



# Active and Passive Procrastination

## Research proposal

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## 1. Abstract

Despite the vast research by Chu and Choi about the positive effects of 'active' procrastination little is known about the difference in project results of active and passive procrastinators, which is exactly the main focus of this research report. Another thing that was observed is the impact that procrastination has on the lives of active procrastinators. The following report contains information about the objective of our research, methods used, results and conclusion.

The tool we used to reach the study population is a survey including questions requiring insights about the behaviour and working habits of the person. The answers that we received, which are connected to our research questions measure procrastination within different scenarios and therefore prove or disapprove the hypothesis for the specific question.

After observation of the results we stated our findings as follows:

- There is a no difference between the amount of male active procrastinators and the amount of female active procrastinators;
- There is a difference between project results from active and passive procrastinators;
- There is a minimal difference between the amount of active procrastinators with mental health issues and the amount of passive procrastinators with the same issues.

Despite the absence of difference between male and female active procrastinators, we conclude that mental health issues and project results depend on the type of procrastinator that the person is.

The aim of this observation is not only to raise awareness about the difference between active and passive procrastination, but also to give insights on the effects of each type and to define the key concepts when it comes to the positive effects. Moreover, we succeeded in achieving the objectives to find answers on the three different questions.

## 2. Introduction

### 2.1 Topic

Psychologists define *procrastination* as the habit of delaying things requiring immediate attention (Steel & Ferrari, 2002, 55). This problem is caused by lack of time management skills. From 80% to 95% of college students engage in procrastination, which is proven to have negative influence on the mental health of the students (Onwuegbuzie, 2004, 7). A research made in 2014 proved the possible benefits of procrastination and identified two types of procrastinators (Chu & Choi, 2005, 245).

The classical *passive* procrastinators tend to avoid their responsibilities with no mean to actually execute the tasks and they find themselves helpless when they have to act within a certain period of time (Chu & Choi, 2005, 245). On the other hand, *active* procrastinators postpone to the same degree, however their selfmanagement skills allow them to make risky but time balanced decisions, since they feel confident working under pressure. Therefore the active procrastinators seem to be closer to non-procrastinators than to procrastinators, since the difference between the two types has been discovered in the research of Choi and Chu in 2005.

### 2.2 Problem analysis

After reviewing previous studies, we have concluded that procrastination is a common habit among college students and assumed to have mostly negative influence on their performance at school. It can also have impact on the mental health of the student and even lead to depression and a lack of selfconfidence. However, after analysing the two types of procrastinators mentioned above, it seems wrong to say that both of them are constantly negatively influenced by their habit to postpone. It has been proven that active procrastinators have learned how to manage their time even when they postpone and delay things. Therefore, in our research, we want to clarify both the differences between active and passive procrastinators.

### 2.3 Research objective

That is why the aim of this research is to provide new insights into the topic by providing information about the difference in project results for active and passive procrastinators. Another thing that we would like to focus on, is the impact that procrastination has on the lives of active procrastinators. We would like to research this due to the fact that their personality normally not allows procrastination and therefore can cause serious mental health issues. The goal of this research is raise awareness among college students about the importance of time management by finding out any possible dangers of procrastinating.

### 2.4 Existing literature, research questions and hypotheses

According to Tice and Baumeister, procrastinators may suffer from stress at the end of the project, while non procrastinators do their worrying and hard-working earlier in the project period. In this view, procrastinators may suffer late whereas others suffer early, but the total amount of suffering could be the same (Tice & Baumeister, 1997, pp. 454-455). Pursuant to this research, when this amount is compressed to a reduced amount of time, stress will be suffered in a diminished factor.

RQ1: Is there a difference between the amount of active procrastinators with mental health issues and the amount of passive procrastinators with mental health issues?

Stress is caused by fear of danger or misfortune. That is why this can make someone procrastinate certain projects. It is no surprise that procrastination is therefore often compared to the scales of potentially related content areas (like anxiety, but also depressions, and self-esteem) (Solomon & Rothblum, 1984, p. 503). In order to find out if a correlation between these exists, researchers have done an experiment in which students of a psychology course could take 23 self-paced quizzes. The number of self-paced quizzes they took during the last 5 weeks would function as the procrastination index. The second section of the experiment provides multiple scenarios regarding things like anxiety and perfectionism. Students would rate each statement (with the index of the first part) to whether they would still procrastinate if they were in this scenario. The results of this experiment were quite clear, since they show that 50% the people that normally do not procrastinate, would do it when linked to a described factor.

