

The Effect of Self-Control on Academic Procrastination

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Abstract

Various academic tasks at vocational high school or Vocational High School and their deadlines urge the issue of academic procrastination. Of this issue, the present study aimed at discovering the effect of self-control on the academic procrastination of Vocational High School students. It used a quantitative approach and involved 379 students (227 male and 152 female students) with the age range of 14-17 years. Their data were collected using the scales of self-control and academic procrastination. Findings indicated a negative relationship between self-control and academic procrastination. It infers that students with high self-control seem to be able to manage themselves from disruptive behavior that is not in line with their goals.

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INTRODUCTION

Vocational High School students are expected to own more optimal skills in fulfilling their obligation and task demands. The demands are such as doing school work, understanding subject materials independently, reading books, and preparing for school examinations in which all these jobs need to be accomplished and done in time. When the loads are beyond their limits, some students may experience decrease in learning achievement and do procrastination, including delaying time to school tasks. In relation to education, this phenomenon is called as academic procrastination.

Procrastination is an intentional act of delaying even in bad circumstances (Steel & Klingsieck, 2018). Students who have this attitude will tend to delay doing their tasks right after they receive them (Utaminingsih & Setyabudi, 2018). Another form is an act of slowing the tempo of doing tasks which finally can end up having not enough time to finish. The habit of delaying and diverting school activities by students to other activities which can eliminate attention is referred to as academic procrastination (McCloskey, 2011).

Procrastination may arise due to anxiety of evaluation, inability to make decisions, inability to do self-control, fear of the consequences of success, rejections to tasks, and perfectionism (Solomon, & Rothblum, 2019). When facing difficulties in doing a task, surely students will need longer time and have a chance to fail in meeting the deadline. In addition, the finding of a preliminary study done by the researchers showed students were reluctant to finish their tasks due to the excessive workloads. It is supported by a study done by Widayari, et al (2020) that students who have exceeded the task deadline is labelled as doing academic procrastination.

The procrastination phenomenon is common to be found in twelfth graders of vocational high school or Vocational High School, coinciding with adolescence. Papalia and Feldman (2017) mention adolescence is a transitional period from childhood to adulthood

in which some changes, such as physical, cognitive and psychosocial take place. In details, it can last from the age of 11 up to 19 and 20 years. During this phase, students are often found to procrastinate tasks given by doing activities such as delaying doing the tasks, submitting the tasks late, and skipping classes.

Initially, the researchers interviewed 27 students who practice academic procrastination based on McCloskey's. Their practices were recognized from the report of subject teachers. Following the interview, the students admitted to procrastinate because every task has pretty long deadline, so they prefer doing other things; each task has different difficulty level, so whenever they found a difficult task, they tended to procrastinate it; the students lacked of content mastery and had less interest in further comprehending the material, so did the task completion.

Another reason for doing procrastination was the lack of support from the closest people (family and peers). Supposedly, parents must give support to their children since this effort can boost their spirit and motivate them in pursuing their goals as students. Boring task types caused this issue too. It was found that students mostly received similar task types in all subjects, so they felt bored and needed new looks of an assignment.

Regarding the previous explanation, students prefer doing fun things to completing assignments. This makes academic procrastination become a habit for them and make them do the tasks when they are in the mood, even some admitted not submitting the assignments. Solomon and Rothblum (2019) state that another bad impact of the procrastination is the low quality of works. As a result, students' learning achievement is not optimal and in line with what they desire. Steel states that academic procrastination is influenced by several aspects with one prominent aspect called self-control (Hen & Goroshit, 2020). In their study, Aini and Mahardayani (2018) explains that there is a very significant relationship between self-control and negative procrastination. This means that the

higher the self-control an individual has, the lower the procrastination behavior carried out, and vice versa.

Susantiner et al., define self-control as an individual's ability to regulate feelings, thoughts, and actions towards oneself against actions that are not in accordance with predetermined goals (Duckworth et al., 2019). Lindner et al. (2018) interpret self-control as an effort made by individuals in doing an uncomfortable activity. The role of self-control is to reduce the discrepancy so that the individual can adjust the current conditions to the conditions he wishes.

