

## Students' Perceptions of the Causes, Impacts, and Coping Strategies for Academic Procrastination at the Faculty of Medicine, Universitas Muhammadiyah Sumatera Utara

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**Abstract:** Academic procrastination among university students is relatively high and has psychological impacts such as anxiety, depression, and stress. This study aims to determine the perceptions of students at the Faculty of Medicine, Universitas Muhammadiyah Sumatera Utara (FK UMSU) regarding the causes, impacts, and strategies for managing academic procrastination. This study employed a mixed-methods approach with consecutive sampling involving 76 students. The quantitative findings showed that the majority of students, 59, had a moderate level of academic procrastination, while 11 had low and 6 had high levels. There were two categories of external factors (peers and time) and six categories of internal factors (behavioural, cognitive, physical, academic, interpersonal, and affective). Strategies for managing procrastination were classified into individual and group categories. Most FK UMSU students demonstrated a moderate level of academic procrastination. The contributing factors included peers and time management. Internal factors influencing procrastination were mood, motivation, task perception, academic ability, time management, and recreation. The impacts experienced by students covered behavioural, cognitive, physical, academic, interpersonal, and affective domains. Prevention strategies were categorised into individual and group approaches.

**Keywords:** Academic procrastination, causal factors, impacts, strategies, medical students.

### INTRODUCTION

Procrastination is a widespread phenomenon in the academic field, where students often delay completing tasks such as studying for exams, doing homework, or handling academic administration.<sup>1</sup> An individual may plan to start working on a task at a specific time but fails to follow the

predetermined schedule, resulting in delays or failure to complete the task properly, as they prefer engaging in more enjoyable activities rather than completing the tasks that should be done.<sup>2</sup>

Previous studies found that among 275 students of the Faculty of Sports Science at Universitas Negeri Surabaya,

21% exhibited high levels of procrastination, 62% moderate levels, and 12% low levels.<sup>3</sup> Another study showed that 78.5% of students at Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga engaged in academic procrastination,<sup>4</sup> while another study found that 74% of students at the Faculty of Psychology, Universitas 17 Agustus Surabaya, also exhibited academic procrastination.<sup>5 6</sup>

Academic procrastination occurs due to various factors that can be categorised into two groups: internal and external factors.<sup>7</sup> Internal factors originate within the individual, such as how a person perceives tasks or courses, emotional (affective) conditions, mindset (cognitive aspects), personal skills, personality, motivation, physical condition, and the tendency to prefer engaging in enjoyable or other activities considered more appealing.<sup>8</sup> Meanwhile, external factors come from outside the individual, such as the influence of lecturers, the academic environment, and educational institutions, which can shape a person into engaging in procrastination.<sup>9</sup>

The impacts of academic procrastination are diverse, including emotional, cognitive, behavioural, physical, academic performance, and interpersonal aspects. There may also be positive impacts, although these are rare.<sup>10</sup> To address academic procrastination, there are two main approaches: individual strategies (self-directed) and group strategies (involving others or the environment). One effective strategy to reduce the high prevalence of procrastination is time management.<sup>11 12</sup>

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Utara, there has been no prior research data on academic procrastination.<sup>13,14,15</sup> Therefore, this study is necessary to establish baseline data on the prevalence of procrastination among FK UMSU students and to identify the causes, impacts, and strategies used by these students to manage academic procrastination.

## METHOD

This study employed a mixed-methods design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative approach was used to determine the number of students at the Faculty of Medicine, Universitas Muhammadiyah Sumatera Utara (FK UMSU) who experience academic procrastination, while the qualitative approach was used to explore in greater depth the causes, impacts, and coping strategies.

In the quantitative phase, the sampling technique used was consecutive sampling, with a total of 76 respondents from four cohorts (2020–2023). Data were collected using the Academic Procrastination Scale (APS) questionnaire, which consists of 23 items. In the qualitative phase, samples were selected using purposive sampling, with inclusion criteria of active FK UMSU students who experience high levels of academic procrastination and are willing to participate as respondents.

## RESULT

### *Quantitative Research Results*

**Table 1. Overview of Academic Procrastination among FK UMSU Students**

| Category | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|----------|-----------|----------------|
|----------|-----------|----------------|

|              |           |            |
|--------------|-----------|------------|
| High         | 6         | 7,9        |
| Moderate     | 59        | 77,6       |
| Low          | 11        | 14,5       |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>76</b> | <b>100</b> |

Based on the tabulated data, it was found that the majority of students, totalling 59 individuals (77.6%), had a moderate level of academic procrastination. Meanwhile, 11 students (14.5%) had a low level of academic procrastination, and 6 students (7.9%) had a high level of academic procrastination.

