

Differing forms of procrastination and relationships to impulsiveness, self-control and working memory.

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ABSTRACT

We examined the distinction between active and passive procrastination. Testing 257 undergraduates, we found passive procrastination was positively correlated with impulsiveness and negatively correlated with self-control and academic self-efficacy. Active procrastination was positively correlated with academic self-efficacy and meta-cognitive beliefs about procrastination. Neither was correlated with working memory performance.

INTRODUCTION

Procrastination is a pervasive problem on college campuses.

However, researchers have proposed that there are at least two forms of procrastination:

Passive

- Avoid Aversive Tasks
- Fear of revealing academic incompetency
- Delay work for immediate gratification
- Indecisive

Active

- Put off tasks to induce psychological flow
- To delay boredom
- Engage in thrill seeking
- Delay action with intention to start at a particular time

Choi and Moran (2009) developed a 16 item survey to measure the construct of active procrastination and demonstrated that active procrastination is distinct from passive procrastination.

Additionally, they reported that active procrastination was weakly correlated with two personality constructs, extraversion and emotional stability, as well as with life satisfaction.

In our study, we wished to replicate the separation between the two constructs as well as measure the relationship of each form of procrastination with a number of other self-report measures theoretically linked to procrastination behaviors such as impulsiveness and self-control as well cognitive measures such as working memory capacity and inhibition.

RESEARCH QUESTION

Do active and passive procrastination have different relationships with impulsiveness, self-control and working memory capacity?

METHODS

Participants:

Our on-line survey participants consisted of 257 College of Idaho undergraduates.

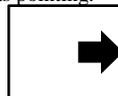
129 of these participants also completed the reading span measure and 96 participants also completed the operation span and symmetry span WM measures as well as the Spatial Stroop task.

Materials:

Our online survey included seven measures:

- General Procrastination Scale
- Active Procrastination Scale
- Barratt Impulsiveness Scale
- Self Efficacy for Learning
- Metacognitive Beliefs about Procrastination scale
- Self-Control Scale

Our lab tasks included working memory span (operation, reading and symmetry span tasks) in which participants must simultaneously remember items (such as letters) while engaged in processing (judging the veracity of a sentence) and the Spatial Stroop in which participants indicated the direction an arrow was pointing.



Congruent



Neutral



Incongruent

Trials could be either congruent, neutral or incongruent, the Stroop effect was calculated by comparing congruent to incongruent RTs and accuracies.

RESULTS

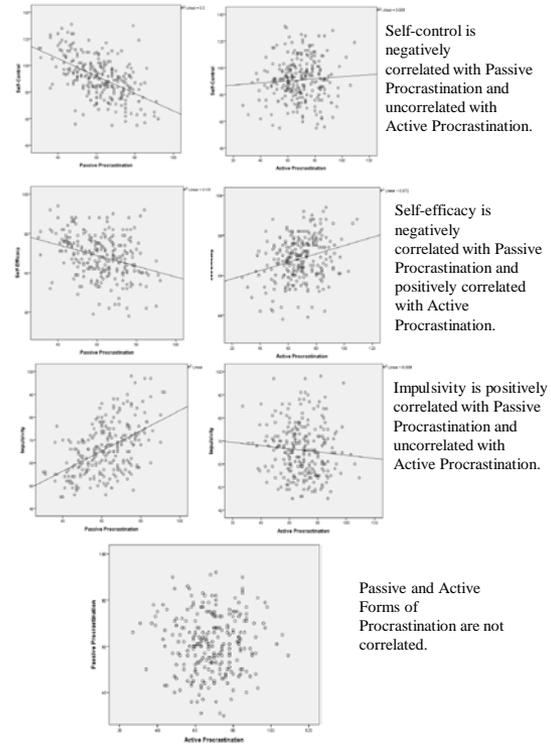
We found as Choi & Moran (2009) that there was no relationship between self-reported passive and active procrastination, $r = -.008$, $p = .92$.

Passive procrastination was negatively correlated with Self-Control, $r = -.54$, and academic Self-Efficacy, $r = -.32$, and positively correlated with Impulsiveness, $r = .51$,

Active procrastination was positively correlated with Self-Efficacy, $r = .27$, and negatively correlated with Negative Beliefs about Procrastination, $r = -.54$. All $ps < .001$.

Neither form of procrastination was correlated with performance on the Spatial Stroop nor to performance on reading or symmetry spans. There was a weak positive correlation between passive procrastination and performance on operations span, $r = .21$, $p < .05$

RESULTS & DISCUSSION



DISCUSSION

Our data support the hypothesis that active procrastination is distinct from passive.

Each showed a different pattern of relationships with impulsiveness, self-control, academic self-efficacy and meta-cognitive beliefs about procrastination.

Individuals who report passive procrastination tend to be more impulsive and exercise less self-control.

Individuals who report higher levels of active procrastination feel more control over their academic performance and are more likely to reject negative beliefs about procrastination

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