

Causes of Student Procrastination: Family Background and Educational Style

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Abstract: As time passes, the words "self-control" and "procrastination" begin to appear more frequently in people's sight, with a growing focus on the issues of procrastination and self-control. However, most research on self-control has focused on adults in the workplace instead of students. To be specific, problems that occur after people reach adulthood are often not caused during their adulthood but are derived from the bad habits developed and practiced when they were still in school. Therefore, before focusing on procrastination in workplaces, it is also vital to discover the academic procrastination and the problem of self-regulation in childhood. Thus, this essay aims to show how the family, as one of the great factors that contribute to children's growth and ability to control themselves, affects students' procrastination and ability to self-control, while synthesizing possible solutions that can be implemented to mitigate or address the problem after research and investigations.

Keywords: self-management; procrastination; Homeschooling methods

1. Introduction

Before explaining how family can affect people's ability to control themselves, a clarification on the classification and identification of issues with procrastination and self-control is necessary. In other words, the way to identify and determine whether a person has procrastination should be explained first.

To specify, since the essay aims to focus on students' ability to self-control, the type of procrastination that they often encounter is possibly academic procrastination, which is a concept initially proposed by Solomon and Rothblum in 1984 that indicates procrastination regarding academics. Based on the organization and compilation of various experts' definitions and interpretations of academic procrastination, Li Yu Hua and his/her colleagues developed a comprehensive and acceptable definition of academic procrastination. To be specific, Li Yu Hua and his/her colleagues finally claimed that the problem with self-control appears when learners (especially teenagers and youngsters in this essay), who understand the negative consequences that procrastinating can bring, still intentionally delay starting or completing certain tasks^[1]. In simpler terms, students can be considered to demonstrate academic procrastination when they intentionally avoid completing the task now and do other things (e.g. playing video games) instead, even though they know that they will suffer from the results of not accomplishing the task now.

2. The Harm of Procrastination on Physical and Mental Well-being

The problem with self-control has become more and more significant and serious over the past few years. To elaborate, research has found that academic procrastination can not only bring a decline in students' academic performance, but also affect their mental health (e.g. escalating depression, anxiety, etc.), decrease satisfaction with daily life, and even cause certain behavioral problems, including Internet addiction. These negative impacts of academic procrastination can be seen in any place. For instance, in China, the problem of Internet addiction is a huge problem, which can be determined as a way of procrastination and a reflection of a poor ability to self-control. To be specific, Chinese students, especially youngsters, often prefer to play video games, scroll on social media platforms, or watch short videos that give them a quick and instant pleasure instead of completing their homework and acquiring knowledge, demonstrating poor self-regulation ability. Additionally, the problem of mental health (as mentioned above) is also obvious and can be caused by academic procrastination. To illustrate, if a student is not willing to accomplish his work and decides to scroll on his phone instead, the thoughts of not completing the tasks will still inevitably appear in his mind causing him to feel more and more stressed when he is procrastinating since he is worried about not able to finish his homework on time^[2].

By having an increasing feeling of anxiety, the student will become more unwilling to face the task since the task becomes more and more impossible to accomplish before the deadline, resulting in more academic procrastination and rapidly rising anxiety and stressful feelings that can negatively influence one's mental state. Therefore, these drawbacks of academic procrastination all show that this issue with self-control should be given more attention and tackled as soon as possible.