Students with good self-control will show some attitudes, such as being able to control behavior, having abilities to control stimulus, anticipate any events, interpret phenomena, and make their own decisions (Ghufron & Risnawita, 2012). They will also direct their behavior to be more positive (Susanti & Nurwidawati, 2018).

The high frequency of academic procrastination behavior that occurs both at secondary and tertiary education levels urged the researchers to conduct a study. Tresnawati and Naqiyah (2019), in their study state that there 49.5% of academic procrastination behavior is influenced by self-control and assertiveness. Then, a study by Husna & Suprihatin (2019) explains there is a 12.6% contribution of self-control in influencing academic procrastination in Islamic High School students of Sultan Agung 1 Semarang. In addition, if procrastination can be handled since secondary education, it will minimize the possibility of procrastination when in college.

With regard to the phenomena and previous studies, the present study aimed at deciding the relationship between SMK students' self-control and academic procrastination and ways to reduce it. It was expected to benefit school counselors in the way they provide the suitable counseling for students with low self-control and low achievement motivation as well as reducing the tendency of academic procrastination.

METHODS

This study was done to the twelfth graders at SMK with 751 total number of population. Those students were sampled using a proportional stratified random sampling technique or randomly selecting the respondents in a simple way. The sample consisted of 3 strata, namely SMKN 1 Bandar Lampung, SMKN 4 Bandar Lampung and SMKN 5 Bandar Lampung. Based on these calculations, there obtained 379 students (227 male students and 152 female students) with an average age of 16 years as the samples.

Two instruments were used in this study. The first was a self-control scale which consisted of 14 items. It was distributed and measured using four options (1= strongly disagree up to 5: strongly agree). Regarding the reliability, this scale got 0.94, while the total item validity ranged from 0.181 until 0.658.

The second instrument was a procrastination scale which consisted of 28 items. It was distributed and measured using four options (1= strongly disagree up to 5: strongly agree). Regarding the reliability, this scale got 0.92, while the total item validity ranged from 0.314 until 0.819

A correlational quantitative approach was employed. The collected data were processed and analyzed using two statistical tests, namely to obtain the validity and reliability coefficients and to answer the hypotheses.

This study was quantitative with a correlational method with the aim of finding the relationship between self-control and students' academic procrastination.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the data description of the 379 samples, it was known that the lowest score on self-control was 14 and academic procrastination was 28. For the maximum score, self-control obtained 70, while academic procrastination obtained 140. In terms of mean, self-control got 39.04 and academic procrastination got 85.83.

Table 1. Frequency Category

Category	KD	P	
F	%	F	%
T 57	15	62	16.3
S 244	64.4	242	63.9
R 78	20.6	75	19.8
M	39.04	85.83	
SD	5.021	12.421	

In table 1, the number of students whose self-control was low were 57 people (15%), medium were 244 people (64.4%), and high were 78 people (20.6%).

In terms of procrastination, the low category had 62 students (16.3%), medium category had 242 students (63.9%), and high category had 75 students (19.8%).

The results of Pearson's product moment correlation test indicated that there was a negative effect of self-control on academic procrastination on the twelfth graders ($r_{xy} = -0.70$, $p < 0.01$). The greater the self-control possessed by students, the lower the academic procrastination behavior would raise. Conversely, the lower the self-control a student had, the higher the academic procrastination behavior practiced by the student.

In details, the phenomenon found in this study was that the twelfth graders often could not deny their feeling of joyful desire during the completion of assignments so that they gradually delayed doing it and did other fun activities. It is supported by Steel (2018) that individuals with low self-control will likely do procrastination. In this study, academic procrastination contributed 48.7% effect on self-control, while the rest percentage was influenced by other psychological factors. The distracted attention by more enjoyable things makes students become complacent and procrastinate in completing their responsibilities as a student (Clara et al., 2018; Widyastari et al., 2020).

