

## THE IMPACT OF PROCRASTINATION ON STUDENTS ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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**ABSTRACT:** *This paper examines the impact of procrastination on students' academic performance of secondary school in Nigeria. Similarly, it shows the causes of procrastination among the students. Yet, the types of procrastination are examined and also the effects of procrastinations and implication of procrastination on students' academic performance are properly discussed and why students procrastinate is thoroughly explained.*

**KEYWORDS:** Procrastination, Students, Academic, Performance

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### INTRODUCTION

Procrastination is an act everyone takes a part in everyday, regardless of their situation in life. Everyone from young junior high students to adults who have been out of school for a while participate in procrastination. Some people would say that it is a form of deviance because by definition deviance is "any violation of norms" and avoiding what should be done is a violation of norms. In today's world of technology and the Internet, however, people procrastinate all the time. It seems that procrastination is now more of a social norm than a deviance.

By definition a social norm is a "rule or standard of behavior shared by members of a social group." The norm in the case of education is to do work and learn in school. Although procrastination is a deviance of the norm of education, there are more students who procrastinate than students who get everything done as soon as it is assigned. The standard has been changed; it is now standard behavior to procrastinate since the majority of the social group participates.

Obviously, the problem of procrastination affects many students in secondary schools in Nigeria. However, many students do not know that their inability to read is problem of postponing their time to studies, but they are engaged more on pleasurable things in which they can not benefits from it. Moreover, the students who studies their books perform better than those who are not serious. (Thomas 2014)

Laeus (2015) explains that the procrastination is avoidance of doing a task that needs to be accomplished. He further states that procrastinate is the process of doing more pleasurable things in place of less pleasurable ones, or carrying out less urgent tasks instead of more urgent ones, thus putting off impending tasks to a later time.

However, the procrastination serves as a major problem which contributes to poor reading and inability of the students to read and understanding in post-primary education in Nigeria today. Moreover, it affects the reading culture among the students only few students are reading and perform well, even this contributes the eagerness of the students who involve in examinations malpractices both internal and external examinations. For instance, in 2014 and 2015 (WAEC)

cancelled the results of more than four zones in Nigeria (South-West, South-South, South-East and North) of senior secondary school certificate examination, while in other zones many students could not pass English language and Mathematics. (Adekunle 2004)

Dilmac, (2009). states that the Procrastination appears to be a troubling phenomenon, people most strongly characterized it as being bad, harmful, and foolish. Justifying this viewpoint, several studies have linked it to individual performance, with the procrastinator performing more poorly overall, and to individual well-being, with the procrastinator being more miserable in the long term. At larger levels of analysis, Procrastination has been linked to several organizational and societal issues.

George (2005) considers procrastination as a dispositional trait which has cognitive, behavioral and emotional components, further more it affects activities of students who could not read but only postponing time of reading .

Allien and Milgram (2017) proposes that procrastination is primarily: (1) a behavior sequence of postponement; (2) resulting in a substandard behavioral product; (3) involving a task that is perceived by the procrastinator as being important to perform; and (4) resulting in a state of emotional upset.

Langton (2016) defines procrastination as avoidance of the implementation of an intention, frustrates an individual's stated purposes by simply putting it off until it's too late or nearly too late. The high threshold for certainty needed before acting on a choice leads to taking longer to complete the task and to seeking more information about alternatives .

Kims (2015) distinguishes between the optimistic procrastinator and the pessimistic procrastinator. Optimistic procrastinators put off their intentions but do not worry about it. They are confident that they will succeed in the end, regardless of their engagement in the intended action now or later. Moreover, they overestimate their progress and their chances to succeed and underestimate the time needed to achieve their goal. In contrast, pessimistic procrastinators do worry about their dilatory behaviour. They are aware of the fact that they get behind schedule. Nevertheless, they still procrastinate because they do not know how to deal with the task. They feel incompetent and are afraid that their involvement in the task will prove their incompetence. Therefore, they procrastinate to avoid unpleasant experiences

Dewitte and Lens, (2000). state that a major difference between the two types might be their degree of adaptive. Although procrastination in general seems to be related to several psychopathological symptoms, this link might be due primarily to pessimistic procrastinators and much less to optimistic procrastinators, who seem to manage their problems reasonably well.

ZimChu and Choi (2005) distinguish between two sorts of procrastination behaviors. They stated that Passive procrastinators are paralyzed by their indecision and as a result fail to complete tasks on time. This is certainly an unfavorable behavior. However, active procrastinators prefer to work under pressure and make deliberate decisions to procrastinate tasks, nevertheless, they usually complete their tasks on time .

Two types that are particularly common are behavioural- and decisional procrastination.

### **Behavioural 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. “Ferrari also thinks that procrastinators suffer from low esteem and self-doubt and worry about how other people judge their abilities. Prolonged procrastination and failure to perform adequately creates a cycle of self-defeating behavior, which results in a downward spiral of self-esteem. Self-inflicted degradation and shame of this kind often translates into stress and (mental) health problems at some point.

