

## THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PROCRASTINATION, OCCUPATIONAL STRESS AND EMPLOYEE'S PERSONALITY GENERAL DIRECTORATE OF YOUTH AND SPORTS OF KHORASAN RAZAVI

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### ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** Procrastination almost always has a negative effect on the productivity and health of the individual and organization. Several studies have proved the negative consequences of procrastination on mental health resulting in stress, anxiety, depression. However, the reasons of procrastination have remained unknown and sometimes there exists contradictory results. **Objectives:** the objective of this study was to examine the relationship between procrastination, occupational stress and employee's personality in General directorate of youth and sports of Khorasan Razavi province. **Methodology:** the population of this study included all the employees of General directorate of youth and sports of Khorasan Razavi province which were 302 people. Using Morgan table, the sample size included 170 people that were selected randomly. Data collection tools consisted of three questionnaires. In this study, descriptive and inferential statistics was used through SPSS software. **Results:** findings of the study showed a significant relationship between occupational stress, employee's personalities and procrastination in General directorate of youth and sports of Khorasan Razavi's staff. **Discussion:** considering the significant relationship between procrastination, occupational stress and personalities of employees, it is recommended to managers to gradually change old habits through adjusting priorities and self-discipline, so that procrastination decreases and occupational stress-as the consequence of procrastination- is avoided. Also by focusing on employees and using their abilities, organization would be improved more and more.

**Keyword:** Procrastination, Occupational Stress, Employee's Personalities, Staff

### INTRODUCTION

Studies suggest that procrastination has negative effects on individual's physical health, eating habits and exercises. Although anyone procrastinate in a certain way, one of the best definitions of procrastination is to put off tasks to a later time without an important reason (Kaveh and Fayyazi, 2009).

Procrastination is so common and plays an important role in efficiency and physical- mental health of people. Unfortunately it has been ignored in institutions and organizations especially Iranian organizations. Some features of procrastinating employees are; fatigue, frustration, leaving work, absenteeism, failure and physical - mental problems. Thus, the organization won't develop, will create loss and inefficiency (Khosravi, 2010).

Due to the vast varieties and constant changes of the 21 century, effective individual and organizational management has faced a lot of challenges. Therefore, speed plays an important role in organizational and individual effectiveness and efficiency. Sometimes clicking on an option one second earlier than other organizations changes the destiny of the individual and the organization and neglect and procrastination cause many losses. So it seems that the proper use of time and carrying out tasks before a deadline is an individual and organizational act, but it is more often ignored and forgotten causing undesirable effects (Ellis and Knaus, 2002). According to the studies, procrastination affects organizations negatively. One of the effects of procrastination is stress (Ekandia *et al.*, 2010). Steffi and Jones (1990) argue that work-related stress may lead to job dissatisfaction. Mental effects of stress are anxiety, depression, fatigue, and

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procrastination (Pathak, 2011). Obviously procrastination in organizations has different effects on the effectiveness of individuals and organizations (Harris & Sutton, 1983). Occupational stress is one of the important characteristics of work place and physical or emotional exhaustion which is caused by real or mental problems (Hall, 2006).

Earlier researches on procrastination focused on individual variables between students. Some of these studies have emphasized on the relationship between procrastination and some characteristics like conscientiousness, locus of control, discipline and behaviors such as anxiety and depression (Ferrari, 2008). Others have investigated the relationship between procrastination and performance (2005; Larson, 2004). The relationship between self-efficacy and procrastination (Kravachak & Rajani, 2008), mental health (Shannan and Nofeld, 2010), and confidence (Beck *et al.*, 2000) has also been explored and the negative relationships have been proved. The prevalence of procrastination among students is 46% (Solomon & Rothblum, 1984) to 95% (Dubrin, 2004).