3. The Impact of Parenting Styles on Students' Procrastination

In terms of the effects of family on teenagers' academic procrastination, different parenting styles and family backgrounds have revealed distinct differences in teenagers' abilities to control themselves when accomplishing academic work. Speaking of parenting styles, there are 3 ways of parenting, including authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive styles. Take parents in urban areas in China as a specific example. The most traditional way of parenting in China is authoritarian parenting, which involves constraining and strictly controlling children, having an abundance of requirements for them, but not responding with enough emotional and physical support for them. Permissive parenting, on the other hand, is significantly different than authoritarian parenting styles. To specify, it includes more connections with children, providing more support for them, but lacks restrictions and demands for them. Finally, authoritative parenting is a way of parenting that combines authoritarian and permissive ways of parenting. In this parenting style, parents set proper rules that children should obey while building a good relationship with them. In other words, authoritative parents will have demands for their children, but they also care about what the children are thinking and will be supportive when their children encounter certain challenges. Some people may be confused about the difference between authoritarian and authoritative parenting since they both demand and constrain their children with a high firmness^[3]. An example of academic scores can be used to clarify the difference between them. When a child performs poorly in school and receives bad scores because of being lazy and not willing to study, authoritarian parents will be very harsh to the child and remove all the entertainment from the child, such as his phone or laptop, forcing him to do nothing except practice and study for exams. Similarly, authoritative parents also set rules, but rather than taking away all the entertainment from the child, they will communicate with the child to let him understand why he needs to get good marks in school and realize the importance by himself.

4. The Impact of Procrastination on Students

4.1. The influence on student decision-making

According to research, "Authoritarian parents who exercised overcontrol and inflexibility of authority were perceived by their daughters as having a parental style that increased their inclination toward indecision". In other words, parents who implement the style of authoritarian parenting can make their children, especially daughters, more difficult to make a fast decision. When working on an academic essay or completing certain homework, decision-making skill is an essential part since making decisions such as which source to use, which vocabulary to apply, or which topic to choose will inevitably be encountered by students in their academic journey. If the authoritarian parenting style can lead to children's indecision when facing certain problems, then it is highly possible that it will hamper them from completing certain academic tasks. Furthermore, with the anxious feeling of being unable to make a decision and complete the task on time, children may start procrastinating by demonstrating certain behaviors such as scrolling on their phone or looking at social media platforms because they want to escape from the current situation and preferred to be entertained by quick and fast entertainment on social media platforms, causing academic procrastination to take place.

4.2. The Impact of Execution Ability on Students

In contrast, the authoritative parenting style used by mothers has been shown to have a positive impact on students' procrastination and improve their ability to control themselves. (Reynolds). To elaborate, mothers are often perceived to be gentle and the person in the family who is best at listening to children and taking care of them^[4]. With a mother implementing the authoritative parenting style and showing empathy for her children by telling them that she understands the challenges that they meet and is willing to break the rules in the family sometimes to help them overcome those difficulties, children will become more willing to communicate and ask for help when they encounter certain problems. By receiving help and advice from parents, children will become more efficient when making decisions and completing

academic tasks, instead of indecision and procrastination due to anxious feelings and the thought of impossible to accomplish the tasks.

5. The Impact of Family Background on Students' Procrastination

5.1. The impact of learning environments on student studies

A range of different experiments or research have been conducted previously, with statistics showing that "children from low-income families showed higher levels of psychological distress, helplessness, and lower levels of self-regulation than children from middle-income families later in development". 3 main reasons may cause these results. First of all, compared to middle-income families, low-income families usually live in places with more noise around since the price of renting or buying these places is cheaper. With constant, noisy sounds around, it will be extremely difficult for students to calm down and concentrate on tasks, making them easily distracted and leading to low working efficiency and self-control. Additionally, with poor economic strength, the rooms of these low-income families will possibly be unclean and untidy, which can cause the presence of bugs, such as cockroaches or mosquitoes^[5]. A good living environment and a tidy study space can better help students focus on their studies.

5.2. The Impact of Family Income on Student Learning

For middle-class families, it is common to hire a nanny to assist with cleaning rooms, doing laundry, and managing household chores. However, for working-class families, the expenses associated with hiring a nanny are often unaffordable. The primary household expenditures must be allocated to daily necessities rather than to substitute labor that could be employed for such tasks. There may be some families, due to unique circumstances, where students are required to participate in daily housework, which can reduce the time available for their studies. Routine and repetitive chores may serve as a refuge for students when they encounter difficulties exploring unknown knowledge.

