulse towards diversion.

A Student's Upbringing: If a student has a largely unhelpful personality trait, it's always tempting to blame something out of his control. There's evidence to suggest that students who suffer with procrastination are more likely to have had an authoritarian father. Alternatively, if a student had role models who did not instill the benefits of proactivity, he may be more likely to

put tasks off. Having strict parents again, having someone telling you what to do (especially) as a child, can result in the passive protest of inactivity. As Ferrary cited in *Weinstein,(2017) says* "It's the child who can't really rebel, so the only way to rebel is to delay doing what the parent is asking them to do."

Poor Teaching Methods: Some lecturer/ teachers are not creative. They find it difficult to adjust to changing situations. For example, if a lecturer fails to understand the individual differences of the learners he or she may not know the lecturing method to be employed in the class. If his or her lecturing methods are monotonous he or she will lose the attention of the class. Such a lecturer forgets that students are very curious and they need to see new things. If the lecturer fails to use appropriate teaching methods when necessary. He or she will lose the attention of his class which may make some students dodge his class, assignment and procrastinate to the last minute.

Consequences of Procrastination on Academic Performance.

Procrastination is often detrimental to people's ability to successfully pursue their goals, which is evident, for example, in the fact that procrastination is associated with receiving worse grades at school and earning a lower salary at work. A survey in 2015 found that, on average, a person loses over 55 days per year procrastinating, wasting around 218 minutes every day doing unimportant things .Here's the math:218 minutes/day x 365 = 79570 minutes = 55.3 days (Ho, 2021). Ojo (2019) observed, procrastination serves as major cumbersome of many students in Nigeria schools, because they fond of postponing what they are expected to do at right time , for instance many students spend much time on social media instead of reading their books, even procrastination actually affect the reading culture among the students in Nigeria. Therefore, many students prefer to postpone the tasks and do pleasure things which they cannot benefit from it .For example, they like to postpone the time to read their book and spend most of their time on social media.

This also prevail among the tertiary institution students in Nigeria. Klassen et al. (2010) found that 57% of one group and 59% of another group of the undergraduate participants in their research "reported spending three hours or more per day in procrastination". Muszynski and Akamatsu's (1991) research on doctoral-level clinical psychology students led to the conclusion that cognitive and affective factors related to procrastination might significantly result in delay or even failure in completing their dissertations. Most disturbingly, graduate students have been found to procrastinate to a greater extent than do undergraduates. Onwuegbuzie's (2004) findings show that graduate students are approximately 3.5 times more likely than are undergraduate students to report that they nearly always or always procrastinate on reading their weekly assignments.

Discussing dreadful effects of procrastination Kirstin (2021) explained the followings as most common effects of procrastination that can destroy not only ones productivity, but also life; ***Losing Precious Time***. The worst thing about procrastinating is the moment you realize that you are two, five, or ten years older and nothing has changed. This is a terrible feeling because you can't turn back the hands of time; you just have to live with the helpless feeling of regret. There is nothing worse than feeling frustrated at yourself, knowing the situation could have been so different if only you had taken that first step.

Ruining a Career. The way one work directly affects his results, how much he achieve, and how well he perform, so the effects of procrastination can end up being detrimental to ones

career. Procrastination may prevent him from meeting deadlines or achieving his monthly targets. Consequently a person might miss out on promotions or even be at risk of losing his job. Hee can try to hide it for a while, but no doubt, that long-term procrastination at work will almost certainly ruin his career.

Lower Self-Esteem. This is one of the vicious circles you might find yourself in. We tend to procrastinate because low self-esteem makes us feel that we won't be able to get a task or project done the right way. Unfortunately, procrastinating only increases feelings of low self-esteem, making us doubt ourselves even more. One study involving college students found that "academic procrastination was negatively predicted by self-esteem, and self-control. When we have low self-esteem, we hold ourselves back, feel unworthy of success, and begin to self-sabotage. Procrastination eats away your confidence, slowly but surely. If this resonates with you, focus on building your self-esteem instead of holding on to the illusion that you should be able to do something, as this makes you force yourself into something when you are not ready.

Damage to ones Reputation. When an individual keep saying he will do something and he don't, his reputation gets tarnished, as nobody wants empty promises. Besides damaging his own reputation, he may be damaging his self-esteem and self-confidence. You will find that it gets easier to procrastinate each time because he would not surprise himself anymore.

People could stop depending on him and hold back on offering such a person opportunities because they could be worried that he will simply procrastinate, even if he has already have a reputation of being a procrastinator he can turn it around. Next time someone asks him for something.

