

Research on the Correlation Between Procrastination and Study Alienation in University Students: Evidence From Russia

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The study of educational procrastination and alienation updates in the context of the rapid dynamics of the educational environment (an increase in the share of independent and distance learning, using new information technologies, etc.). This paper aims to establish the nature of the dependence of procrastination and alienation of university students. The paper presents the results of a survey of 110 students at Vyatka State University (Kirov) using several methods. Research results show that more than half of the students have a high level of procrastination; the majority (56%) of this group are inclined to the absolute alienation of study. There are high rates of alienation of students in learning, interpersonal relations, and self-attitude. The dominant forms of alienation were impotence, vegetation, and adventurism. The main reasons for procrastination are a challenge, “bad” perfectionism, disorganization, impulsivity, and reduced self-control. The main conclusion is the positive relation between procrastination and alienation among university students.

Keywords: procrastination, study alienation, academic activity, learning motivation of university students

INTRODUCTION

Human activities in the current world are continuously changing, new requirements and conditions for its implementation appear. A person who cannot adapt to these requirements may begin to postpone making vital decisions for an indefinite period or make a psychological escape from activities that become internally alien and unacceptable.

These processes can be actively manifested in young people during their higher education. Postponing the completion of study assignments and preparation for exams and tests, isolation from teachers and other students, and internal rejection of educational activity values are only a small part of examples of student behavior prone to procrastination and alienation of academic work.

While studying at a university, vocational training is carried out and active vocational-motivational and personal students' development in terms of future work activities. It is becoming important to study

students' mental well-being in a learning situation (Panyukov, Panyukova, Mamedova & Ponizovkina, 2018). In the context of constant development and improvement of the education system, which is expressed in the emergence of distance learning forms, the use of information technologies in the learning process, the study of procrastination and alienation among university students becomes relevant.

Procrastination – postponing necessary actions, making vital decisions. Procrastination involves a dysfunctional delay in behavior, characterized by extended intervals between the intention and actions of a person prone to procrastination (Svardal, Klingsieck, Steel & Gamst-Klaussen, 2019). Many foreign authors have studied this problem since the late 1970s: (P. Ringenbach, A. Ellis, V. Knaus, J. Burka, L. Yuen (Kovylin, 2013) Russian researchers began to study procrastination only since the late 1990s. There is a high incidence of academic procrastination among students in modern studies – up to 75% (Tibbet & Ferrari, 20145). Procrastination is associated with anxiety, depression, and stress (Kiseleva, 2014; Sirois, Melia-Gordon & Pychyl, 2003). CH Lay gives the following definition of this phenomenon: “Procrastination is a voluntary, irrational postponement of planned actions, despite the fact that it will be expensive or have a negative effect on individual” (Lay, 1986). These researchers consider procrastination in the study of motivation, will, laziness, perfectionism (Karlovskaya & Baranova, 2008; Kovylin, 2013; Varvaricheva, 2010, etc.).

Alienation of personality can be traced at all age stages of life in one form or another. However, with all this, it remains more studied theoretically, within the framework of descriptive terminology. The founders of this direction were representatives of social and humanitarian knowledge – K. Marx (“alienation of labor”), V. Frankl, E. Fromm, S. Maddi (Osin, 2015). E. Fromm spoke about alienation as a result of the loss of the meaning of life. He considered this state as an existential vacuum, in which a person became alien, first of all, to himself. In the existential personology of S. Maddy, the phenomenon of alienation is described as an existential ailment, which is characterized by several cognitive and affective symptoms, such as loss of meaning, inability to believe in the truth and benefits of one's work, lethargy and depression of a person (Maddi, Hoover & Kobasa, 1982).

Russian psychologists L. S. Vygotsky, A. N. Leontiev, D. A. Leontiev, V. S. Mukhina, S. L. Rubinstein, and others (Osin, 2015) investigated this problem. For example, D. A. Leontyev describes alienation as the loss of meaning-forming motives of activity. Furthermore, his student S. N. Osin uses the term “non-inclusion,” which describes the process of alienation as indifference and internal withdrawal from the activity alien to the subject (Osin, 2015).