### **Decisional Procrastination**

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. These procrastinators seek out more and more information about alternatives before attempting to make a decision, if they make one at all. (Dimkisma 2003)

## **REASONS WHY STUDENTS PROCRASTINATE**

**Forgetting about it:** For whatever reason missing class, being distracted when the teacher announced the homework, not writing it down, or forgetting to look at the class website sometimes students leave their work until the last minute because they genuinely have no idea that there’s any work to be done. (That is, until a friend mentions it the day beforehand or until they walk into class the next morning.) Technically speaking, this wouldn’t be classified as “procrastination” because the student is not resisting their work they simply don’t realize they have any work! But this is definitely a common cause of leaving things until the last minute.

**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.

**Girl staying up late working on overdue assignment Overly-lenient deadlines:** When teachers 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 deadlines, 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 behavior 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 & impulses). Either way, this results in them spending time that had been budgeted for their work in other ways.

Overwhelm. When an assignment seems very complex or time-consuming, even thinking about it can seem scary and stressful. So, students often fall into the trap of putting it off. Unfortunately, this ultimately backfires when they eventually do start the project because now the inherent difficulty of the project is compounded by the fact that they have insufficient time to complete it. So, they end up with far more stress than they would have had if they had started earlier.

**Perfectionism /Fear of failure:** Students preoccupied with making their projects "perfect", nervous about making mistakes or "messing them up", or afraid of criticism, are often so concerned about doing assignments incorrectly that they will put them off to avoid the anxiety they feel when they are trying to work on the project. This can lead to the seemingly irrational behavior of avoiding the project even more as the deadline approaches (because they become less and less likely to be able to do a good job on it) until, at last, they are so close to the deadline that producing an ideal assignment is no longer possible, and their only options are to do an imperfect job or turn in nothing at all. Difficulty regulating emotions. Recent studies have suggested that procrastination is less of a problem with time management than we had once believed, and more of a difficulty with emotional regulation. Students who feel bored, tired, frustrated or nervous when they work on assignments will often pursue a strategy of trying to make themselves feel better in the short-term by downplaying the assignment ("it's no big deal; it won't affect my grade much anyway") and distracting themselves with fun, rewarding activities in order to improve their mood.

**Too many commitments:** If a student has so many scheduled activities and so little free time that their life feels like an endless string of obligations and chores, with little or no time off, they may use procrastination as a method to artificially create "free time" for themselves. Unfortunately, this type of "free time" is usually not very satisfying because it's also accompanied with a sense of guilt for avoiding the things they "should" be working on.

**Resistance:** Students will sometimes procrastinate as a form of rebellion when they view work as something that is being "forced" on them by an unreasonable teacher or authoritarian parents. Procrastination becomes their way of resisting this authority. When students think of assignments as something they "have to" do, schoolwork becomes a chore rather than a choice and they are more tempted to procrastinate on it. Procrastination can then become their way of resisting the message that they are "supposed to" complete their work by showing teachers and parents "you can't make me do it".

Girl asleep staying up late to work on homework .The solutions to use with students are different for each of these scenarios which is why it is so important to identify the root cause for a student's procrastination before giving them tips or advice about how to fix it. For example, reminders about the consequences of an impending deadline may help a teen who hasn't been taking deadlines seriously but, for a student with a fear of failure or difficulty regulating emotions, it could actually make things worse by increasing their anxiety about the assignment and their desire to do something else in order to avoid these negative emotions.

### **Implication of Procrastination on Academic Performance of Secondary School Students.**

The procrastination serves as major cumbersome of many students in secondary schools in Nigeria , 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 read their books , even procrastination affect the reading culture among the students in Nigeria.

Therefore, many students prefer to postpone the tasks and do pleasure things which they can not benefit from it .For example, many students fail public examination (WAEC, GCE, NECO) e.t.c yearly because they like to postpone the time to read their books, but they lure to spend all their time on social media .This prevail among the secondary schools students both Urban , Rural and River area in Nigeria.

In all secondary schools in Nigeria there is problem of inability of the students to perform well because many time they are engaged much in social media instead to read their books. it makes the students to perform woefully on their studies , it also contribute to the inability of reading culture.

### **CONCLUSION**

Obviously, many students achieve nothing on their studies because of procrastination. However, many students spend much time do after unnecessarily things instead they suppose to read their books to acquire knowledge , but they lure to concentrate on irrelevance things and this contributes to their poor academic performance on their studies . Therefore, this lead to drop out of many students yearly in secondary schools while others perform woefully in Nigeria because of their inability to cope with their studies .

Inconclusively, students need to avoid procrastination so that they will have much time on their studies and even this will reduce poor academic performance which prevails in secondary education in Nigeria.

### **Suggestions**

1. Students need to avoid the procrastination and face their studies
2. Teachers and parents need to encourage the students on reading culture
3. Teachers who serve as model need to tell the students the implication of procrastination, so that they too will understand the negative impact of procrastination .

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