



## THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ACADEMIC PROCRASTINATION AND PERSONALITY TRAITS IN NURSING STUDENTS

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### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** Academic Procrastination may be defined as the common practice and habit of university students to evade and postpone academic tasks. One of the important elements that affect the academic procrastination of nursing students is a personality trait. Therefore the aim of this study, determining the relationship between academic procrastination and personality traits of nursing students.

**Materials and Methods:** This cross sectional-analytical study conducted on undergraduate and postgraduate nursing students studying in Iran university Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran, during the academic year 2015-2016. The sample size is 341 nursing students. Two questionnaires were used for collecting the data: Procrastination Assessment Students Scale (PASS) and Neuroticism Extroversion Openness- Five Factor Inventory (NEO FFI) along with the demographic characteristics form. The SPSS software was used for descriptive and analytical analysis.

**Results:** The results show that academic procrastination had a significant positive relationship with personality traits (Negative Emotionality, extraversion, agreeableness, and Openness) of the samples under study (P value < 0.05). Extraversion, flexibility, and agreeableness had a significant positive relationship with doing assignments (P value < 0.05). Openness showed a significant positive relationship with studying for exams and persistence in reading assignments as well (P value < 0.05). Academic administrative task had a significant positive relationship with both extraversion and agreeableness variables (P value < 0.05). Attendance tasks had also a positive relationship with extraversion (P value < 0.05). School activities in general were positively correlated with Negative Emotionality and extraversion (P value < 0.05).

**Discussion and Conclusion:** The amount of academic procrastination among the entire participants was less than average. The amount of Negative Emotionality traits among the study participants was low, too. There was a statistically significant relationship between academic procrastination and personality traits. Training programs and educational spaces should be designed in such a way that they would prevent students' burnout in universities.

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### Introduction

For academics, including students, academic programs and performances is one of the life's affairs, often full of tasks and goals, and the students need to schedule their time to be able to do them, so that academic programs and performances depend on the abilities of the students to manage their time and do the assignments properly [1]. Time management means identifying the needs and desires, classifying them by priority and devoting time and resources needed to do those [2]. Once entering this major, nursing students face with many academic assignments and as they enter the university as nursing students, they will have many new tasks to do and will also face with new expectations that demands them to manage their

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time [3]. Time management among nursing students is a set of behavioral skills which is an important factor in displaying the students' viewpoint toward the time available, how to use it, and how to organize their time to perform academic tasks [4, 5]. As a result of poor time management by an individual, academic tasks and functions needed to be completed in the academic campus will be postponed [6]. Academic Procrastination may be defined as the common practice and habit of university students to evade and postpone academic tasks.

They postpone preparing and delivering assignments and presenting them, completing their projects, and even preparing for exams [7]. This term is used as a bad habit and behavioral problem that many adults experience in their daily activities, especially in tasks that should be performed routinely [6]. According to Savari (2011) study, academic procrastination in doing tasks pertaining to college life was a common phenomenon among 70% of college students [8]. Also Clark and Hill have shown that procrastination involves 40% to 95% of learning environments and another study has reported that 70% of people and 20% of ordinary people have a tendency to procrastinate [9].

Procrastination is a powerful predictor of students' delayed behaviors and has determining consequences, including poor grades, dropouts, and delay in carrying out master's theses among MA students; therefore, it seems that procrastination is a problem for many students and due to its prevalence and detrimental effects, it is essential to adopt some methods to decrease it [10].

Although the task types and the study levels in undergraduate and postgraduate nursing students are different, in both groups the possible procrastination factors might be dormitory life problems, being away from parents, and doing extra work to earn a living or help with the costs of everyday life that takes them a lot of time. In general, nursing students have a challenging period of time and encounter intensive theoretical and clinical tasks during study in college [11]. Personality and psychology experts have offered different definitions of the word personality. The term personality trait refers to a particular aspect of human personality. McCrae and Costa (1995) believed that the five-factor personality model had a comprehensive view toward human and involved almost all the traits noted among people and the scientific personality theories, including Negative Emotionality, extraversion, experimental openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness [12].

Despite the factors such as dormitory life problems, being away from parents, doing extra work to earn a living, etc. That affect the academic procrastination of nursing students, personality traits of this educated class can enjoy a particular importance in academic procrastination. Although procrastination and delay lead to positive results, such as reducing working time stress and preventing physical illnesses, they can lead to behavioral and personality outcomes, such as late assignment delivering, hasty learning, and test anxiety [13]. Regarding the mentioned issues and the results of relevant research in this area, the need to examine students' academic procrastination and their personality traits is felt more than ever; therefore, this study aimed at determining the relationship between academic procrastination and personality traits of nursing students. The results of studies can be important to enhance for Evidence-based practice is critical to undergraduate and graduate nursing education.