V. N. Kosyrev was one of the first scientists who began to research alienation in study in Russian science. The alienation is such an attitude of a student to learning, in which the products of his activity, he, as well as teachers, administration, and other students and social groups as carriers of norms, attitudes, and values of educational activity act for him as something alien to his self, that expressed in the corresponding experiences (feelings of isolation, loneliness, rejection) and behavior (Kosyrev, 2011).

Studying the problem of procrastination and alienation of higher education in current psychology is of particular importance since it directly affects future specialists' quality of training. Both phenomena have many negative consequences for the student's personality, productivity, and successful mastering of the chosen profession. However, procrastination and alienation are considered in modern literature as separate phenomena. We did not find any studies devoted to the manifestation analysis of these phenomena in the life of a higher institution.

Our study aims to empirically test the hypothesis that there is a direct connection between these phenomena: the higher the level of procrastination among students, the higher the level of their alienation from academic work.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

To achieve this goal, we conducted a study at Vyatka State University (Kirov) in March-April 2020. The sample is random; sample size – 110 full-time students of all study courses.

Sample structure by gender: 30% of male and 70% of female; by the level of education received: bachelors (83%), specialists (4%), masters (13%); in the direction of education: social and humanitarian and pedagogical (74%), technical and natural science (26%).

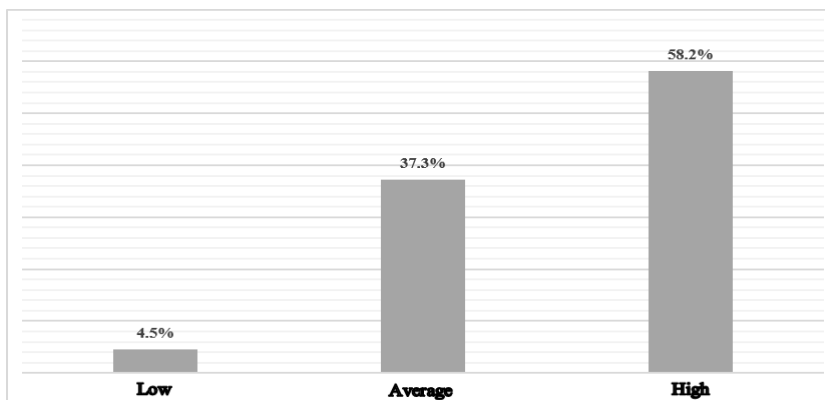
The following research methods were used: the questionnaire of student procrastination by S. Lay (Yudeeva & Garanyan, 2011) (tested by T. Yu. Yudeeva, N. G. Garanyan, D. N. Zhukova), which allows determining the level of procrastination of students; PASS (Procrastination Assessment Scale for Students by L. Solomon & E. Rothblum) (Zvereva, 2018) adapted by M. V. Zvereva, which is aimed at identifying various indicators: the frequency of academic procrastination, its causes and personal characteristics “procrastinator”; test questionnaire “Subjective alienation of study” by V. N. Kosyrev (Kosyrev, 2011), aimed at identifying and diagnosing alienation in students.

The obtained data analysis was implemented using the IBM SPSS Statistics 21.0 software package.

RESULTS

Based on the methodology “Questionnaire of student procrastination S. Lay (approbation of T. Yu. Yudeeva, N. G. Garanyan, D. N. Zhukova)” we identified groups of students with different procrastination levels (Fig. 1).

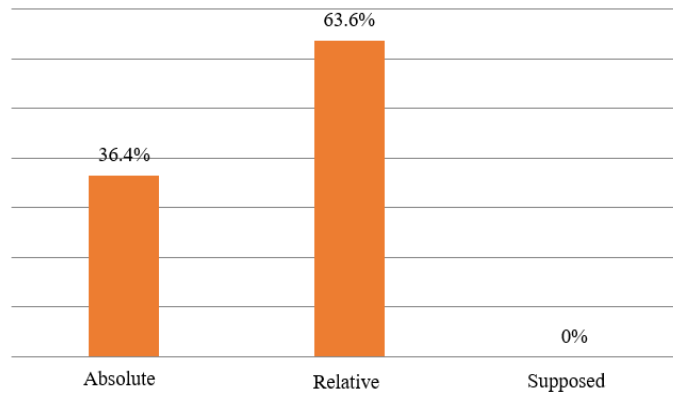
FIGURE 1
LEVELS OF STUDENTS PROCRASTINATION (“QUESTIONNAIRE OF STUDENT PROCRASTINATION C. LAY (APPROBATION OF T. YU. YUDEEVA, N. G. GARANYAN, D. N. ZHUKOVA”), %