Risking Health. Among the effects of procrastination are mental health problems like stress and anxiety, these in turn are linked to health issues. procrastination leads to feelings of depression, this will start to affect other areas of someone's life. If he procrastinates too much with something, it will most likely start to stress him out and cause anxiety, especially when other people or things are involved, all of this can lead to poor health outcomes. Another way that procrastination can affect health in the short term is when an individual continually put off check-ups and postpone appointments or things they need to do, such as exercise. The problem only gets worse and the consequences more dire.

Last-Minute Propulsion. Interestingly, for some people, putting off things until the very last minute can create an emergency-type situation—an urgency of sorts—that helps propel you forward to successfully get the job done. The fast approaching deadline (and the immediacy of the negative consequences that will follow if the deadline isn't met) may help you to focus and complete the task. The problem is that this urgency can create quite a bit of stress and anxiety, too. And the stress can take a tremendous toll on you as well as those around you. Inevitably, these last-minute rush jobs also tend not to be as high quality as they might have been without such procrastination.

Strategies for Managing Academics Procrastination among Students

While procrastination might not be something one can avoid entirely, becoming cognizant of the reasons why he procrastinates and how to overcome those tendencies can help. By implementing some strategies, one might find that it is easier to put his nose to the grindstone and get started on those important tasks (Scully, 2019). The following steps can help students to stop procrastinating and start being more productive as suggested by some Researchers.

Figure out the exact nature of your procrastination problem. You can do this by thinking about cases where you procrastinated, and then identifying *when*, *how*, and *why* you did so. The First Step to overcome procrastination you need to have an understanding of the reasons why you procrastinate and the function procrastination serves in your life. You can't come up with an effective solution if you don't really understand the root of the problem. As with most problems, awareness and self-knowledge are the keys to figuring out how to stop procrastinating. For a lot of people acquiring this insight about how procrastination protects them from feeling like they are not able enough, and keeping it in mind when they are tempted to fall into familiar, unproductive, procrastinating habits goes a long way to solving the problem.

Break the project into smaller tasks. Big project s can be overwhelming at the outset. Help yourself by breaking down the project into manageable parts such as research, writing and editing. Then, you can tackle each task step by step until the project is done. This will also help you develop and practice project planning and time management skills. Breaking down big tasks into little ones is referred to as ***Swiss Cheese*** *It* approach by McGraw (2021). A variation on this is devoting short chunks of time to a big task and doing as much as you can in that time with few expectations about what you will get done. For example, try spending about ten minutes just jotting down ideas that come to mind on the topic of a paper, or skimming over a long reading to get just the main ideas. After doing this several times on a big task, you will have made some progress on it, you'll have some momentum, you'll have less work to do to complete the task, and it won't seem so huge because you've punched holes in it (like Swiss cheese).

Finding Productive Reasons for Engaging in Tasks. To overcome procrastination it's critical that you stay motivated for productive reasons. Productive reasons mean reasons for learning and achieving positive, productive, satisfying feelings and actions. These reasons are in contrast to engaging in a task out of fear of failing, or not making your parents angry, or not looking stupid, or doing better than other people to "show off." While these are all reasons - often very powerful ones - for doing something, they are not productive since they evoke maladaptive, often negative feelings and actions. For example, if you are concerned with not looking dumb you may not ask questions, delve into new areas, try new methods, or take the risks necessary to learn new things and reach new heights. A good way to put positive motives in motion is to set and focus on your goals. Identify and write down your own personal reasons for enrolling in a course and monitor your progress toward your goals using a goal-setting chart. Remember to focus on your reasons and your goals. Other people's goals for you are not goals at all, but obligations.

Build up your confidence. Some students procrastinate because they are afraid to fail or think they can't live up to expectations. Boosting your confidence by reviewing your efforts and past achievements can help you develop a more positive attitude toward your work, making it easier to get started. Visualize your future self by experiencing the outcomes of your work. Avoid a perfectionist mindset by accepting that your work will have some flaws. Develop a belief in your ability to successfully overcome your procrastination (Nick, 2021)

Make a project plan and stick to it. Create a schedule for your study, setting dedicated blocks of "homework time" to work on schoolwork each day. When bigger projects are assigned, sit down and make a plan to follow. Set mini project due dates or milestones you can aim for. This will help break down the assignment, making big projects seem more manageable. This plan should involve a combination of relevant anti-procrastination techniques that will allow you to deal with situations where your procrastination problem is preventing you from achieving your goals. Implement your plan of action and as time goes by, make sure to monitor your progress and

refine this plan, by modifying or dropping anti-procrastination techniques based on how well they work for you, and by adding new ones if you think they could help (Nick, 2021)

Develop good study skills. Improve your study skills by focusing on the learning process not just your grades. Getting a good grade is the goal, but it is good study skills that will help you achieve it. Involve in active thinking and critical problem-solving skills by talking through any challenge you are facing with assignment and other academic tasks and working out a solution together. Furthermore, create a dedicated study space. Without a proper study space, one can become distracted by everything going on around him something that can quickly lead to a procrastination situation. To avoid this, create a dedicated quiet space where you can sit down and do your work each day. Make sure this space has all the materials you will need, including pencils, paper, and erasers. While reading, try (1) seeking out what is interesting and relevant to you in the course materials, (2) setting your own purpose for every reading and class session, and (3) asking yourself (and others) questions about what you are learning. (McGraw, 2021).

