Academic Procrastination Guilt, a phenomenon among students

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Definition of construct

Academic Procrastination Guilt Definition:

- The discomfort and self-directed criticism a university student experiences when they put off their academic work until the last-minute.

Reasoning: This construct highlights the guilt in its specific context in accordance to procrastination as well as academics. It also describes the internal feelings and bodily response a student goes through when they realize delaying it is not academically responsible, nor meeting their own personal goals. It is important to note that this measure is not for procrastination as a behavior, instead the emotional response in relation to the behavior.

Distinguishing Academic Procrastination Guilt from related constructs

It is crucial to distinguish Academic Procrastination Guilt from other similar constructs to ensure construct clarity as well as discriminant validity.

- Trait Procrastination: Measures the tendency to delay tasks (Blunt & Pychyl, 2000). Academic Procrastination Guilt measures the emotional reaction.
- Academic Anxiety: The worry or fear in regards to academic performance. Academic Procrastination Guilt focuses on guilt not the fear of evaluation.
- Depression: Persistent low mood and self-worth across domains. Academic Procrastination is specific to the context of school work rather than outside factors.

This measure now has singled out guilt as an emotional process which is felt in a context specific environment or situation.

Theoretical Background

Guilt is considered a self-conscious emotion which arises when one believes they have violated their own standards or expectations of themselves (Ferguson et al., 1999). Unlike shame or depression, guilt is focused on the behavior that causes it, its repercussions, and it motivates corrective action. For example, if a student delays their work long enough the guilt is often motivated by procrastination, along with the fear of failing, which forces them to complete their academic tasks before they are due.

Academic procrastination is not only the simple act of delaying. Instead, it is a self-regulatory failure where individuals postpone academic tasks despite the possible negative outcomes. (Steel, 2007). According to Blunt & Pychyl (2000), emotional avoidance and task aversiveness are also underlying themes in terms of procrastination. Finally, research has proven that procrastination is linked to negative emotions, further proving the importance of this measure of guilt (Tice & Baumeister,1997).

Existing research demonstrates that there are measures for procrastination and guilt, it is tough to come by measures that are context-specific to academics and the guilt that is associated with it. University or college students usually have certain goals in mind in terms of their future, which is often why delaying academic work does cause some levels of self evaluations in a negative way. All this considered, Academic Procrastination Guilt is defined as the emotional response which is triggered by the delay of academic work.

Subscales

1. Emotional Guilt Response
    a. The emotional discomfort one experiences when delaying an academic task.
2. Negative Self-Evaluation

a. The self-criticism that one internalizes when procrastinating on academic tasks.

Interpretation of Scores

Scores on the Academic Procrastination Guilt scale represent the amount of guilt one feels in response to academic procrastination.

- High score: A high score on this measure points to an individual who experiences strong levels of emotional discomfort, and negative self-evaluations, all linked to the delay in academic work.
- Low score: A low score would indicate that the individual feels insignificant amounts of guilt in regards to academic procrastination.

It is also important to note that the guilt felt in the high scores does not necessarily lead to negative outcomes. Guilt can also promote corrective action, causing students to work hard to complete tasks. However an excessive amount of guilt may not be beneficial for the physical and mental state of a student.

Initial Item pool:

The initial item pool consisted of 10 items to try and capture both subscales. Items were created to try and directly reflect emotional discomfort, as well as negative self-evaluations.

1. I feel guilty when I delay my assignments
2. I feel anxious when my work is outstanding
3. I judge myself badly when I don't do my work
4. I regret putting off my academics

5. When I procrastinate I feel uncomfortable
6. I criticise myself after delaying academic assignments
7. Delaying schoolwork makes me feel like I am not living up to my potential
8. I question my own responsibilities as a student when I procrastinate
9. I am aware that I should be doing school work instead of procrastinating
10. I have a lingering fear of failure when I procrastinate

Refinement

Items were thoroughly evaluated and refined to ensure they aligned with the construct and the subscales,

- Items mentioning anxiety were removed
- Repetition among items was avoided
- Confusing worded items were removed
- Preference was given to shorter, more concise items

After this, only 8 items remained

Final items

1. I feel guilty when I delay academic work.
2. I regret putting off my academics.
3. When I procrastinate I feel uncomfortable.
4. I criticise myself for procrastinating on my assignments.
5. Delaying schoolwork makes me feel like I'm not living up to my potential.
6. I am aware I should be doing schoolwork instead of procrastinating.
7. Procrastinating on my work makes me feel like I am letting myself down
8. I feel that I have failed to meet my own standards when I procrastinate

Response Format

Students will respond using a 5-point Likert scale:

1 - Strongly Disagree

2 - Disagree

3 - Neutral

4 - Agree

5 - Strongly Agree

Face and Content Validity

- Face validity is supported because all the items are directly referring to either both or at least one of academic procrastination or guilt.

- Content validity is supported because the items uphold the subscales, by representing emotional discomfort or negative self-evaluations.

Data Collection Process

Once the preparation of this measure is completed and formatted in a participant-friendly manner, it would be ready for sampling. Participants would mainly be undergraduate university students, recruited mainly online, in as many universities as possible. An anonymous online survey would be sent out, to ensure we get as many participants as we can. Along with the Academic Procrastination Guilt Scale, participants would be measured on a relevant and similar scale of academic procrastination to assess the measure for convergent validity. In this, the Academic Procrastination Guilt should positively correlate with the relevant construct. Discriminant validity would be assessed by a measure of

extraversion. Criterion validity would be evaluated by collecting self-report measures in regards to late assignments or last-minute ones. After that, data would be collected and analyzed before being published as a measure.

References

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