Procrastination, mental health & life- satisfaction: The vicious cycles of a fatal relationship

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Procrastination is conceptually representative of self-regulatory failure (Ferrari 2001) that disables individuals from guiding their goal-directed activities across changing circumstances and over time (Karoly, 1993).
Chronic Procrastination
Is associated with:

- a future orientation ( - )
- a past orientation (+)
- a present time orientation (not associated) (AIP; Specter & Ferrari (2000))
- fatalistic and/or hedonistic presents (+)
- future time orientations (-)

(ZTPI. Ferrari and Díaz- Morales 2007a; Díaz-Morales et al. 2008b; Digdon and Howell 2008; Sirois, 2014).
• a negative evaluation of the past,
• a fatalistic view of the present
• negatively related to future

Academic procrastination
Jackson et al. (2003) found that after controlling negative affect academic procrastination was highly related with:
The cost of procrastination

- negative emotions such as shame and guilt about oneself, depression,
- negative health behaviors, (e.g., delaying seeking care for health problems) (Steel 2007; Sirois et al. 2003; Sirois, 2007)
- poor academic performance
University Students And Procrastination: You Can’t Have One With Out The Other!!!

- 80-95% of the students procrastinate at some point of their lives
- 75% of them believe that they procrastinate towards meeting their study obligations
- 50% systematically procrastinates
- 20-40% of the student report having very serious difficulties
50% of the undergraduate students do not ever graduate.

length of studies is extended up to 25% in Greek universities.
Mental health among university students represents an important and growing public health concern

- In an American study it was estimated that the prevalence of any depressive or anxiety disorder was 15.6% for undergraduates and 13.0% for graduate students. Suicidal ideation in the past 4 weeks was reported by 2% of students. Students reporting financial struggles were at higher risk for mental health problems (Eisenberg, Gollust, Golberstein, & Hefner, 2007)

- In a British study it was found that financial and other difficulties increased anxiety and depression and affected academic performance (Andrews & Wilding, 2004)

- Greek university students in particular were found to be 1.5 to 2% times more likely to develop a psychological disorder comparing to the general population according to a large epidemiological study (Efthimiou, Efstathiou & Kalantzi-Azizi, 2007; Navridis, Dragona, Mialiarini & Damigos, 1990).
The aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between general and academic procrastination with mental health and life satisfaction among college students
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Procedure</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Measures</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N=182</td>
<td>Snowball sampling</td>
<td>Male (N = 65)</td>
<td>• Procrastination Assessment Scale-Students, (Solomon &amp; Rothblum, 1984)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td>Female (N = 117)</td>
<td>• General Procrastination Scale (Lay, 1986)</td>
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<tr>
<td>M=22.32</td>
<td>technique</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Life Satisfaction Scale (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, &amp;Griffin, 1985)</td>
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<tr>
<td>yrs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Mental Health Inventory (Veit &amp; Ware, 1983)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Beck’s Anxiety Inventory (Beck &amp; Steer, 1993).</td>
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</table>
A 38-item measure of psychological distress and well-being, developed for use in general populations.
Results
Correlations of general procrastination measures with Mental Health Inventory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Psychological distress</th>
<th>Mental Health Index</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(.26**)</td>
<td>(-.28**)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of behavioral/</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>emotional control</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(.29**)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(.19*)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Anxiety</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>(.23**)</td>
<td></td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Psychological well being</th>
<th>Emotional Ties</th>
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<tr>
<td>(-.27**)</td>
<td>(-.25**)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Positive affect</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(-.24**)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life satisfaction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(-.30**)</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Correlations of academic procrastination measures with Mental Health Inventory

Psychological distress (.36**)
Loss of behavioral/emotional control (.41**)
Depression (.31*)
Anxiety (.30**)

Psychological well being (-.31**)
Emotional Ties (-.28**)
General Positive affect (-.28**)
Life satisfaction (-.31**)

Mental Health Index (-.37**)
Correlations between procrastination, Life satisfaction scale and Beck’s Anxiety Inventory

**General procrastination**

- Life Satisfaction Scale: $(-.35^{**})$

**Academic procrastination**

- Life Satisfaction Scale: $(-.36^{**})$

**Anxiety - BAI**

- (.22^{**})

**Anxiety-BAI**

- (.30^{**})
An investigation of procrastination, psychological distress and life satisfaction

Effects of procrastination on life satisfaction were partially mediated by psychological distress.

- CMIN/DF = 2.41 (< 3), CFI = 0.97 (> 0.95), TLI = 0.95 (= 0.95), SRMR = 0.04 (< 0.08), RMSEA = 0.09 (> 0.08)
difficulty to meet deadlines within a specific time-frame is related to worse mental health and overall life satisfaction

Early diagnosis & effective treatment of Procrastination or underlying psychological disorders such as Anxiety or Depression is thus crucial to diminish the suffering and to increase Overall Life Satisfaction of students
Discussion

• Findings are in line with previous research suggesting a negative correlation between procrastination and university students’ mental health (Steel, 2007, Sirois, 2003, Ferrari, Harriott and Zimmerman, 1999).

• In another study it was found that much of procrastination’s effect on life satisfaction was mediated though anxiety and regret (Caldwell & Mowrer, 1998). The role of depression, however, or the loss of emotional and behavioral control was not taken into account.
Procrastinators experience less stress and have better physical health when deadlines are far off (Tice & Baumeister, 1997).

✓ Procrastination is strategy to regulate negative emotions, thereby making the individual feel better, at least temporarily (Baumeister, Heatherton, & Tice, 1994).

Affectively, when a deadline approaches, procrastinators feel pressured and become pessimistic in their outlook, especially about their ability to achieve satisfactory results (Ferrari, Parker, & Ware, 1992).

✓ Their thoughts of self-doubt and inadequacy increase the chance of failure and induce feelings of guilt and depression (Steel, Brothen, & Wambach, 2001).

In the long run, university students high on procrastination not only received low grades but also reported a high level of stress along with poor self-rated health (Tice & Baumeister, 1997).
• Strengths of the study

✓ The use of the Mental Health Inventory that enables a more detailed examination of the relationship between procrastination and mental health in various domains, in contrast to more global measures previously used

✓ First study conducted in Greece- extends previous findings adding ecological validity to the procrastination & mental health literature
Limitations & Suggestions for future research

✓ University students sample
✓ Small sample size
✓ Exclusive use of self-reports
✓ Future research could benefit from the inclusion of clinical samples where associations are expected to be even stronger
✓ Investigate the impact of treatment of procrastination and of underlying anxiety/ depression on life satisfaction
✓ Include time perspective
• interventions should focus more on the development and changes of procrastination over time and across contexts.

• center on the means of goal pursuit rather than the outcome, especially at the beginning of the task, when reward is distant and fear of failure is high.

• when deadline is near or task aversion is high, it may be more beneficial to concentrate on the outcome.

Krause & Freund, 2014
Thank you

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