## Method

This research is a cross sectional analytical study of which the population included all undergraduate and postgraduate nursing students studying in Iran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran during the academic year 2015-2016. After obtaining permission from the ethics committee and the license for doing the study from Iran University of Medical Sciences, the researchers introduced for students to the units required for the study and entered them into the study if they had the inclusion criteria.

The samples included undergraduate students in semesters 2 to 6 and postgraduate students studying in semesters 1 to 4. To determine the required sample size with 95% confidence level and 80% test power, and assuming that correlation coefficient between academic procrastination score and each personality trait was at least  $r = 0.2$  (13), the sample size  $n = 194$  was determined using a formula, that for increase the power of study, the sample size increased to  $n = 341$ .

For data collection, two questionnaires were used including Procrastination Assessment Scale-Students (PASS) and Negative Emotionality -Extraversion-Openness Five-Factor Inventory (NEO FFI) along with the demographic characteristics form that contained age, sex, educational level, type of residence, marital status, number of students' semester, and probation. The PASS questionnaire consisted of two parts, the first one of which was used in this study. It measured the amount of academic procrastination in six academic performance dimensions (writing a term paper, studying for exams, keeping up weekly reading assignment, academic administrative tasks, Attendance tasks, and school activities in general). For each dimension, 3 questions were raised and there were a total of 18 questions. This part (the first part) was designed as five-option Likert scale (from 1 to 5, the worst to the best case). After scoring the questions, the total scores corresponding to each dimension were calculated. The higher scores in each dimension represented more academic procrastination in the corresponding dimension, and the lower scores represented less academic procrastination in the same dimension. The academic procrastination score in each dimension of the academic performance was calculated by adding up the first and second questions (scores ranging from 2 to 10), and the total academic procrastination in each six dimensions included the scores ranging from 12 to 60. The total academic procrastination score was calculated from the total scores in six dimensions, so that the higher the score was, the more the academic procrastination would be. The validity and reliability of this tool in the study by Solomon and

Rothblum was approved as 0.8 with Cronbach's alpha. This questionnaire was also validated by Rafie et al [11]. In Iran in 2014, and the validity of the questionnaire was 93.0 and its reliability was 0.73 using Cronbach's alpha [11].

The NEO FFI questionnaire involved 60 questions which were used to evaluate the 5 main personality factors, including Negative Emotionality, extraversion, experimental openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness, and each factor was measured by 12 questions. The questions of this questionnaire were based on the five-option Likert scale so that the option completely disagree had the score 4, disagree had the score 3, no comment had the score 2, agree had the score 1 and completely agree had the score 0.

Given that this tool involved 5 dimensions, it had 5 mean scores, each indicated the average score for each dimension, and it would be finally interpreted based on the domain it was ranged in. That is to say, we added up the score corresponding to each personality trait, and then interpreted it based on the obtained score and in which domain the scores 12-24, 24-48 or 48-60 were ranged.

The construct validity of the questionnaire had been approved in a previous study by Nilforooshan et al. (2011) [13], using factor analysis method.

### Statistical analysis

After collecting the data, the analysis was performed using SPSS software version 22. Number and percentage were used for qualitative data analysis, and mean and confidence interval were used for quantitative data analysis. Linear regression was also used to examine the relationship between the students' academic procrastination and their personality traits.

### Results

Table 1 show that the absolute and percentage frequency of the qualitative variables of the samples under study. According to this table, women comprised the most members of the study sample (52.7%). Also, the majority of the sample members (65.5%) were undergraduate students. Also the majority of the study samples (70.9%) were also single and 73.2% of the subjects did not have a job. 63.8% of the subjects were not living in the dormitory. Age was the only quantitative variable related to the demographic characteristics of the samples measured in this research. Based on the study results, the mean age of the participated subjects was  $24.12 \pm 3.75$ .

**Table 1:** frequency of qualitative variables

Variable %	Frequency%
sex	
male	166 (47%/3)
female	185 (52%/7)
Educational level	
undergraduate	230 (65%/5)
postgraduate	121 (34%/5)
Marital status	
single	249 (70%/9)
married	102 (29%/1)
Job	
yes	94 (26%/8)
no	257 (73%/2)
Dormitory living	
yes	127 (36%/2)
no	224 (63%/8)
Educational status	
conditional	40 (11%/4)
non-conditional	311 (88%/6)
semester	
2nd	126 (35%/9)
third	51 (14%/5)
fourth	91 (25%/9)
fifth	48 (13%/7)
sixth	35 (10%/0)

In the second part of the results, the mean and SD for the subjects' personality traits are shown in table 2. As this table shows, conscientiousness and Negative Emotionality dimensions had the highest (25.74) and the lowest (22.25) mean scores, respectively. The mean scores of other personality dimensions are presented in table 2.