H1: The amount of active procrastinators with mental health issues is higher than the amount of passive procrastinators with health issues.

The results were surprising, but the researchers wanted to know whether there were more men or women involved in the procrastination as well.

RQ2: Is there a difference between the amount of male active procrastinators and the amount of female active procrastinators?

They found out that of this 50%, about 80% was female (Solomon & Rothblum, 1984, p. 505).

H2: There are more female active procrastinators than male active procrastinators.

While procrastination is mainly seen as something bad, so called “active” procrastination has shown to have some positive effects. Most of the existing literature on procrastination has contrasted procrastinators with non-procrastinators, while the real difference for this research paper will be found in the difference between active and passive procrastinators. Whether a person does a task far ahead of a deadline or only slightly ahead of it does not necessarily affect the quality of the work, according to Tice & Baumeister. Therefore, practically speaking, procrastination should not necessarily have a negative impact on the effectiveness of the task performance (Chu & Choi, 2005, p. 246).

RQ3: Is there a difference between project results from active procrastinators and the project results from passive procrastinators?

Most people that procrastinate, actually say it is to increase their task performance (Ariely & Wertenbroch, 2002, p. 219). An experiment over a 14 weeks course was the ultimate test for this theory for some fellow researchers. Students of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology were free to choose the dates by which the student committed to hand in the short paper, but the deadlines had to be announced in advance and were binding. What was interesting, is the fact that the students chose deadlines that involved more commitment instead of losing a grade for being late (Ariely & Wertenbroch, 2002, p. 221). What was also remarkable was that for slightly more than 50% of the students, their grade would have been higher if not decided upon their own deadline. It might seem that they see their own deadline as less binding, but it has been confirmed that people who procrastinate the most tend to perform better when they do so (Ariely & Wertenbroch, 2002, p. 222).

H3: Active procrastinators tend to have better project results than passive procrastinators.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Research Design and Data Collection Method

The exploratory nature of our study requires a comparative type of design. That is why we are going to use a survey as a tool to reach our study population. A further explanation of the data collection method follows. The types of questions that the participants have to answer are directly linked to our research questions. Additionally, their answers will be based on previous experience with both types of procrastination. We will provide our research group with a questions that contain likert scale within. We will measure the procrastination with specific scenarios like: "Minor issues bother me and reduce my motivation to complete my tasks in time." and "I tend to worry about things that I have no control over". However, here we are strongly relying on the complete honesty of our participants as this might not be in our advantage. This specific procrastination measuring questions will be from the scale—strongly disagree to strongly agree. Within those options, we would like to discover if the low results at exams and assignments and the lack of motivation is derived from the procrastinating factor. Our hypotheses will therefore be proved or disproved within the answers of our survey.

#### 3.2 Questionnaire

[https://nhtv.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/preview/SV\\_87fulkJ5xznB2V7](https://nhtv.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/preview/SV_87fulkJ5xznB2V7) (See Appendix A)

Minor issues bother me and reduce my motivation to complete my tasks in time.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

I tend to worry about things that I have no control over.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Delaying tasks influences my personal life.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Fear of failure makes me delay tasks.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

### 3.3 Population and sampling:

This research proposal will focus on the young generation and moreover the people within the age of 18-25 years. The reason that we chose this age group is because at this age mostly people attend university or college and tend to delay and procrastinate very much their responsibilities. The proposal will examine the effects of both types of procrastination based on people with and without mental issues. Furthermore the proposal will explain if there is any connection between the genders and both types of procrastinations. Finally the proposal will concentrate on the project results of the participants and the two types of procrastinations. The division of the population is made upon the following elements: sex, age, gender, nationality and current occupation status; meaning their working/studying status. The results will be established by the answers that we receive from students, belonging to the two of the biggest universities in the Netherlands - "NHTV" and "Avans". The percentages of our research will match the current reality within the age variety of 18-25 years in both of the universities. We will reach our participants by social media tools such as: email and Facebook, direct meetings at places such as: universities, colleges. We will concentrate on the social media platform Facebook, due to its frequent visit by people on the desired of our age, according to lately held research on the topic (Duggan, 2015). We would like also to create booths and locate it a place that our research group is visiting a lot in their spare time.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Research question 1

Is there a difference between the amount of active procrastinators with mental health issues and the amount of passive procrastinators with mental health issues?