Vocational high school students are in the adolescence. Here, they will find some transitions and changes in their lives. These changes can cause them to feel pressured and affect the quality of their learning at school (Santrock, 2012). Students will be required to

play an active role independently in the learning process, starting from completing every school assignment, reading material related to learning, attending every learning process in class, attending meetings outside of academic activities, and studying independently to prepare for exams (Solomon & Rothblum, 2019). If all the tasks and demands that students have can be fulfilled, they will be able to get optimal learning outcomes. Santrock (2012) also explains that students who play an active role will have a positive impact on both academic and psychological results.

In meeting school demands, SMK students are expected to be independent in learning. However, the fact shows they dishonor and delay their tasks, not to mention they seem do not care about the deadlines, even looking slow and relaxed in doing it. They are not accustomed to do assignments right after the teachers gave and feel confidence that they can finish it in a short time. It is similar to that of McMloskey regarding factors influencing procrastination. Hence, many of the students have low attendance percentages.

According to the analysis, the twelfth graders were known to have a medium level of self-control. It was proven in table 1 that the highest percentage of self-control laid in the medium level. In other words, the students were still able to control themselves in encountering the academic activities at the schools. However, they still need better understanding of the importance of self-control within themselves. Zacks & Hen (2018) explain that students need to understand how to use adaptive self-control strategies to be successful in the learning process. The lack of learning related to self-control in students results in students not having adequate strategies to manage their learning process. When students can control themselves well, they will be able to use the time they have appropriately. Apart from that, they can also develop themselves into better behavior (Widyastari et al., 2020)

It was found that the most common excuse the students often used to avoid assignments was laziness. The large number of

assignments that they had to complete from various subjects made them confused and ultimately reluctant to start working on these assignments. According to Solomon and Rothblum (2019), there are two reasons for a student to do academic procrastination, namely fear of failure which includes anxiety to face evaluation, perfectionism towards tasks, and lack of self-confidence; and hatred of tasks which includes unwillingness to complete tasks and laziness to do tasks. However, it is possible that these two factors are supported by several other factors, one of which is self-control (Afzal & Jami, 2018; Hen & Goroshit, 2020).

Based on the numerous frequencies of self-control and academic procrastination of the twelfth graders, it was assumed that there was a relationship between self-control and academic procrastination, but inversely proportional. It meant that when students' self-control was low, academic procrastination behavior appeared high, and vice versa, when students' self-control was high, academic procrastination behavior appeared low. This was then followed by the categorization of students' scores following the analysis of the instruments, namely low, medium, and high.

The level of relationship between self-control and academic procrastination seems to be high, although basically it is at a medium level (Wijaya & Tori, 2018). In this study, the students with the medium level in both self-control and academic procrastination gained the highest frequency. Moreover, Wijaya and Tori (2018) and Steel and Klingsieck (2018), mention self-control has a better role in predicting academics compared to the academic environment. Thus, academic procrastination behavior can be reduced or even eliminated by the students themselves. How students use their methods and efforts to regulate their self-control is very much needed in this case. Not only self-control, procrastination behavior that appears in students must also be overcome.

CONCLUSION

Based on the hypothesis testing regarding the effect of self-control and academic procrastination, it can be concluded that there is an effect of self-control and procrastination in the grade twelve students at SMK, meaning that the hypothesis is accepted. Besides, due to the minus score of correlation coefficient, the relationship between self-control and academic students in the twelfth graders at Vocational High School is negative and has strong connection. Therefore, counselors are suggested to provide a self-control-related counseling service to encourage students in meeting the demands and assignments as well as reducing academic procrastination. Not to mention, a counseling service should be given to students who experience special obstacles in the learning process and the personal and time managements.

Further researchers are recommended to carry out studies using other guidance and counseling aspects which possibly can affect academic procrastination. The studies can also be done in different educational levels either lower or higher than vocational high school. Since academic procrastination does not rule out the possibility of being caused by several factors, the future researchers can also deepen the investigations into possible factors support the emergence of academic procrastination behavior in students.

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