The reasons for procrastination are unknown. Sometimes even controversial findings have been announced. Experts have considered many reasons for it, including the fear of success, fear of failure, Self-defeating behaviors (when people consciously or unconsciously do things that will cause them to fail or bring them trouble), to avoid things the individual is reluctant to do, lack of motivations (reward), creating stress for doing things in the last minute (some people get better results when they are under pressure), job difficulty, lack of knowledge and skills needed for the job (Dabryn, 2004), lethargy and inactivity, improper physical conditions (Dubrin, 2004). Also, some factors such as perfectionism, low levels of tolerance toward problems, and inferiorities are some reasons of procrastination (Ellis and Kunnes, 2004). Most of the studies have examined procrastination from one dimension. For instance, researchers have considered procrastination as a personality characteristic and investigated individual factors. There are plenty of such researches in the literature. Some researchers have described procrastination as a result of contextual and environmental factors which varies according to circumstances. One of these factors is to have deadlines. Steele believes those activities which are less attractive, are postponed more (Steele, 2007). In a study which was conducted on college students, procrastination affected not only low grade students but also those who suffered from stress (Tis and Bumster, 1997). Gaffin examined 70 teachers and found out those having more occupational stress, procrastinates more (Wyk, 2004). Steele and *et al.*, believed that neurosis may be a reason for procrastination, because anxiety may be a sign to avoid to do something (Petzel *et al.*, 1987).

Several studies indicate that the interaction between certain types of workplaces and personality characteristics (Samari & La'li faz, 2004). For instance, Landsbergis and Bruckner suggest that work places and an individual's job affect radically on irritation and self-esteem (Bruckner, 1998; Landsbergis, 2003). On the other hand the high level of stress can be associated with personality characteristics (Ghanbari *et al.*, 2014).

Researchers have considered Five Factor Model of Personality as an important personality character (Digman, 1990) and they believe that the best conceptualization of personality is reflected in the five factor model (Husseini & Latifian, 2009).

The five factor model is a useful model for personality character. These five factors are; Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, and Openness to Experience.

In a hierarchical view in the structure of personality (Eysenck, 1947), these five factors show the highest level of organizing levels (Penon, 1993). Procrastination, like other behaviors of personality, relates to the next level. Certain delay behaviors, such as avoiding to write an article, show a lower level of organization. Although the theoretical classification and five factors of personality can be challenged (Eysenck, 1992), this structure provides us with a common framework that can demonstrate different systems of personality in use today (John, 1990).

Apart from cultural and scientific attempts, procrastination is common in the society and affects 15 to 20 % of adults. In spite of the wide range of self-study books, there is a little understanding of reasons and effects of procrastination. The nature of procrastination is known with contradictory findings (Steele and *et al.*, 2000). The contextual factors in procrastination are less explored (Fritrish *et al.*, 2003). Despite the

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increasing number of studies, it is needed to examine procrastination more. In fact, procrastination is one of the unresolved factors in human being's life (Steele, 2007).

Naus and Eliss (1977) estimate that 95 % of college students deal with procrastination, yet Solomon & Rothblum (1984) believe that at least half of students are consistently involved in procrastination.

In a study entitling "the evaluation of procrastination in the workplace" Galoe (1990) found the following conclusions: procrastination may potentially affect negatively on employees and efficiency of the organization.

But there isn't enough studies determining the reasons for procrastination. Hariot and Ferrari (1996) believe that procrastination is so common among adults and many students and 15 to 25 % of people suffer from procrastination.

Henry *et al.*, (1995) in a study entitling "The "Big Five" factor taxonomy" concluded that: findings recorded from two samples were significantly consistent. Behavioral procrastination was in line with unconscientiousness. Actually some behavioral characteristics such as "unconscientiousness", "Laziness", and "incongruity" were related to procrastination (study 1).

In the second study, they found out that procrastination is related to six aspects of conscience; competition, order, conscientiousness, achievement effort, self-discipline, consultant. Also procrastination demonstrated some relationships with neuroticism, in the form of uncertainty (study 1), and impulsive behavior (it is a form of neurosis) in study 2. In addition, procrastination related partially with lack of extraversion.