Eliminate Distractions. It's hard to get any real work done when you keep turning your attention to what's on television or you keep checking your friends' Facebook status up dates. Assign yourself a period of time during which you turn off all distractions such as music, television, and social networking sites and use that time to focus all of your attention on the task at hand. (Scully, 2019)

Disconnect from the internet. *A*ccording to Kristin (2021), 47% of people's time online is spent procrastinating. As a student, if you're trying to make progress on a complex task, the best thing you can do is simply disconnect from the internet. Set your phone to "Do Not Disturb" put your devices in Airplane mode; If you find that's too drastic, or if you still need to have some access to the internet in order to complete your tasks, start by signing out of your emails and using a social media blocking app like Freedom.

Hang out with People Who Inspire You to Take Action. Identify the people, friends or colleagues who trigger you most likely the go-getters and hard workers and hang out with them more often. Soon you will inculcate their drive and spirit too. Having a companion makes the whole process much more fun. Ideally, your friend should be someone who has his/her own set of goals. Both of you will hold each other accountable to your goals and plans. While it's not necessary for both of you to have the same goals, it'll be even better if that's the case, so you can learn from each other. Have a good friend that you can talk to regularly and always ask each other about your goals and progress in achieving those goals.

Adapting and use the Pomodoro technique. Pomodoro Technique is a time management method developed by Francesco Cirillo in the late 1980s. It uses a timer to break work into intervals, traditionally 25 minutes in length, separated by short breaks. It is process of setting block of time (usually 25 minutes) to work on your task and following it with an equally mandatory timed break (usually 5 minutes). Play with the proportions 25:5, 30:10, 45:15 until you find a ratio that works for you and your attention span. No matter what you're working on, keep your tasks moving and get more done (Kirstin, 2021). Advising students On pomodoro, Chloeburrough (2016) said, study for 25 minutes with no distractions and no breaks. No checking your phone or looking at a non-study related website. After, take a five-minute break to stretch, move around or get new snacks. This is 1 completed Pomodoro. Repeat 3 times before having a longer 15-30 minute break.

Conclusion

Academic procrastination is a phenomenon where people particularly students unnecessarily postpone academic task such as studying for a test or writing a paper. Many students achieve nothing on their academic endeavour due to procrastination. The phenomenon of academic procrastination affects nearly 95% of graduate and postgraduate students within academia with its associated problems seen in reduced academic performance, inability to complete course of study and experiencing studies stress. Procrastination can be due to attitude of Forgetting about it, Skill deficits and avoidance, low Self-esteem, Student's Upbringing and so on.

Academic Procrastination has been linked to a number of negative effects, such as depression, irrational behaviour, anxiety and neurological disorders, losing Precious Time, blowing Opportunities, not Meeting goals. Going by the realization of this facts, academic procrastinators need help in handling the bad effects of procrastination in order to effectively cope with present situation and move ahead with their life and develop proper school adjustment. To attain this arduous but necessary task, helping hand of a professionals like counsellors is required to effectively and efficiently overcome challenges associated with academic procrastination. Students should put into practice the aforementioned and explained strategies.

Suggestions

Based on the finding of this study the following suggestions were advanced:

1. Federal government or relevant education Authorities should provide enough Guidance Counsellors in the various tertiary institutions of learning who will assist in the counselling of the students on the dangers of academic procrastination.
2. Counsellors should use different counselling intervention strategies that are appropriate in handling procrastination related problems like depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, fear of failure etc. Since procrastination has emotional and social effects on students
3 Lectures should be counselled on the need to play their roles in eradicating academic procrastination among tertiary institutions students by using appropriate teaching method and effective time management skills.
4. Orientation programme should be intensified by counselling centers (where there is any) in various tertiary institutions to keep the students informed of the need to make judicious use of the time available to them.
5 Experimental studies can be carried out on effectiveness of some counselling therapies/Techniques on academic procrastination among university students most especially those of postgraduate level since it's very common among them.
6 Moral and value orientation counselling should also be provided by counsellors in different counselling centers in Nigerian tertiary institutions using many forums in the schools to discourage risking procrastination.

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