



Procrastination in a group of adult students in an online environment

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Abstract

Procrastination is the action of putting off a task that has to be accomplished. This postponement can compromise several areas of the person's life. Academic procrastination is a way of putting off performing academic tasks. It is considered a failure in the students' self-regulation process. The objective of our work was to know, on the one hand, the attitude of a group of online students towards time management - academic procrastination. On the other hand, the relationship between the procrastination quotient and the hours they dedicate to study. To this end, we used a sample of 482 subjects, 78.8% female and 21.2% male. Their average age is 40 years, ranging between 19 and 63 years. As a data collection instrument, we used a questionnaire consisting of 10 questions with an alpha of 0.793. Our results point to a lack of a significant relationship between the procrastination quotient and sex. However, we found a negative and significant correlation between the type of procrastinator and weekly study time, with a shorter study time corresponding to a higher level of procrastination.

These results suggest that researchers and practitioners should consider the individual characteristics of students involved in designing and optimizing online learning environments.

Keywords: *Online learning; adult students, procrastination, curricula design*

1. Introduction

In the digital age there are many and varied sources of information that individuals face in their daily life. This reality has implications in education systems and how individuals learn providing a more dynamic learning system, in which its former linearity came to be replaced by a certain way of being and networking learning. This reality brought new scenarios and new ways of looking at the process of learning that are now considered.

Cyberculture and the use of technology has enabled new ways to connect with others and with information, with consequences in the methods of formal education. Access to information in different places, led to new challenges and allowed creating knowledge networks. But it is not only in access to knowledge that changes can be found. This way of sharing and living in society also has implications in the way of being and working. Collaborative learning starts having another sense. The "School" won another dimension.

The decrease of space-temporal constraints, that the virtual environment brings to the teaching - learning process, make them a more democratic and attractive system for those who depend on training to acquire both the initial level, as well as a continuous education. These are precisely the elements that make these environments successful and where technological, economic, methodological and pedagogical investments are increasing and with greater success.

Technological advances have been giving a new face to distance learning systems. ICTs open new perspectives to facilitate learning. They work as tools that complement and are a real and basic support to the training system. Through the features of virtual learning environments, *virtuality* - eliminating barriers of time and space -, *globality* and the *ubiquity* - the *campus* is always with us.

This new format implies methodological, pedagogical, psychological and even emotional changes with consequent modifications in roles and functions of the actors involved in it [1].

Thus, the teacher changes from a carrier of information to a facilitator of the learning processes; from the only source of information to an adviser, mediator, mentor, facilitator, motivator and entertainer of the learning process. Seeks to create a positive environment that gives time to answer, anticipates and resolves questions and problems. He plans and structures contents and activities, using different



formats and strategies [2]. He is, therefore, a manager and organizer of information and team work. Because of the specificity of this didactic relationship, learners and teachers, now take roles appropriate to these new demands and to the complexity inherent in virtual environments roles. This leads to the teacher incorporating new skills, without losing his former ones.

This typology of teaching and learning promotes flexibility allowing students to achieve their educational goals. Purchases go beyond formal content. They can also be situated on a personal level, such as the development of their autonomy, critical thinking and collaborative work. If we think about this flexibility in terms of time and space, we find that it promotes better management of your training, considering your personal and professional constraints. Also, in these scenarios we saw changed the role of the professor. He is now a learning facilitator / mediator. With this it is expected that he will provide the appropriate educational indications so that the student develops his autonomy and builds his learning.

In this learning system, issues related to study strategies in general, and those related to time management are very important. [3] defines academic procrastination as "intentionally delaying or deferring work that must be completed" (p. 12). In other words, procrastination is, in this sense, the opposite of motivation and is associated with the executive functions of planned action and self-control. this being negative [4]. The study by [5] also points to the implications of procrastination in intrinsic motivation and self-regulation efforts. The same evidence was found in the work of [6] who aimed to know the relationship between procrastination and self-regulation. The results indicated that procrastination is negatively related to 6 sub-constructs of self-regulated online learning: task strategy, mood adjustment, self-evaluation, environmental structure, time management, and help-seeking.