**Table 2. Overview of Academic Procrastination by Cohort**

| Academic Procrastination | Cohort    |             |           |             |           |             |          |             |
|--------------------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|-------------|----------|-------------|
|                          | 2020      |             | 2021      |             | 2022      |             | 2023     |             |
|                          | n         | %           | n         | %           | n         | %           | N        | %           |
| Low                      | 0         | 0.0         | 3         | 3.9         | 3         | 3.9         | 5        | 6.6         |
| Moderate                 | 16        | 21.1        | 16        | 21.1        | 17        | 21.3        | 4        | 4.4         |
| High                     | 3         | 3.9         | 0         | 0.0         | 3         | 3.9         | 0        | 0.0         |
| <b>Total</b>             | <b>19</b> | <b>25.0</b> | <b>19</b> | <b>25.0</b> | <b>19</b> | <b>25.0</b> | <b>9</b> | <b>25.0</b> |

Based on Table 2, it can be seen that 5 students (6.6%) with a low level of academic procrastination were from the 2023 cohort. The majority of students, totalling 16 individuals (21.1%) with a moderate level of academic procrastination, were from the 2020 and 2021 cohorts. Meanwhile, all students with a high level of academic procrastination, totalling 3 individuals (3.9%), were from the 2020 and 2022 cohorts.

### *Qualitative Research Results*

**Table 3. External Factors Causing Academic Procrastination**

| Category | Sub Category                            |
|----------|---|
| Student  | Inviting to Relax<br>Relying on Friends |
| Time     | Assignment Submission Time              |

Based on Table 3, the interview results indicate that there are two categories of external factors influencing students to engage in procrastination, namely peers and time. Peer-related factors include invitations to relax and reliance on friends. Meanwhile, time-related factors include the assignment submission deadline.

**Table 4. Internal Factors Causing Academic Procrastination**

| Category                | Sub Category   |
|-------------------------|--|
| Mood                    | Mood changes   |
| Motivation              | Laziness   |
| perception of tasks     | Perceiving tasks as insignificant<br>Underestimating tasks           |
| Academic Ability        | Lack of mastery of the material                                      |
| Time Management         | Poor time management   |
| Recreational activities | Playing online games<br>Using social media<br>Spending time outdoors |

Based on Table 4, the interview results indicate six categories of internal factors influencing students to engage in procrastination: mood, motivation, perception of tasks, academic ability, time management, and recreational activities. Mood-related factors include fluctuations

in emotional state. Motivation-related factors include laziness. In terms of task perception, students tend to view assignments as trivial and underestimate their importance. Regarding academic ability, students report not fully understanding the material. Time management issues include an inability to effectively organise time. Recreational factors include playing online games, using social media, and spending time on outdoor activities.

**Table 5. Impact of Academic Procrastination**

| Category      | Sub Category                                |
|---------------|---|
| Behavioral    | Late submission of assignments              |
|               | Rushing and perceiving time as more limited |
|               | Reluctance to complete other tasks          |
|               | Lack of specific goals                      |
| Cognitive     | Constantly thinking about unfinished tasks. |
|               | Reluctance to think                         |
| Physical      | Self-perception of failure                  |
|               | Easily fatigued                             |
|               | Difficulty sleeping                         |
|               | Headaches                                   |
| Academic      | Lack of motivation to move                  |
|               | Declining grades                            |
|               | Accumulation of assignments                 |
| Interpersonal | Suboptimal work performance                 |
|               | Being reprimanded by lecturers              |
|               | Receiving negative evaluations from others  |
| Affective     | Restlessness                                |
|               | Regret                                      |
|               | Anxiety                                     |
|               | Stress                                      |
|               | Difficulty sleeping                         |

Based on Table 5, the interview results indicate six categories of impacts

experienced by students after engaging in procrastination: behavioural, cognitive, physical, academic, interpersonal, and affective.

Behavioural impacts include late submission of assignments, rushing tasks, perceiving time as more limited, reluctance to complete other tasks, and lack of clear goals. Cognitive impacts include persistent thoughts about unfinished tasks, reluctance to think, and self-perception of failure. Physical impacts include easy fatigue, difficulty sleeping, headaches, and reduced motivation to move. Academic impacts include declining grades, accumulation of assignments, and suboptimal work performance. Interpersonal impacts include being reprimanded by lecturers and receiving negative evaluations from others. Affective impacts include feelings of restlessness, regret, anxiety, stress, and difficulty sleeping.

**Table 6. Strategies for Managing Academic Procrastination**

| Category   | Sub Category                                 |
|------------|--|
| Individual | Noting assignment deadlines                  |
|            | Consistently considering tasks as important. |
|            | Starting tasks from the easiest first        |
|            | Self-motivation                              |
| Group      | Regulating mood beforehand                   |
|            | Seeking diligent peers                       |
|            | Working collaboratively in groups            |

Based on Table 6, the interview results indicate two categories of strategies used by students to prevent procrastination: individual and group strategies.

