

Stress, Procrastination, and Government Employees: A Gender based Analysis

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Abstract

This study on stress, procrastination, and government employees, with a focus on gender differences, holds significant importance. It can inform employee well-being initiatives, enabling policymakers to develop targeted interventions that promote productivity and job satisfaction. By identifying gender-based differences, organizations can tailor support systems to enhance performance, reduce absenteeism, and increase retention. The study's findings can also contribute to gender-sensitive policies addressing unique needs and challenges of male and female employees. Furthermore, it advances research on occupational stress, providing insights into government employees' experiences and identifying areas for future research. Ultimately, understanding factors influencing employee performance can improve public service delivery, critical for community well-being and development. This study contributes meaningfully to understanding the complex relationships between stress, procrastination, and gender in the workplace, with implications for policy, practice, and research.

Keywords: Stress, Procrastination, Government Employees, Work Place, Employee Performance, Gender Differences, Burn Out, Job Performance

Introduction

Procrastination is the practice of carrying out less urgent tasks in preference to more urgent ones, or doing more pleasurable things in place of less pleasurable ones, and thus putting off impending tasks to a later time. In order for a behavior to be classified as procrastination: it must be counterproductive, needless, and delaying. Similarly, it is "to voluntarily delay an intended course of action despite expecting to be worse off for the delay. (Schraw, Gregory & Wadkins, 2007)

Effects of Procrastinating

People experience that the effects of wasting time and not meeting deadlines is devastating at both the business and personal levels. Procrastination may result in stress, a sense of guilt and crisis, severe loss of personal productivity, as well as business and social disapproval for not meeting responsibilities or commitments. These feelings can combine and may create further procrastination. For some the anxiety and stress caused by procrastinating does end up being a motivating force to initiate action for various tasks however this is usually followed by attempts to justify the delay which further reinforces the same type of behavior from the individual. While it is regarded as normal for people to procrastinate to some degree, for those wanting to stop

procrastinating need to raise themselves above any attempts to justify or minimize procrastination being acceptable in any form. (Steel & Piers 2007).

In counseling psychology exhibiting chronic procrastination is considered as a sign of an underlying psychological disorder. Yet others regard procrastination as a useful way of identifying what is important to us personally as it is rare to procrastinate when one truly values the task at hand. The procrastinator however, must learn to raise the value of certain priorities even if they do not truly enjoy doing them in order to continue to be productive in all aspects of their lives. The public perception of those who procrastinate is the belief that task-aversion is accompanied by laziness, low willpower, irresponsibility and low ambition. While this is not the attitude of those who research or treat procrastination in a psychological or clinical area it is how the general public (your friends, boss, clients) see you. (Akinsola, M.K., et al, 2007)

Causes of Procrastinating

In Clinical Psychology (counseling), there appears to be a connection with issues of anxiety, low sense of self-worth, and a self-defeating mentality. However the overwhelming majorities of studies on Procrastination among populations are not in need of psychological services shows No or at best an extremely weak connection with procrastination. Instead, procrastination is strongly connected with lack of self-confidence (e.g., low self-efficacy, or learned helplessness) or disliking the task (e.g., boredom and apathy). The strongest connection to procrastination, however, is impulsiveness (Brewer & Landers, 2003).

These characteristics are often used as measures of the personality trait 'conscientiousness', whereas anxiety and irrational beliefs (such as perfectionism) are aspects of the personality trait neuroticism. Being a perfectionist has no direct links to procrastination and that any relationship is fully compensated by conscientiousness (Lee & Dong-gwi 2006). Rather the consensus is that the predominant reason we procrastinate is a breakdown in our self-control. You know what you ought to do and you're not able to bring yourself to do it. It's that gap between intention and action. (Chu & Choi, 2005)

Reasons for procrastination

Psychological causes of procrastination vary greatly, but generally surround issues of anxiety depression, low sense of self worth, and a self defeating mentality. Procrastinators are also thought to have a lower –than-normal level of conscientiousness, more based on the dreams and wishes of perfection or achievement in contrast to a realistic appreciation of their obligations and potential (Van Wyk, L., 2004).