We found a high level of procrastination in more than half of the students (58.2%). This category of students belongs to the so-called “procrastinators”, inclined to postpone the completion of educational tasks until the completion of the terms of their completion. The most organized students, who are practically not susceptible to the phenomenon of “postponing,” include only 4.5% of students.

According to the methodology “Test-questionnaire “Subjective alienation of study” by V. N. Kosyrev” the following levels of alienation among students were revealed (Fig. 2).

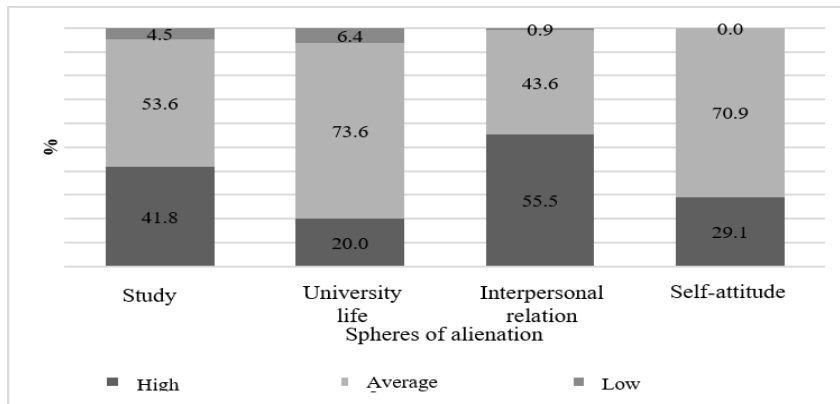
FIGURE 2
TYPES OF ALIENATION OF ACADEMIC WORK



As a result, more than a third of students (36.4%) showed *absolute alienation*. Students of those norms, values, and attitudes of educational activities transmitted to them by the university administration, teachers, and other students can be characterized as distance and internal rejection, which manifests itself in the corresponding isolated and detached behavior during educational activities. The rest of the students (63.6%) showed relative alienation, which, unlike absolute, is unstable and can change depending on conditions. There was no apparent alienation among students.

Let us analyze further *the spheres of alienation of the study* (Fig. 3).

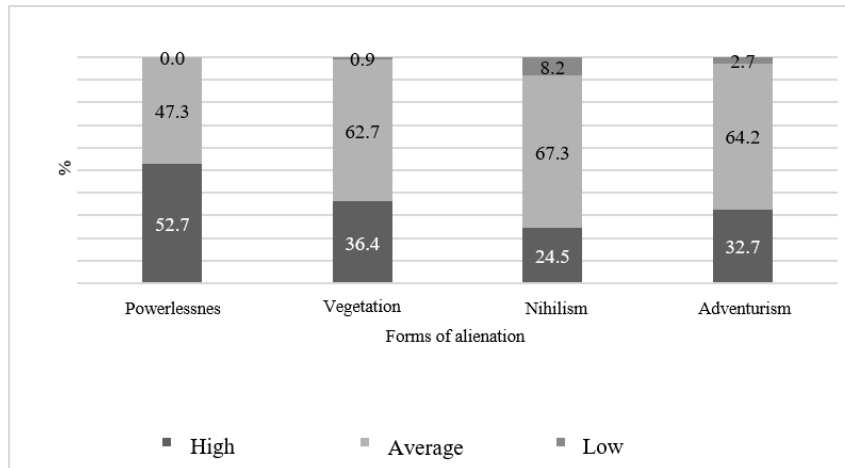
FIGURE 3
AREAS OF ALIENATION OF STUDY, %



Average exclusion rates dominate in each area. Nevertheless, the highest indicator of alienation is in interpersonal relations – more than half of the students (55.5%). A high indicator of alienation in the field of learning has 41.8% of students. Alienation in the sphere of broader university life is highly characteristic of only 20% of students. In the sphere of self-attitude, each student, in a medium or high degree, shows alienation, that is, does not accept oneself in the context of educational activity.