2. Methods

2.1. Research objectives

The objective of our work was to know,

- a) the attitude of a group of online students towards time management - academic procrastination, and
- b) the relationship between the procrastination quotient and the hours they dedicate to study.

2.2. Instrument

We used a two-part questionnaire to collect the data. The goal of the first part was to collect the demographic data from our sample; with the second part we tried to collect data about the behaviour regarding the timing questions. The second part was based on the Procrastination Quotient questionnaire (<https://www.houghton.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/procrastination-quotient.pdf>). We translated the questionnaire to Portuguese and we got a .793 alpha Cronbach when analysing the reliability. The questionnaire consists on ten statements with a scale of four values (*Strongly Agree/ Mildly Agree/ Mildly Disagree/ Strongly Disagree*).

2.3. Procedures

The students from module X had at their disposal a questionnaire for them to complete whenever they had questions about the timing associated with studying strategies. The goal was to get the students to reflect about their behaviour and be more aware about these questions. There was no time limit to answer the questionnaire. The questionnaire was done through google docs and after completed submitted anonymously.



3. Results

3.1. Our sample

482 students participated in our study whom are studying online. Of these, 78,8% are female and 21,2% are male. Their average age is 40 years (SD = 8,4), with a minimum of 19 and a maximum of 63 years. 64.1% attend distance learning between 0 and 1 year. Where 64% are, for the first time, in online learning.

In Tabel 1 we have the data collected from the question *Number of hours, in average, of study per week*.

Table 1| Number of hours of study per week

	%
< 4 hours	12,4
between 4 and 6 hours	25,5
between 7 and 9 hours	17,6
between 10 and 13 hours	23,9
> 13 hours	20,5
Total	100,0

As we can see the values vary a lot, but the majority says to study between four to six hours per week.

3.2. We will proceed to the presentation of the data from parts 2. We will proceed to present the following data

3.2.1. Type of procrastinator

After analysing the answers we calculated the procrastination quotient taking into consideration:

Procrastination Quotient: Below 20 -- Occasional Procrastinator

Procrastination Quotient: 21-30 -- Chronic Procrastinator

Procrastination Quotient: Above 30 -- Severe Procrastinator

In Table 2, we can see the results of our sample after applying the previous scale.

Table 2 | Type of procrastinator

	%
Occasional procrastinator	28,8
Chronic procrastinator	61,0
Severe procrastinator	10,2
Total	100,0

As you can see, on Table 2, around 61% from our sample has a Chronic procrastinator level. The t-students statistic test shows there is no statically relevant correlation between the female and male gender. This result is also seen in other studies about this subject [7]. In table 3, we can see the behaviour between the number of hours of studying versus the level of procrastination.



Table 3| Correlation test results

The number of hours per week X procrastination level	Spearman	-,298**
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** The correlation is significant on 0,01 level (2 extremities)

The correlation between the level of procrastination and the number of hours of studying is negative. Meaning, a bigger level of procrastination is associated with a lower number of hours of study.

4. Conclusion

Our goals were to understand the students behaviour regarding their time management and the correlation between this and the number of hours they study. From our data we could see a potential problem regarding time management and the delay of starting a task. Academic procrastination is problematic, but if we look at it from an online learning system perspective the problem increases. The online learning system puts the student at the centre of the process, which comes with extra responsibility, once is asked of the student to manage their time, when the temporal boundary is less constricted. For this to happen it is necessary for the student to have a high level of self-control. That is why, students that have more difficulties to self-regulate can show more difficulties in online learning environments, where it is required a bigger level of self-learning [5]. A procrastinator tends to choose the short-term benefits. Usually students with a procrastinator profile get more demotivated, which can take them to drop. Regarding our first goal, we detected that exist an elevated number of possible dropping situations. The results from our second goal help us to draw a profile of these type of students. These students not also show a moderate level of procrastination, but also spare less hours of studying. As we seen previously, procrastination is a lack of self-regulation and lack of motivation to do a task. Academic procrastination is a problem that can have different levels and come up from different reasons [8]. It is necessary for the students to have a learning environment where they can stay motivated, where they can be more self-governing, and consequently more self-regulated. The effort to be self-regulated implies to focus on the future and work on that direction avoiding distractions.

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