

The Exploring Internal and External Factors of Academic Procrastination: A Case Study

Eksplorasi Faktor Internal dan Eksternal Prokrastinasi Akademik: Sebuah Studi Kasus

Mistaq Marlina Khusna

Faculty of Psychology, Universitas Negeri Surabaya

Email: mistaq.22088@mhs.unesa.ac.id

Satiningsih*

Faculty of Psychology, Universitas Negeri Surabaya

Email: satiningsih@unesa.ac.id

Abstract


Academic procrastination is a common issue among students and often arises from a complex interplay of personal and environmental factors. Its impact extends beyond delayed assignments, influencing motivation, concentration, and overall academic performance. This study aims to explore the case of a high school student, AD, and describe the internal and external factors contributing to his procrastination. The research employed a qualitative case study method, with data collected through observation and semi-structured interviews, then analyzed descriptively to identify recurring patterns. The findings reveal that AD's procrastination is shaped by internal factors such as low learning motivation, weak concentration, poor self-regulation, and a preference for practical activities over theoretical subjects. External influences include strained family dynamics, limited parental autonomy, the undisciplined habits of his twin brother, peer conformity, and insufficient school control. Together, these factors create a multidimensional pattern of delay in academic tasks. This study highlights the importance of understanding procrastination not as a single-cause behavior but as a phenomenon emerging from the interaction between personal tendencies and social environments.

Keywords : Academic procrastination; internal factors; external factors

Abstrak

Prokrastinasi akademik merupakan fenomena multidimensional yang sering muncul akibat interaksi antara kecenderungan pribadi dan lingkungan sosial. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji kasus seorang siswa SMA, AD, serta menggambarkan faktor internal dan eksternal yang memengaruhi perilaku prokrastinasinya. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan studi kasus kualitatif dengan teknik observasi dan wawancara semi-terstruktur, kemudian dianalisis secara deskriptif untuk menemukan pola yang berulang. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa prokrastinasi AD dipengaruhi oleh faktor internal seperti motivasi belajar yang rendah, kesulitan konsentrasi, regulasi diri yang lemah, serta preferensi terhadap aktivitas praktis dibandingkan mata pelajaran teoritis. Faktor eksternal meliputi dinamika keluarga yang kurang harmonis, keterbatasan kebebasan dari orang tua, kebiasaan saudara kembar yang tidak disiplin, konformitas teman sebaya, serta kontrol sekolah yang belum efektif. Kombinasi faktor-faktor tersebut membentuk siklus penundaan dalam tugas akademik, menegaskan bahwa prokrastinasi bukanlah akibat dari satu faktor tunggal, melainkan hasil interaksi berbagai dimensi.

Kata kunci : *Prokrastinasi akademik; faktor internal; faktor eksternal*

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Academic procrastination is one of the most common phenomena found among high school students. Procrastination behavior is usually characterized by delays in starting or completing tasks (Wulandari et al., 2021). Procrastination can also be defined as an individual's habit of responding to and working on assigned tasks. Individuals who procrastinate generally understand that the tasks they postpone are important and beneficial for them, yet they still choose to delay completing them (Sanggasurya & Mamahit, 2021). Such delays are not merely habitual but represent a failure of self-regulation and weak time management, which ultimately impacts the individual's academic achievement (Sanggasurya & Mamahit, 2021).

The phenomenon of procrastination affects not only academic achievement but also psychological aspects such as self-esteem, motivation, and emotional well-being. (Steel, 2007) emphasized that procrastination is closely related to low self-regulation, where individuals fail to direct their behavior in line with long-term goals. In the educational context, particularly in high schools, this can lead to declining performance, increased academic stress, and maladaptive behaviors such as copying assignments from peers or avoiding responsibilities (Ndruru et al., 2022).

Based on a preliminary study conducted at SMA X, many students were found to engage in academic procrastination, beginning with delays in completing assignments, which eventually affected aspects such as decreased achievement, reduced discipline, and increased rule-breaking behavior. Several preventive measures and sanctions have been implemented, such as assigning violation points and calling parents, but these efforts have not been sufficient to address students' academic procrastination.

Many factors can contribute to procrastination, but low self-motivation and poor time management are among the primary causes (Munawwaroh et al., 2022). Time management can be defined as a student's ability to allocate time effectively and efficiently (Munawwaroh et al., 2022). When individuals can manage their time well, they are able to maximize its use through planning, scheduling, time control, and prioritization according to importance. In addition to time management, learning motivation also plays a significant role. Students with strong motivation tend to be more diligent, allocate time to learn various subjects, and have a strong drive to complete assigned tasks.