Individual strategies include noting assignment deadlines, starting with easier

tasks, consistently perceiving assignments as important, self-motivation, recording deadlines, and regulating mood beforehand. Meanwhile, group strategies include seeking diligent peers and completing tasks collaboratively.

## DISCUSSION

Based on the results of this study using APS questionnaire scores, the majority of students were found to have a moderate level of academic procrastination.<sup>16-19</sup> This is consistent with previous research, which reported that 37 students (18.3%) were in the high category, 134 students (66.3%) in the moderate category, and 31 students (15.3%) in the low category.<sup>21-23</sup> The majority of students at the Faculty of Medicine, Universitas Tarumanagara Jakarta, experienced academic procrastination at a moderate level, meaning they still engage in delays, although not consistently.<sup>24</sup> Common activities reported by respondents include postponing task completion until the following day, being distracted by various other activities, and spending time on less important tasks.<sup>25</sup>

In this study, the external factors identified were peers and time. This is in line with other studies showing that conformity with peers plays an important role in academic procrastination, demonstrating a positive and significant impact of social adjustment. These findings indicate that students who are more cohesive, compliant, and aligned with their peer groups tend to exhibit higher levels of academic procrastination.<sup>26 27</sup>

Meanwhile, the internal factors identified in this study include mood,

motivation, perception of tasks, academic ability, time management, and recreation. Students tend to start tasks depending on their mood, which is consistent with other research showing that students are more likely to procrastinate when they are in a poor mood.<sup>28</sup> Conversely, when students are in a good mood, they tend to feel more motivated to complete academic tasks.<sup>29</sup>

A high level of learning motivation supports the achievement of academic goals. This is consistent with other studies indicating that motivation has a negative relationship with academic procrastination: the higher the learning motivation, the lower the likelihood of delaying academic tasks.<sup>30</sup> The level of task difficulty can also influence academic procrastination. This aligns with previous findings that motivation plays a crucial role: higher motivation reduces the tendency to procrastinate, whereas lower motivation increases the likelihood of academic procrastination.<sup>31</sup>

Poor time management can lead to tasks not being completed on time, which in turn contributes to academic procrastination. This is consistent with other studies that found time management has a significant negative effect on academic procrastination, with  $\beta = -0.571$ ,  $t = -7.588$ , and  $p = 0.000$ . These findings support the hypothesis that there is a relationship between time management and the level of academic procrastination among students.<sup>26</sup>

Students engage in academic procrastination due to frequent use of internet services such as social media and online games. This is in line with other studies stating that uncontrolled internet use

can have negative effects, including reduced focus on learning. These effects may lead students to engage in academic procrastination.<sup>32</sup> Students also tend to prefer more enjoyable activities, such as spending time outdoors, which contributes to procrastination. This is consistent with other research indicating that one common way students avoid academic responsibilities is by deliberately prioritising more attractive and enjoyable activities.<sup>33</sup>

This study also found several impacts experienced by students after engaging in academic procrastination, including behavioural, cognitive, and physical effects. Behavioural impacts include late submission of assignments, rushing tasks, perceiving time as limited, reluctance to complete other tasks, and lack of clear goals. Cognitive impacts include persistent thoughts about unfinished tasks, reluctance to think, and self-perception of failure. Physical impacts include easy fatigue, difficulty sleeping, headaches, and decreased motivation to engage in activities.<sup>34</sup>

To prevent academic procrastination, this study identified several strategies. First, at the individual level, these include noting assignment deadlines, consistently perceiving tasks as important, self-motivation, recording deadlines, completing tasks starting from the easiest, and regulating mood. Meanwhile, at the group level, strategies include seeking diligent peers and working collaboratively in groups.<sup>35</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of this study regarding students' perceptions of the causes, impacts, and strategies for managing academic procrastination at the Faculty of Medicine, Universitas Muhammadiyah Sumatera Utara, the following conclusions were obtained:

The majority of students, totalling 59 individuals (77.6%), demonstrated a moderate level of academic procrastination. Meanwhile, 11 students (14.5%) showed a low level of academic procrastination, and 6 students (7.9%) showed a high level of academic procrastination.

External factors influencing students to engage in procrastination include peers and time. Internal factors include mood, motivation, perception of tasks, academic ability, time management, and recreational activities. The impacts experienced by students after engaging in procrastination can be categorised into behavioural, cognitive, physical, academic, interpersonal, and affective aspects. Additionally, prevention strategies can be categorised into individual and group approaches.

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