Physiological roots of procrastination mostly surround the role of the prefrontal cortex. This area of the brain is responsible for executive brain functions. such as planning, impulse control, attention and acts as a filter by decreasing distracting stimuli from other brain regions. Damage or low activation in this area can reduce an individual's ability to filter out distracting stimuli, ultimately resulting in poorer organization, a loss off attention and increased procrastination. This is similar to the prefrontal lobes role in attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), where under activation is common (Van Wyk, L., 2004).

Stress

Stress is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that affects individuals physically, emotionally, and psychologically. It is a natural response to a perceived threat or demand that disrupts an individual's homeostasis, triggering a cascade of physiological and behavioral reactions. When faced with a stressor, the body's "fight or flight" response is activated, releasing stress hormones such as cortisol and adrenaline into the bloodstream. These hormones prepare the body to either confront the threat or flee from it, causing physical symptoms like rapid heartbeat, increased blood pressure, and tensed muscles. However, when stress becomes chronic or overwhelming, it can have debilitating effects on an individual's mental and physical health, leading to anxiety, depression, burnout, and a weakened immune system. Stress can arise from various sources, including work-related pressures, financial difficulties, relationship problems, and major life

changes, making it a ubiquitous and inevitable part of modern life. Understanding stress and its impact is crucial for developing effective coping strategies and maintaining overall well-being (Selye, H. 1956).

Types of Stress

According to Taylor Lindsay & Shelley (2009) states that, there are four major types of stress and she explains them as follows:

Chronic Stress

This type of stress is as unrelenting demands and pressures for seemingly interminable periods of time. Chronic stress is the type that wears the individual down day after day and year after year with no visible escape. It grinds away at both emotional and health of the individual leading to breakdown and even death (Cohen, S., et al.2012).

Acute Stress

This type of stress is the most common and most recognizable form of stress. It is the kind of stress which the individual knows exactly why he is stressed; he was just in a car accident; the school nurse just called him, a bear just ambled onto his campsite. It can also be something scary but thrilling, such as a parachute jump. Normally, the body rest when these stressful events cease and life gets back to normal because the effects are short-term. Acute stress usually does not caused severe or permanent damage to the body (Cohen, S., et al.2012).

Traumatic Stress

It is a severe stress reaction that results from a catastrophic event or intense experience such as a natural disaster, sexual assault, life-threatening accident, or participation in a combat. Here, after the initial shock and emotional fallout, many trauma victims gradually begin to recover. But for some people, the psychological and physical symptoms triggered by the trauma do not go away, the body does not return to equilibrium, and life does not return to normal. This condition is known as post trauma stress disorder. Common symptoms of this type of stress are flashbacks or nightmares about the trauma, avoidance of places and things associated with the trauma, hyper vigilance for signs of danger and irritability and tension (Cohen, S., et al.2012).

Episodic Acute Stress

The individual experiencing this type of stress lives are very chaotic, out of control and they always seem to be facing multiple stressful situation. They are always in a rush, always late, always taking on too many projects, handling too many demands. Those who are prone to this type of stress include "Type A" personality types. If an individual is prone to episodic acute stress, he may not know it or admit it. He may be wedded to a life style that promotes stress. Unfortunately, people with episodic acute stress may find it so habitual that they resist changing their lifestyles until they experience severe physical symptoms (Cohen, S., et al.2012).

Objectives of the study

The present study has the following major objectives.

1. To check the relationship between procrastination and stress among government employees.
2. To check the impact of stress on procrastination.
3. To compare the level of stress and procrastination on the base of gender.

Hypothesis

Following hypothesis were formulated for the present study.

- H1 There will be significant relationship between procrastination and stress among government employees.
- H2 Stress will have significant impact on procrastination of government employees and private employees.
- H3 Female will have greater level of stress and procrastination then male employees.

Measures and Methods

A sample of 130 individuals was selected. Sample size divided into two groups. First group consisted of (N=47) Male employees and the second group consisted of (N=83) Females employees. The data was collected from Mian channu and Multan city. Two scales procrastination Scale and workplace stress scale were selected for the research purpose. Along with the instruments a demographic sheet is attached in order to get information about the demographic variables. The required information was age, gender, Education, no of siblings, birth order, family system, organization name, sector, experience and monthly income.