**Table 2:** The mean scores of the dimensions of personality traits questionnaire

Questionnaire dimensions	Mean	SD
Negative Emotionality	22.25	4.93
Extraversion	25.65	4.92
Openness	23.51	4.82
Agreeableness	23.41	4.74
Conscientiousness	25.74	5.18

In table 3, the mean score and SD of the main variable in this study (academic procrastination and its dimensions) can be seen. According to this table, keeping up weekly reading assignment and writing a term paper had the highest (5.85) and the lowest (5.18) mean scores, respectively. In addition, the mean score of academic procrastination was 32.97. The mean score of other academic procrastination dimensions are summarized in table 3.

**Table 3:** the mean scores of academic procrastination questionnaire dimensions

Questionnaire dimensions	Mean	SD
writing a term paper	5.18	1.92
Studying for the exam	5.75	1.60
keeping up weekly reading assignment	5.85	1.75
Academic administrative tasks	5.21	1.70
Attendance tasks	5.40	1.81
school activities in general	5.56	1.70
Total mean	32.97	7.42

In this part, the estimation results of the regression model for the relationship between academic procrastination dimensions and personality traits are given. The details of the regression model results are shown in table 4. Based on the regression model results, except for having a job, other variables (education, Extraversion, Openness, Agreeableness) had a significant positive relationship with doing assignments (P value < 0.05). Marital status had a significant negative relationship with studying for exams ( $\beta=-0.10$  and P value <0.05) and other factors, such as age and Openness had a significant positive relationship with studying for exams (P value <0.05). In addition, Openness had a positive relationship with keeping up weekly reading assignment ( $\beta=0.17$  and P value <0.05). Executive tasks had a significant positive relationship with both extraversion and agreeableness variables ( $\beta=0.15$  and P value <0.05;  $\beta=0.13$  and P value <0.05). In addition, Attendance tasks had a positive relationship with extraversion ( $\beta=0.20$  and P value <0.05). School activities in general had a negative relationship with the number of semester ( $\beta=-0.17$  and P value <0.05) and a positive relationship with Negative Emotionality ( $\beta=0.11$  and P value <0.05) and extraversion ( $\beta=0.18$  and P value <0.05). Academic procrastination itself had a negative relationship with the number of semester ( $\beta=-0.11$  and P value <0.05) and a positive relationship with other personality dimensions (P value <0.05).

**Table 4:** the relationship between dimensions of academic procrastination questionnaire and dimensions of personality traits questionnaire and demographic variables

academic procrastination	Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	R square %	Sig	CI 95%	
		B	SE	B			L	U
writing a term paper	Education*	0.84	0.20	0.20	24.2	0.001	0.43	1.25
	Job**	-0.38	0.20	-0.08	24.4	0.06	-0.77	0.01
	Extraversion	0.04	0.03	0.11	24.6	0.04	0.001	0.08
	Openness	0.05	0.02	0.14	24.7	0.01	0.01	0.10
	Agreeableness	0.08	0.02	0.21	25.3	0.001	0.04	0.13
Studying for the exams	Age	0.04	0.02	0.11	5.7	0.04	0.02	0.09
	Marital status***	-0.37	0.18	-0.10	6.1	0.04	-0.74	-0.04
	Openness	0.07	0.01	0.22	5.9	0.001	0.03	0.10
keeping up weekly reading assignment	Openness	0.06	0.02	0.17	6.5	0.004	0.02	0.10
Academic administrative tasks	Extraversion	0.05	0.02	0.15	4.1	0.006	0.01	0.09
	Agreeableness	0.04	0.02	0.13	3.8	0.02	0.007	0.08
Attendance tasks	Extraversion	0.07	0.01	0.20	4.0	0.001	0.03	0.11

school activities in general	Semester****	-0.21	0.06	-0.17	11.3	0.001	-0.34	-0.09
	Negative Emotionality	0.04	0.01	0.11	8.4	0.03	0.004	0.07
	Extraversion	0.06	0.01	0.18	9.1	0.001	0.02	0.10
Total mean	Age	0.21	0.10	0.10	11.3	0.03	0.01	0.41
	Semester****	-0.63	0.27	-0.11	22.3	0.001	-1.16	-0.09
	Extraversion	0.21	0.08	0.14	11.3	0.001	0.04	0.39
	Openness	0.25	0.09	0.16	12.6	0.008	0.06	0.43
	Agreeableness	0.22	0.08	0.14	11.9	0.01	0.04	0.40