Shahani *et al.*, (2006) conducted a research on "investigating prevalence of procrastination and the effects of cognitive- behavioral treatment methods" and attempted to examine procrastination from two perspectives of prevalence and treatment. According to their results the prevalence of procrastination among students is high (17% boys and 14% girls).

According to Joukar and Delavarpour (2007), procrastination is a side effect of self-regulation and is associated with four sided patterns of objectives. Performance avoidance goals and mastery avoidance are positive predictors and mastery approach goals are negative predictors for educational procrastination. Besides the results of this study show that the pattern between mastery goals and procrastination isn't the same between girls and boys.

Simpson and Pickil (2008) investigated the relationship between procrastination and personality characteristics based on stimulation and procrastination motives. The results showed that there isn't any relationship between general procrastination measures and emotional measures. The analysis of 5.2 variance, and regression showed that emotional evaluation, extraversion, and reduction index of stimulation confirm the subjects related to procrastination. These challenging results demonstrate that procrastination is a measure of stimulated procrastination. But some people believe that procrastination is stimulated by stimulation.

In another study entitling "prediction of procrastination behavior and decision-making with respect to metacognition in students" some variables were predicted such as; uncontrollability, risk, and cognitive self-consciousness, behavioral procrastination and decision- making. Cognitive reliability is the only behavioral procrastination predictor (Husseini & Khayyer, 2009).

Kaveh and *et al.*, (2009) investigated the prevalence of procrastination and affecting factors on it between managers and employees in biggest universities of the country. They concluded that the prevalence of procrastination is 17.6 % between managers and employees. Although there were not any significant relationship between education, work experience, age, and the position, the results showed that there exists a significant difference between men and women in prevalence of procrastination. Besides, managers and employees believed that personal factors have the most effect on procrastination. After that, organizational and environmental factors are important in procrastination, respectively.

Malikeh *et al.*, (2014) investigated the relationship between procrastination of employees and their occupational stress in executive offices of Rafsanjan city. They found that there is a direct relationship between procrastination and occupational stress. Also relationship exists in all dimensions of procrastination and occupational stress. Alishahi and *et al.*, (2006) conducted a research on the structural

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models of personality character in stress and performance with respect to mediating effects of individual response behavior. According to their results; conscientiousness and stress have a negative significant relationship, accountability and stress have a positive significant relationship, and Agreeableness and performance have appositive significant relationship. However, agreeableness and accountability have a negative significant relationship.

They also realized that accountability plays a mediating role in the relationship of conscientiousness and occupational stress. Accountability played a mediating role in the relationship of agreeableness and performance.

Huchran *et al.*, (2014) investigated the relationships between emotional intelligence, fatigue, procrastination, and occupational stress. They found a significant relationship between unrelated presence and fatigue and procrastination. However, self- reported studies on occupational stress informed no relationship between unrelated presence and work.

There are a lot of psychological researches on procrastination, but this concept is still unknown to organizational literature. This subject is also ambiguous in psychological branches of Iran. Considering the importance of procrastination and attempting to reduce it, researchers need to pay attention to this phenomenon in organizations –work places- (Kaveh and *et al.*, 2009).

Managers and psychologists have tried to focus on some factors that influence efficiency of employees and the have found out that one of these factors is occupational stress (Kazemi, 2013). Controlling factors that cause stress could be helpful in reducing employee's stress. Employees who suffer from stress in their jobs, experience behavioral, physical, and mental problems. These problems intervene in individual and organizational performance (Beheshtifar *et al.*, 2014).