$H_0$ : There is no difference between the amount of active procrastinators with mental health issues and the amount of passive procrastinators with mental health issues

$H_1$ : There is a difference between the amount of active procrastinators with mental health issues and the amount of passive procrastinators with mental health issues

In order to figure out if there is a distinct difference in the amount of active procrastinators with mental health issues and the amount of passive procrastinators with mental health issues, we asked people to fill in what type of procrastinators they are (according to themselves) and if they have ever experienced mental health issues. However, in order to come up with a trustworthy conclusion, we have asked people some control questions regarding the types of procrastination. This resulted in six people being removed from the data collection due to the fact that they have not answered both questions truthfully. The end results of this can be seen below:

*Have you ever experienced mental health issues? \* Choose the term that applies to you:  
Crosstabulation*

Count		Choose the term that applies to you:			Total
		Active- procrastinator	Passive- procrastinator	Non- procrastinator	
Have you ever experienced mental health issues?	Yes, in the past	13	6	1	20
	Yes, currently experiencing	4	9	4	17
	No	30	22	5	57
Total		47	37	10	94

Table A: Crosstabulation of type of procrastinator and mental health issues

17 out of 47 (=36%) active procrastinators have experienced mental health issues and 15 out of 37 (=40%) passive procrastinators have experienced mental health issues. So apparently there is a minimal difference between active-procrastinators with mental health issues and passive-procrastinators with mental health issues. However, is the difference significant enough to start concluding? Since we are analyzing two nominal variables (mental health issues and the type of procrastinator) in a three by three table, we need to find out Cramer's V in order to conclude if there is a distinct correlation between being an active- or passive-procrastinator and mental health issues. We found out the following:

*Symmetric Measures*

		<i>Approximate Value Significance</i>	
Nominal by	Phi	,293	,090
Nominal	Cramer's V	,207	,090
N of Valid Cases		94	

Table B: Level of association between type of procrastinator and mental health issues

We found out that Cramer's V has a value of 0.207, which means that this is a moderate level of association and thus acceptable ("POL242 LAB MANUAL: EXERCISE 3A; Crosstabulation with Nominal Variables", n.d.). Therefore, we reject  $H_0$  and accept  $H_1$ .

## 4.2 Research question 2

Is there a difference between the amount of male active procrastinators and the amount of female active procrastinators?

*H<sub>0</sub>: There is no difference between the amount of male active procrastinators and the amount of female active procrastinators*

*H<sub>1</sub>: There is a difference between the amount of male active procrastinators and the amount of female active procrastinators*

In order to figure out if there is a distinct difference in the amount of male and female active-procrastinators, we asked people to fill in what type of procrastinators they are (according to themselves) and what gender they are. However, in order to come up with a trustworthy conclusion, we have asked people some control questions regarding the types of procrastination. This resulted in six people being removed from the data collection due to the fact that they have not answered both questions truthfully. The end results of this can be seen below:

*Select your gender: \* Choose the term that applies to you: Crosstabulation*

Count		<i>Choose the term that applies to you:</i>			
		<i>Active-</i>	<i>Passive-</i>	<i>Non-</i>	<i>Total</i>
		<i>procrastinator</i>	<i>procrastinator</i>	<i>procrastinator</i>	
Select your	Male	20	18	2	40
gender:	Female	27	19	8	54
Total		47	37	10	94

Table C: Crosstabulation of type of procrastinator and gender

We found out that there is a no difference at all. This is caused by the fact that 27 out of 54 women that answered our survey are active procrastinators and 20 out of 40 men that answered our survey are active procrastinators. However, is there also no correlation according to Cramer's V? We found out the following:

*Symmetric Measures*

		<i>Approximate</i>	
		<i>Value</i>	<i>Significance</i>
Nominal by	Phi	,168	,267
Nominal	Cramer's V	,168	,267
N of Valid Cases		94	

Table D: Level of association between type of procrastinator and gender

We found out that Cramer's V has a value of 0.168, which means that this is a weak level of association ("POL242 LAB MANUAL: EXERCISE 3A; Crosstabulation with Nominal Variables", n.d.). Therefore, we reject H<sub>1</sub> and accept H<sub>0</sub>.

### 4.3 Research question 3

Is there a difference between project results from active procrastinators and the project results from passive procrastinators?