\*the reference group is undergraduate, \*\* yes/no,\*\*\* married/single, \*\*\*\*the reference group is 2nd

## Discussion

The results of the current study show that academic procrastination among all undergraduate and postgraduate nursing students studying at Iran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran during the academic year 2015-2016 was less than average. Furthermore, based on the study results, all dimensions of academic procrastination (writing a term paper, studying for exams, keeping up weekly reading assignment, academic administrative tasks, Attendance tasks, and school activities in general) were less than average. Similar to this study, Kyamarsy et al. (2013) showed that academic procrastination among the female students of Azad University of Ardabil was less than average [14]. A study by Ogonor and Moon (2006) also showed that students of humanities and natural sciences marginalized their academic tasks [15]. In other word results of this study confirmed by prior studies. For example Bunhumy et al. showed that non-academic activities were more important for students and they spent more time on those activities [16]. Based on the results of this study, all dimensions of academic procrastination were below average. In addition, in a study by Abomoghli et al. (2005) about 37% students told that they studied only in exam days. In line with the current research, in a study by Vanderberg (2008) students had academic procrastination as well [17, 18]. Steell (2007) showed in his study that 75% of the students identified themselves as procrastinators and recognized it as a problem for themselves [19]. In their study, Rafie et al.[11], citing from Srew and Quad, noted that according to statistics, 70% of the students continuously postponed their academic tasks, and about 25% of them chronically postponed doing assignments. This statistic was increasing by then [11]. One of the reasons for academic procrastination in nursing students could be that academic quality or position of nursing major was away from their expectations. Of course, feeling of stress and dissatisfaction in nursing students might be seen in their understanding of the importance of this major [3]. In addition, during learning periods, different factors such as motivation, self-esteem, and learning methods might affect their learning and success [20]. Individuals' motivational orientation had a significant impact on their activities and outcomes, so that people's motivation would determine the activity type and its outcomes [21]. In a study by Vahedi et al. (2012) on nursing students in Tabriz Nursing University, the researchers concluded that academic achievement in low-motivation students was less than others. Individuals' personality traits can also be a reason for their academic behavior diversity [22]. Personality patterns specify individual behavior, and would be manifested when faced with stressful events in life. Accordingly, for examining the hypothesis about the relationship between personality traits and academic procrastination in this study, students' personality traits were also studied. Based on the obtained results of this study, the amount of Negative Emotionality trait in the participants was low. Also, according to the results, students had low extraversion, openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. In addition, the findings of this study showed that there was a statistically significant relationship between academic procrastination and personality traits. There was also a significant direct relationship between academic procrastination and extroversion, openness, and agreeableness. It means that by increasing extroversion, openness and agreeableness features in students, academic procrastination might also be increased, and by decreasing the amount of these features, academic procrastination could be decreased as well. In addition, according to the study results, there was a significant direct relationship between doing assignments and extraversion, openness, and agreeableness. There was a significant direct relationship between reading for exams and persistence in reading assignments and openness. Of course, a significant direct relationship was found between Academic administrative tasks and extraversion and agreeableness. Finally, a significant direct relationship was observed between school activities in general and Negative Emotionality and extroversion. Various studies also examined the relationship between people's personality traits and academic activities. In a study, Wei (2006) showed that students of a University in China, procrastinators had higher personality disorders [23]. In addition, some studies showed that academic procrastination was a performance predictor and had a significant relationship with traits such as Negative Emotionality, psychosis, extraversion and self-esteem [19]. Gargari et al. (2015) showed in their study on the students of Shahid Madani University of Azerbaijan that discrepancies between the ideals and the reality, conscientiousness, openness to experience and incontinence obsessive feature in doing things, were the most important predictors of the students' procrastination [13]. Their research was almost the same as the present one in terms of measuring the relationship between academic procrastination and personality traits, since it measured various dimensions in terms of personality traits. The significance of academic procrastination and its influence on various factors including personality traits opens a significant window toward educational administrators and school counselors. As

mentioned, academic procrastination could influence individuals' academic performance and success. Therefore, identifying and controlling the factors affecting students' academic procrastination should be taken into account as a priority program in the university management. In this research, while human psychological dimensions were not the only effective factors affecting the development of their educational activities, only the relationship between individuals' personality traits and academic procrastination was taken into account.

## Conclusion

Based on the results, students had low extraversion, openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. The study findings also showed that there was a statistically significant relationship between academic procrastination and personality traits. Therefore, we can prevent academic procrastination in nursing students partly by holding training courses about how to manage personal characteristics and holding effective workshops for students in order to teach them how to plan curriculum. Besides, using various training methods for people with different characteristics and identifying the characteristics affecting the students' academic performance and strengthening them might somehow prevent academic procrastination among nursing students.

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