Despite the numerous studies, there isn't conducted a research on procrastination in Iran that focuses on three variables of procrastination, occupational stress and personality characters in a sport organization. Thus the objective of this study is to investigate the relationship between procrastination, occupational stress and personality characters of directorate of youth and sports of Khorasan Razavi province.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

### **Methodology**

This research is descriptive and correlational. The population of the study included all the employees of General directorate of youth and sports of Khorasan Razavi province. Statistical samples were selected according to Cochran formula with 5% error probability. From 302 employees of General Directorate of Youth and Sport of Khorasan Razavi province, 170 people were selected. This field research was conducted using three questionnaires for measuring organizational procrastination. Spielberger's occupational stress questionnaire and Neo personality character questionnaire have been used with demographic characteristics.

Measuring procrastination questionnaire was created by Saffarinia and Amirkhani Razliqi in 2010. In order to find reliability test- retest method and Cronbach's alpha coefficient were used and to assess validity, Criterion-related validity and Construct validity were used.

NEO Personality Inventory (NEO- PI) is a well-known psychological tool which is proposed by grey and costa in 1985. This questionnaire consists of 60 elements and for every element 12 items are selected. These items were chosen considering the highest load with respect to the testing characteristics. For neuroticism, Grey and Costa proposed a correlation higher than 0.68, and the reliability of alpha coefficient was between 0.68, also they reported a rate of 0.86 for compatibility. In addition for neuroticism, in the range of 0.76, Helden reported a compatibility of 0.87 Moradian & Nezlak also reported the Cronbach's alpha of Neuroticism, Extraversion, Agreeableness, Openness to Experience and Conscientiousness, 0.84, 0.75, 0.74, 0.75 and 0.83 respectively.

Spielberger's standard occupational stress questionnaire includes 30 questions with 9 options which is based on Likert scale. The questionnaire considers 8 selected characteristics as the main characteristics to determine the number of occupational stress occurrence and is developed by Spielberger and Ternitch (1991). The reliability of the questionnaire is proved by Cronbach's alpha formula 0/81.

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### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### Findings

##### Descriptive Data Analysis

According to the descriptive data analysis, following results were obtained:

62.4 % of population was male and 37.6 % were female. 84.7% of the population were married and 15.3% were single. The average age was about 31 to 40. 20% of the samples were under 30, 24.1 % were between 41– 50 and 6.1% were more than 51. The academic degrees of 8.2% had diplomas, 12.9% had associates, 65.3 % bachelors, and 13.5 had masters.

In Table (1) the descriptive occupational stress indicators have been presented. The mean of all elements of occupational stress are lower than average except for promotion and reward element.

**Table 1: Descriptive occupational stress indicators**

Variable	Standard deviation	mean	Cut off point % 50	range
Occupational stress	48/77	142/29	150	222
Fulfilling the duty	8/35	23/48	25	35
Participation and decision making	5/36	14/63	15	22
Responsibility	5/61	14/39	15	23
Work place	6/39	18/30	20	30
Support	3/75	9/76	10	16
competition	1/95	4/60	5	8
Relations	4/51	9/27	10	16
Promoting and rewards	3/82	10/07	10	14

According to table 2 which presents descriptive procrastination variable's indicators, the mean for all elements was lower than average.

**Table 2: Descriptive procrastination variable's indicators**

variable	Standard deviation	Mean	Cut off point %50	Maximum	Minimum	range
Procrastination	17.54	64.45	75	109	25	100
Inefficiency	13.53	40.13	48	80	16	64
Mental motivation	3.75	14.98	15	25	5	20
Aversion to tasks	3.59	11.05	12	20	4	16

**Table 3: Descriptive personality characteristic variable's indicators**

Variable	Standard deviation	Mean	% 50 Cut off point	Range
Conscientiousness	9.04	41.48	36	46
Agreeableness	7.71	40.69	36	46
Neuroticism	8.06	36.40	36	46
Extraversion	7.88	39.31	36	46
Openness	6.91	36.38	36	46

According to table 3 which presents descriptive personality characteristic's indicators, the mean for all personality characteristics are lower than average.