On the forms of manifestation of alienation among students, the results were obtained, graphically shown in Fig. 4.

FIGURE 4
FORMS OF ALIENATION OF STUDY, %



Students are dominated by a high level of powerlessness (typical for more than half of students), as seen from Fig. 4. According to S. Maddi (Maddi et al., 1982), powerlessness is a person’s loss of faith in his influence on the course of life events, which at the same time remain meaningful and essential. More than a third of students have pronounced *vegetation* – lack of learning value and *adventurism* – enthusiasm for dangerous and extreme activities as compensation for nihilism (loss of the meaning of teaching, a high level is noted for every 4th student).

The ratio of the levels of procrastination and alienation of study among students is presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1.
THE CORRELATION OF THE LEVELS OF PROCRASTINATION AND ALIENATION OF ACADEMIC WORK AMONG STUDENTS, %

Types of alienation of study	Procrastination levels		
	High	Average	Low
Absolute alienation	56.3	9.8	0.0
Relative alienation	43.8	90.2	100
Total	100	100	100

There is a direct relation: the higher the level of procrastination, the more often students have expressed absolute alienation (To determine the statistical relation, the Pearson chi-square method was used: $\chi^2=0.472$, $p=0.01$) (Ermolaev, 2003).

Furthermore, Spearman’s correlation analysis (Ermolaev, 2003) was carried out, making it possible to reveal the relation between the scales of the methodology for researching procrastination by K. Lay and the methodology for studying the alienation of educational labor by V. N. Kosyrev. The analysis results are shown in Table 2.

TABLE 2
CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS OF STUDENT PROCRASTINATION INDICATORS WITH
INDICATORS OF ALIENATION OF STUDENTS' ACADEMIC WORK

Procrastination rates	Indicators of study alienation				
	General level of alienation	Teaching	University life	Interpersonal relationships	Self-attitude
Procrastination level	0.488**	0.339**	0.339**	0.419**	0.289**
Social anxiety	0.203*	0.186	0.239*	0.112	0.181
Laziness	0.237*	0.215*	0.184	0.127	0.174
Challenge	0.256**	0.450**	0.291**	0.158	0.346**
“Bad” perfectionism	0.353**	0.395**	0.382**	0.253**	0.389**
Organization	-0.267**	-0.248**	-0.211*	-0.190*	-0.188*
Avoiding failure	-0.089	-0.045	0.005	-0.195*	-0.074
Impulsiveness	0.244*	0.184	0.286**	0.164	0.186
Self-control	-0.301**	-0.255**	-0.223*	-0.247**	-0.235*

Note: ** p-value < 0.01; * p-value < 0.05

Table data 2 indicates the presence of a positive moderately significant correlation between the level of procrastination among students and all spheres of manifestation of alienation: learning (0.339**), university life (0.339**), interpersonal relationships (0.419**), self-attitude (0.289**). Students with a high level of procrastination did not find the optimal way to gain knowledge for themselves. They could not join the student community. Such students become detached from their own “I,” lose self-identity, as well as the meaning of their existence and activity.

Positive significant correlations of the scale “Challenge” with the scales “General level of alienation” (0.256**), “Teaching” (0.450**), “University life” (0.291**), “Self-attitude” (0.346**) were revealed. This relationship demonstrates that students who procrastinate, trying to challenge themselves or others, performing tasks at the very last moment while experiencing some pleasure, are more prone to alienation in the educational sphere.