*H<sub>0</sub>: There is no difference between the project results from active- and passive-procrastinators*

*H<sub>1</sub>: There is a difference between the project results from active- and passive-procrastinators*

In order to figure out if there is a distinct difference in project results between active- and passive-procrastinators, we asked people to fill in what type of procrastinators they are (according to themselves) and what their average project result is graded. However, in order to come up with a trustworthy conclusion, we have asked people some control questions regarding the types of procrastination. This resulted in eight people being removed from the data collection due to the fact that they have not answered both questions truthfully. The end results of this can be seen below:

*My average project result is graded: \* Choose the term that applies to you:*

*Crosstabulation*

Count		<i>Choose the term that applies to you:</i>			
		<i>Active-</i>	<i>Passive-</i>	<i>Non-</i>	<i>Total</i>
		<i>procrastinator</i>	<i>procrastinator</i>	<i>procrastinator</i>	
My average	1	1	1	0	2
project result is	2	1	0	1	2
graded:	3	3	1	0	4
	5	0	1	1	2
	6	5	2	0	7
	7	26	16	5	47
	8	6	11	2	19
	9	4	2	1	7
	10	1	3	0	4
Total		47	37	10	94

Table E: Crosstabulation of type of procrastinator and project results

If we narrow down the results, we find out that the active-procrastinators score an average of 6.77, while passive-procrastinators score an average of 7.27, as you can see below:

*Statistics<sup>a</sup>*

My average project result is graded:

N	Valid	47
	Missing	0
Mean		6,77
Median		7,00
Mode		7

a. Choose the term that applies to you: = Active-procrastinator

Table F: Central tendency (mean) of the project results of active procrastinators

*Statistics<sup>a</sup>*

My average project result is graded:

N	Valid	37
	Missing	0
Mean		7,27
Median		7,00
Mode		7

a. Choose the term that applies to you: = Passive-procrastinator

Table G: Central tendency (mean) of the project results of passive procrastinators

So apparently there is a difference between project results from active- and passive-procrastinators. However, is the difference significant enough to start concluding? Since we are analyzing an interval variable (average project result) and a nominal variable (type of procrastinator), we need to find out Cramer's V in order to conclude if there is a distinct correlation between being an active- or passive-procrastinator and project results. We found out the following:

*Symmetric Measures*

		Approximate Value	Significance
Nominal by	Phi	,423	,398
Interval	Cramer's V	,299	,398
N of Valid Cases		94	

Table H: Level of association between type of procrastinator and project results

We found out that Cramer's V has a value of 0.299, which means that this is a desirable level of association ("POL242 LAB MANUAL: EXERCISE 3A; Crosstabulation with Nominal Variables", n.d.). Therefore, we reject H<sub>0</sub> and accept H<sub>1</sub>.

## 5. Conclusion

The main topic that is discussed in terms of this research report is the effect of two major types of procrastinations – active and passive over project results on students attending universities and colleges. As it is already stated in the problem analysis, postponing important tasks is a common problem among students and this therefore has a negative influence over their professional achievements. As stated earlier the two types of procrastinations are active and passive. Active procrastination can be described as an action of consciously delaying tasks until a crisis point, but still the personal self-management skills allow the person to handle the task. On the other hand passive procrastination means that the person is delaying tasks with no mean and at the end point they are feeling helpless and incapable of performing their tasks. Moreover this report is explaining the effects of procrastination has on the lives of active procrastinating people. The reason why we are concentrating on this specific topic is that delaying tasks until the very end might be a sign of the existence of mental issues and at normal circumstances their personality would not allow this type of procrastination.

Regarding our research and data collection method, we created a survey linked to specifically to our research questions. There are different types of questions, which are connected to the two kinds of procrastination. The questions presented to the participants were completely regarding the topic and therefore presenting the problem we are researching.

The most important part of the survey are the likert scale questions that actually demonstrate how sampling of the population determine whether they are active or passive procrastinators. What can be seen from the result section and therefore concluded as a final statement, is that firstly we are focusing on the difference between the amount of active procrastinators with mental issues and the amount of passive procrastinators with mental issues. Results therefore has shown that there is a difference between them, derived from Cramer`s V value of 0.207. Moreover – 17 out of 47 active procrastinators (36%) have experienced mental health issues and 15 out of 37 passive procrastinators (40%) have experienced mental issues. As we also wanted to measure if there is difference between the two genders and procrastinations, it can be seen in the results that there is no significant difference between the male and female and active procrastination, supported by the Cramer`s V value of 0.168 and the results of: 24 out of 54 women and 20 out of 40 men both active procrastinators.