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### The Analytical Data Analysis

As presented by table 4 the results of spearman rank correlation test between procrastination and occupational stress equals 0.39 which means this average relationship is significant  $p < 0.001$ . As a result the null hypothesis of correlation coefficient is rejected. This means that there is a significant direct relationship between procrastination and occupational stress.

Also there is a positive significant relationship between occupational stress and elements of occupational stress in the error level of 0.001.

**Table 4: The correlation coefficient between procrastination and occupational stress**

Procrastination	Significance level	Correlation coefficient
Occupational stress	0.000	0.39
Fulfilling the task	0.000	0.46
Participation and decision making	0.000	0.35
Responsibility	0.000	0.41
Work place	0.002	0.24
Supportive	0.001	0.26
Competition	0.010	0.20
Relationships	0.000	0.38
Promotion and rewards	0.000	0.35

**Table 5: The correlation coefficient between procrastination and personality characteristics**

Procrastination	Significance level	Correlation coefficient
Conscientiousness	0.000	-0.56
Agreeableness	0.000	-0.53
Neuroticism	0.988	-0.001
Extraversion	0.000	-0.48
Openness	0.000	-0.33

As stated in table 5 there is a correlation of -0.56 between procrastination and conscientiousness. This shows the average converse relationship existing between these elements in the error level of 0.001.

There is a correlation of -0.53 between procrastination and agreeableness. This shows the average converse relationship existing between these elements in the error level of 0.001.

There is a correlation of -0.001 between procrastination and neuroticism which shows a weak insignificant relationship. Thus, the null hypothesis is accepted meaning that there exists an insignificant relationship between procrastination and neuroticism.

A correlation of -0.48 exists between procrastination and extraversion which represents an average, converse relationship in error level of 0.001.

A correlation of -0.33 exists between procrastination and openness which represents a weak converse relationship with error level of 0.001.

### Discussion

Procrastination has been studied from different point of views. Behavioral theories describe procrastination based on Skinner's reward and punishment theories. Therefore, if an employee is faced with an activity that does not have immediate consequences, he or she will procrastinate. Cognitive-behavioral theories, investigate procrastination based on cognitive believes and processes and focus on its irrational underlying ideas. In organizational literature, increase in the performance requires efficacy and effectiveness of resources (including human resources). If human resources procrastinate in fulfilling their tasks, the quality of the task will decrease and other resources will get wasted. Thus, we need to study this phenomenon and the ways of its prevalence. We also have to consider solutions to reduce procrastination.

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As stated by Kazemi and *et al.*, (2013) showed that there were not any significant relationship between education, work experience, age, and the position, the results showed that there exists a significant difference between men and women in prevalence of procrastination. In some other researches procrastination of men and women were equal (Gafni & Geri, 2010) yet in others procrastination in women was a little more than men (Shehni *et al.*, 2006).

The results of first hypothesis are consistent with the results of Beheshtifar and *et al.*, (2011). They investigated the relationship between procrastination of employees and their occupational stress in executive offices of Rafsanjan city. According to their there is a direct relationship between procrastination and occupational stress. Also relationship exists in all dimensions of procrastination and occupational stress. In other words, the more the occupational stress, the more procrastination. In organizational contexts, occupational stress is stated as job stress. These terms are interchangeable and they refer to the same thing (Larsen, 2004). Also, Koteh (1987) believes that occupational characteristics influence on procrastination. Those who have experienced stress and anxiety are not able to meet the needs of their jobs. This results in the low quality of occupational life. Kaveh and *et al.*, (2009) also believe that organizational and environmental factors affect procrastination.