Procrastination Scale

The procrastination scale was developed by Tuck man (1991).The original scale consists of 35 items designed to assess procrastination. For the present investigation, the computed cronbachs Alpha reliability for the resulting 16 items scale was 0.86.The scale is a 4 point likert scale. Results from various studies yield a high internal consistency of procrastination scale. The Alpha reliability was found to be 0.60.

Workplace stress scale

The scale is developed by Robert C. Rosenfeld by 1988, the scale consists of 8 items and it is a 5 point likert scale. Studies have shown good internal consistency, with cronbach's alpha values exceeding 0.80 which indicates good internal consistency among scale items. Alpha reliability of the work place stress scale is 0.88.

Results

Table 1Mean, SD, & Correlations Matrix of stress and procrastination (N=130)

		M	SD	Stress	Procrastination
1	Stress	20.9231	3.57557	1	
2	Procrastination	39.8231	5.35914	.164	1

$p \leq .01$, $p = 0.05$

Table 1 reveals the correlation coefficients between stress and procrastination result indicate that there is no significant relationship between stress and procrastination.

Table 2 Standard, Regression Model showing impact of Stress on procrastination (N=130)

Predictors	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	P
(Constant)	34.669	2.773		12.500	.000
Stress	.246	.131	.164	1.885	.062

$R^2 = .027$, Adjusted $R^2 = .019$, (F (1,128) = 18.07, $p < 0.001$) $p < 0.05$,

Table 2 reveals that there is no impact of stress on procrastination.

Table 3 Differences between males and females for their Scores on stress &procrastination

Scales	Males (N=47)		Females (N=83)		T	P
	M	SD	M	SD		
Stress	19.9574	3.33595	21.4699	3.61007	-2.358	.664
Procrastination	39.6170	5.57383	39.9398	5.26458	-.329	.312

df. = 128, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.001$

Table 3 shows the comparison between the male and female employees. Findings suggest that females have greater level of stress and procrastination then male employees.

Discussion

The present study aims at investigating the relationship of stress and procrastination on the life of government employees. Since the issue of stress on the workplace is inevitable, so the organization can control stress is effective in reducing employee stress. Employees who have a high stress job, from the behavioral, physical and psychological difficulties and these will interfere with the individual and organizational performance. On the other hand, it is evident in many of the organizations due to the lack of a regular and responsive, "time" is the main victim and staffs do not pay attention to the issue of delay in performing those tasks. Procrastination is associated with outcomes such as increased job stress. So it is better to start something that is delayed because of the delay that is set aside, the custom handling the work pleasant and enjoyable and will probably start working on the actual causes of stress to do all the work to reduce it.

The first hypothesis shows that there is significant relationship between stress and procrastination among government employees. Our first hypothesis should that truly rejected

The first hypothesis, which posits a significant relationship between stress and procrastination among government employees, is actually rejected based on the findings. This rejection indicates that the data does not support the notion that stress is significantly related to procrastination in this population. The rejection of this hypothesis highlights the complexity of the relationship between stress and procrastination, warranting further investigation into the underlying factors that influence procrastination behavior in this group.

Contrary to the H2 that stress would have a significant impact on procrastination among government and private employees, the findings suggest otherwise. The results indicate that stress does not have a significant effect on procrastination in either group. The lack of a significant relationship between stress and procrastination challenges the common assumption that stress is a primary driver of procrastination. Instead, it highlights the complexity of procrastination and the need to explore other influencing factors. This finding has implications for strategies aimed at reducing procrastination, suggesting that interventions should focus on a broader range of factors beyond just stress management.

The study's findings support the H3 that female employees experience greater levels of stress and procrastination compared to male employees, suggesting that gender plays a significant role in shaping these experiences. This disparity may be attributed to various factors, including societal expectations that place additional pressures on women, challenges in achieving work-life balance due to family responsibilities, and biases and stereotypes that affect their productivity and stress levels. To address these differences, organizations should develop targeted support systems and policies that cater to the unique challenges faced by female employees. By acknowledging and addressing these needs, organizations can foster a more inclusive and supportive work environment, ultimately promoting the well-being and productivity of all employees.

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