5.3. Case Study

A real-life example that supports the claim above is a secondary student called Zhan Pingfang. Just like any other children from low-income families, Zhan Pingfang's family is also experiencing financial difficulties. With the expensive economic demand for studying in schools, Zhan Pingfang and his family members are often concerned about whether they have enough money to live. This leads to an internal struggle in Zhan Pingfang's mind, evoking his thoughts of quitting school and spending more money on basic needs instead of education. However, he is afraid of conveying his thoughts to his parents since it may be disappointing and heartbreaking for their parents to hear that. This struggle can make him unable to decide whether he should dedicate his effort and time to acquire knowledge or not, since he may instantly drop out of school the next day^[6]. Not putting effort and concentration into completing academic tasks, will lead to his academic procrastination and poor academic performance in school while negatively affecting his future, clearly illustrating how the economic status and financial stress of a family can affect students' academic procrastination and ability to self-control.

Although particular ways of parenting will greatly increase students' academic procrastination, with immediate and appropriate actions from parents, the negative impacts are still reversible. To be specific, the problem of academic procrastination can be tackled by two distinct aspects, which consist of parents and children.

6. Conclusion

6.1. In the context of family education

In terms of parents, as mentioned previously, an authoritarian parenting style has been shown to lead to an increase in procrastination, while an authoritative parenting style can improve children's ability to control themselves^[7]. Therefore, parents should be more aware of the number of rules they set for their children. To elaborate, necessary rules such as respecting older members of the family should be established by parents to ensure that their children will not develop any behavioral problems in the future, but additional rules such as not allowing children to hang out with friends can constrain children's freedom should be avoided. Additionally, since students who encounter academic procrastination lack

the ability to self-control, parents can play an important role in helping their children concentrate and create an environment without distraction. To specify, parents can work with their children in the same area or room to remind their children to focus on the task instead of playing on their phones or having meaningless conversations with friends when it is time to work. However, it is worth mentioning that in-depth communication with children about whether he/she accepts this strategy to tackle academic procrastination is vital before implementing it to ensure that this will not result in overcontrolling children and making them feel uncomfortable, which can lead to an authoritarian way of parenting and even aggravate the issue of self-control. Furthermore, if possible, families with a low income should avoid asking children to help with housekeeping work while trying to provide them with the most silent space for them to acquire knowledge so that distractions and noises are minimized.

6.2. Importance level

In brief, the problem of self-control and academic procrastination is becoming more and more impactful, with one of the most influential factors contributing to this issue being the parents and family background of students. To elaborate, even though an authoritarian way of parenting and families' financial stress can lead to aggravation of procrastination, fortunately, with appropriate and prompt actions taken by both the parents and children, such as switching to authoritative parenting, the issue can still be mitigated or even addressed. It is also worth mentioning that the problem of procrastination and self-control is not only limited to students but as time passes, it will also be carried on in workplaces and future careers, further affecting these adults who grew up with academic procrastination issues. These issues may contribute to making adults unable to complete their tasks on time with their low productivity, causing them to lose their jobs and influencing their income, therefore affecting the next generation by having a low-income family and continuing the negative cycle of procrastination and failure^[8]. The problem of self-control is a reflection of various kinds of issues in modern society, including parents' way of parenting, high financial demand for education (referring to Zhan Pingfang's example), the development of technology causing distractions (e.g. social media and games that distract students from studying), and etc. This essay, therefore, mainly focuses on the parenting aspect that is related to the problem of self-regulation, and it is emphasized that both the parents and children need to recognize this issue with academic procrastination to bring an instant change and prevent from turning into a long-lasting problem that will accompany the students throughout their whole lives. On the other hand, the current solution is still being synthesized with a limited amount of research and statistics since more experts are more willing to dedicate their time to other problems. Thus, it is hoped that there will be a more effective way to tackle or even eradicate the problem of self-control and academic procrastination in the future with more attention drawn to this issue.

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