The result of the second hypothesis is in lines with the results of Henry and *et al.*, (1995). They stated that behavioral procrastination is relates to unconscientiousness. Henry and *et al.*, found out that procrastination is associated with six aspects of conscience; competition, order, conscientiousness, achievement effort, self -discipline, consultant. According to their results there exists a significant convers relationship between procrastination and conscientiousness. In other words, the more the procrastination is, the less the conscientiousness. Conscientiousness is related to different jobs and family satisfaction. Tasks have a less harms on physical and mental health of conscientious people. It seems that these kind of people act better in managing the time, responsibilities and tasks.

According to the results of the third hypothesis, there is a convers relationship between agreeableness and procrastination. In other words the more the procrastination is, the less the agreeable ness and vice versa. An agreeable person is caring, kind-hearted, participative, and good tempered. In contrast, a person who is not agreeable is bad-tempered, competitive, and skeptical to others opinions (Konan, 2003).

The results of the fourth hypothesis showed that there isn't any significant relationship between procrastination and neuroticism. This finding is not consistent with the results of Henry and *et al.*, (1995) which showed the relationship between procrastination and neuroticism. Neurotics suffer from anxiety. This anxiety has different reasons. May be the dynamic needs of a person aren't satisfied and have caused anxiety. Like Freud and Kettel believed that when dynamic drives such as sexual drives and aggression are punished repetitively by the society, the anxiety of the person increases. Thus we can conclude that; since neuroticism causes anxiety, it increases the procrastination meanwhile.

According to the fifth hypothesis, there is a converse relationship in procrastination and extraversion. There existed a relatively small relationship between procrastination and extraversion in Henry's (1995) research. Extraverts are able to create possibility for the group members to communicate. They are eager for working as a group and collectively and introverts are eager to work individually. Therefore, the more extravert a person is, the less procrastination occurs. This results match the findings of our study. However, Safari & Goudarzi (2010) showed that there isn't any significant relationship between openness and burnout.

The results of the sixth hypothesis showed a convers relationship between procrastination and openness to experiences. Openness is an element of emotional intelligence which help people to adjust their abilities to unfamiliar, unpredicted circumstances. When these people realize they are wrong, they admit. Open people are consistent, wise, cheerful, and tolerant. They are not fanatic and never insist that they are right. The results of Simpson and Pickbil (2008) examined the relationship between extraversion and the reduction indicator of subject's arousal. Their results is consistent with the findings of this study.

### Conclusion

Procrastination is delaying a task without any rational reason. It is one of the main elements in wasting time in organizations. In fact, procrastination is an eternal part of the human life that nobody likes it and

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has produces negative effects that affect organizational and individual life (Kendall, 2006). Since the subjects and statistical samples are different in the literature, the results on procrastination are also different. Most of the procrastination studies have been conducted on students in an organizational environment. Generally, negative concepts and issues like procrastination-being the subject of this study-are biased. Actually concepts such as procrastination, burnout, stress and etc. are taboos. This negativity hinders people from fully participating and the findings are below the expected results of similar studies. In addition it is important to consider the cultural differences and other effective factors. According to the related literature, procrastination is cognitive psychological issue and has been studied from psychological aspect. Generally, the results show that individual factors are more effective than organizational and environmental in procrastination. We found that there existed a relationship between procrastination, occupational stress and employee's personality.

According to the results of this study we propose that:

- 1- Considering the positive relationship between occupational stress and procrastination, we propose that stress factors should be reduced to prevent wasting time and increase profitability. Since organizational structure is one of the most important factors in occupational stress for sport managers, it is suggested that the structure of the organization be designed in a way that reduces the pressures and limitations of them. Another factor in occupational stress among sport coaches and teachers is the minimum use of their energies. In order to reduce the stress, managers should use all potentials and skills of this group so that the tasks are not boring or exhausting. Also, managers should pay enough attention to interests, expertise, and skills of the employees and then assign tasks. So reducing the occupational stress, procrastination is also reduced.
- 2- Controlling individual and environmental factors is difficult for managers and organization as a whole; however, by controlling and improving organizational factors which affect procrastination, this phenomenon can be reduced to some extent.

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