We found positive, moderately significant correlations of the “Bad” perfectionism scale with the scales “General level of alienation” (0.353**), “Teaching” (0.395**), “University life” (0.382**), “Interpersonal relations” (0.253**), “Self-attitude” (0.389**). This relation shows that students prone to procrastination due to “bad” perfectionism (overestimated requirements for the results of their work, objectively not corresponding to the individual’s inner potential) are subject to alienation in all spheres of academic life. Such students experience anxiety and internal disappointment in themselves, internal isolation and detachment from educational activities, the whole university life, the students, and teachers around them from themselves.

DISCUSSION

Let us describe the main results of the study. More than half of the students (58%) have a high level of procrastination is indicative. Moreover, most often (in 56% of cases), this group of students-procrastinators is inclined to the absolute alienation of study – stable isolated and detached behavior in various areas directly and indirectly related to studying a university.

High rates of alienation of students in the field of learning (41% of students) indicate that not everyone has found an optimal way of acquiring knowledge for themselves, could not “join” the educational process, and have withdrawn from educational activities. In the student environment, this is manifested in a low level of participation in the university’s life, events organized by the university competitions, competitions, etc.

A high level of alienation of interpersonal relations (among 55% of students) indicates that many students are alienated from other students and teachers, spend more time alone, may react negatively to the successes of other students, do not express sympathy for the problems of other people, possibly are looking for communication and support outside the university.

High alienation in the sphere of self-attitude (for every third student) indicates the presence of a negative image of themselves in educational activities, rejection of oneself in studies, and, as a result, can negatively affect personal development in general.

It is interesting to note that the dominant form of alienation among students is impotence. In fact, for more than half of the students, the value of learning remains significant, but there is no faith in their influence on the course of learning, in the feeling of their subjectivity. More than a third of students have pronounced vegetation – a decrease in learning value, every fourth student has nihilism – a loss of the meaning of learning. As a result, a compensatory mechanism develops – adventurism – passion for dangerous and extreme activities (for every third student).

The study identified the leading causes of procrastination – challenge, “bad” perfectionism, disorganization, impulsivity, and reduced self-control. Thus, procrastinating students who postpone the execution of educational affairs because of a challenge do not accept strict rules, restrictions, or any prohibitions that are always present in the framework of educational activities and the university environment in general. Such behavior can lead to difficulties in mastering the curriculum, internal personality conflicts, frequent conflicts with the teaching staff, and the administration of the university.

Students who are prone to procrastination due to “bad” perfectionism can “close” in their inner world, not accepting any attitudes and values from the outside; for them. Everything becomes alien, the meaning of obtaining higher education, participation in the university’s life, acquiring new acquaintances and friends in the student community is lost. Students with low levels of self-control experience interpersonal alienation. The inability to control oneself can lead to conflicts in a student’s social circle, provoking withdrawal from his inner world, alienation from the whole environment, alienation from their values, and attitudes. Thus, we can conclude that there is a connection between procrastination and alienation among university students. The higher the level of procrastination a student has, the higher his alienation will be in all areas of educational activity. Students who postpone assignments due to social anxiety, “bad” perfectionism, and challenge, as a rule, are alienated from the learning process, any social activity at the university, and other students. Student-procrastinators have the following personal characteristics: a low level of organization and self-control and an increased impulsivity level. The inability to control their behavior, plan their affairs, perform deliberately actions and actions by students leads to the fact that they begin to perceive the educational process as alien to them, their internal attitudes, and values.

CONCLUSION

We conclude that procrastination and alienation of the study are widespread phenomena in a university student’s life. Postponing the completion of study assignments, untimely preparation for certification activities is combined with an feeling of detachment from the educational process, refusal to take any part in university life.

In an empirical study, a positive relationship was found between the phenomena of procrastination and alienation among university students. Students who postpone assignments tend to be alienated from the learning process, from any university’s social activities with other students.

The study results can be used to develop practical recommendations for reducing the level of procrastination and alienation of study among university students. In this case, the main goals of correctional work should be to increase the level of self-control and organization of students, form their motivation for learning, involvement in extracurricular areas of university life, a positive attitude towards the teaching staff, towards other students, and towards themselves.

Further research in this area can be devoted to a deeper analysis of the relationship between procrastination and alienation and discovering new links between these phenomena.

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