Finally when measuring the difference between the project results with the two types of procrastination, results have shown that there is difference between them as the active ones scored an average of 6.77 and the passive one the average of 7.27

This study can be used to raise the awareness about the importance of time management among students attending colleges and universities and the possible dangers of the processes of procrastination. A mistake that could have occurred during conducting the research might have been the non-complete honesty of the participants in the study, as some of them would not like to expose their personal problems such as delaying of tasks. It is therefore a realistically connected issue that the research might experience throughout the process. A recommendation regarding this problem could be forwarded to future studies on the same research topic.

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## 7. Appendices

### Appendix A (Survey):

Intro Block Block Options ▾

IVA1.1  This survey is about active and passive procrastination. Active procrastination is delaying tasks willingly thinking that you will perform better in last moment situations and passive procrastination means that people tend to avoid their responsibilities with no mean to actually execute the tasks and they find themselves helpless when they have to act within a certain period of time. So people either choose to procrastinate or unknowingly procrastinate due to a lack of time management.

The goal of this survey is therefore to create awareness among college students about the importance of time management. It will take up to 5 minutes to fill it in.

**We will handle your information with care, and we will not sell it to third parties.**

Own Perception Block Options ▾

IVA3.1  Do you think procrastination always has a negative impact?

Definitely yes  Probably yes  Might or might not  Probably not  Definitely not

IVA3.2  Choose the term that applies to you:

Active-procrastinator  
 Passive-procrastinator  
 Non-procrastinator  
 I don't know

IVA3.3  Have you ever experienced mental health issues?

Yes, in the past  Yes, currently experiencing  No

IVA3.4  My average project result is graded:

1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10

Select the answer of the following questions which is most relevant for you:



Minor issues bother me and reduce my motivation to complete my tasks in time.

Strongly disagree  Disagree  Somewhat disagree  Neither agree nor disagree  Somewhat agree  Agree  Strongly agree



I tend to worry about things that I have no control over.

Strongly disagree  Disagree  Somewhat disagree  Neither agree nor disagree  Somewhat agree  Agree  Strongly agree



Delaying tasks influences my personal life.

Strongly disagree  Disagree  Somewhat disagree  Neither agree nor disagree  Somewhat agree  Agree  Strongly agree



Fear of failure makes me delay tasks.

Strongly disagree  Disagree  Somewhat disagree  Neither agree nor disagree  Somewhat agree  Agree  Strongly agree



Select the answer of the following questions which is most relevant for you:



I prefer to create a planning and spread out the workload.

Strongly disagree  Disagree  Somewhat disagree  Neither agree nor disagree  Somewhat agree  Agree  Strongly agree



Doing tasks last-minute helps me concentrate.

Strongly disagree  Disagree  Somewhat disagree  Neither agree nor disagree  Somewhat agree  Agree  Strongly agree



I perform better under stress.

Strongly disagree  Disagree  Somewhat disagree  Neither agree nor disagree  Somewhat agree  Agree  Strongly agree



Delaying tasks leads to missing my deadline.

Strongly disagree  Disagree  Somewhat disagree  Neither agree nor disagree  Somewhat agree  Agree  Strongly agree



IVAB.1 Select the answer of the following questions which is most relevant for you:



IVAB.2 I perform significantly lower when I unconsciously delay a task.



Strongly disagree  Disagree  Somewhat disagree  Neither agree nor disagree  Somewhat agree  Agree  Strongly agree

IVAB.3 When deliberately delaying tasks until the last moment, I receive better results.



Strongly disagree  Disagree  Somewhat disagree  Neither agree nor disagree  Somewhat agree  Agree  Strongly agree

IVAB.4 When the stress of a task occurs at the end of the project I perform better and receive better results.



Strongly disagree  Disagree  Somewhat disagree  Neither agree nor disagree  Somewhat agree  Agree  Strongly agree

IVAB.5 I receive worse results when deliberately delaying tasks until the last moment.



Strongly disagree  Disagree  Somewhat disagree  Neither agree nor disagree  Somewhat agree  Agree  Strongly agree

IVA2.1 Please fill in your demographics:



IVA2.2 Select your age:



Younger than 16 ▾

IVA2.3 Select your gender:



Male  
 Female  
Group

IVA2.4 State your permanent country of residence:



Netherlands  
 Other:   
Group