Beyond these factors, several studies have identified different causes of academic procrastination. Research conducted by (Panzola & Taufik, 2022) found that peer conformity plays a dominant role, where higher levels of conformity among students to their peer groups increase the tendency to delay academic tasks. Meanwhile, (Setiawati & Nurjanah, 2024) identified internal factors such as mood, laziness, and difficulty starting tasks, as well as external factors such as overly difficult or numerous assignments, unclear teaching methods, parental homework demands, peer influence, and limited learning resources. In contrast, (Hendrawan & Sulastra, 2022) highlighted parenting style as a factor, but their findings showed that the dimensions of responsiveness and demandingness did not significantly contribute to

academic procrastination among SMA “X” students. These differences in findings underscore that academic procrastination is a multidimensional phenomenon influenced by complex interactions between internal and external factors.

Given the variety of factors identified, this study is important in illustrating the causes of academic procrastination through a real case study as its focus. A case study approach allows researchers to explore the dynamics of task delay behavior more deeply, not only through statistical data but also through students’ subjective experiences. The urgency of this research lies in its effort to provide a concrete picture of how internal factors (motivation, self-regulation, mood) and external factors (family support, peer influence, task characteristics, parenting style) interact in students’ daily lives. Thus, this study is expected to provide a comprehensive understanding that not only enriches theory but is also practically relevant for teachers, counselors, and parents in addressing academic procrastination among adolescents.

Method

This study employs a qualitative case study method (Sugiyono, 2017). Qualitative research is descriptive, emphasizing the subject’s perspective, process, and meaning, while using theoretical foundations to support field data (Fiantika et al., 2022). The case study approach was chosen as it aligns with the research focus on understanding academic procrastination, its behavioral dynamics, and the factors influencing procrastination among high school students. This approach enables the researcher to explore subjective meanings holistically and gain deeper insights into the causes of procrastination, as well as the internal and external factors involved (Stake, 1995; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Fiantika et al., 2022).

Participant

This study involved one participant selected through purposive sampling, a technique in which subjects are chosen based on specific criteria determined by the researcher (Sugiyono, 2017). The participant is a 17 year old male high school student AD, who enrolled in grade XI IPS at SMA X in Surabaya. He was identified as showing consistent academic procrastination behaviors, such as delaying assignments, lack of focus during lessons, frequent tardiness, and reliance on peers to complete tasks. This individual provided valuable insights into the psychological and behavioral factors underlying academic procrastination among adolescents.

Data Collection Techniques

In qualitative research, case studies have been defined differently by scholars. Stake (1995) and (Fiantika et al., 2022) describe case studies as a process of learning about a case and the outcomes of that learning experienced by an individual. Meanwhile, Miles and Huberman (1994) and (Fiantika et al., 2022) view case studies as phenomena occurring within a specific period of time. From these perspectives, it can be concluded that case studies essentially represent unique experiences, as they refer to processes that occur within a certain timeframe and are connected to phenomena that can be reflected upon.

The selection of the case study approach in this research is considered appropriate, as it aligns with the focus of the study, which seeks to gain a deeper understanding of academic procrastination, the behavioral dynamics involved, and the factors influencing procrastination among high school students. This approach enables the researcher to explore subjective meanings holistically, providing deeper insights into procrastination tendencies as well as the internal and external factors that shape them.

Data Analysis

The data analysis in this study was conducted using qualitative descriptive analysis, as outlined by (Sugiyono, 2017). This approach emphasizes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, focusing on presenting the findings in a straightforward manner based on interview and observation results. Qualitative descriptive analysis aims to provide a clear picture of the phenomenon without extensive theoretical abstraction, making it suitable for exploring the factors underlying academic procrastination among high school students.

Results

A. Observation Results

During classroom observations, AD consistently displayed low interest and minimal engagement. He often appeared unfocused, resting his head on the desk, daydreaming, yawning, and showing signs of fatigue. Instead of paying attention, AD secretly used his phone to play games or access unrelated applications, and frequently chatted with peers despite teacher warnings. These behaviors reflected a lack of motivation and poor concentration during lessons.

Further observation in a Bahasa Indonesia class revealed similar patterns. AD showed little enthusiasm, frequently requested to leave the classroom, and continued to use his phone discreetly. He did not participate in discussions and often appeared bored, leaning back in his chair or supporting his chin with his hand. Overall, his classroom behavior suggested avoidance of academic tasks and weak self-regulation.

Outside the classroom, AD was frequently late to school, sometimes up to three times in a week. Despite disciplinary measures from teachers, such as being asked to sing the national anthem, his tardiness persisted. During a self-compassion seminar, he arrived on time but remained inattentive, preferring to chat with friends rather than engage in the discussion. His focus was limited, though he appeared slightly more energetic in the less formal setting compared to regular lessons.

In extracurricular activities, however, AD demonstrated a contrasting attitude. As a member of the supporter group, he showed enthusiasm, actively led chants, and communicated well with peers. This suggests that while his academic engagement was low, AD was capable of motivation and leadership in non-academic contexts.

B. Interview Results (Others)

The alloanamnesis interviews were conducted with AD's homeroom teacher, several subject teachers, the school counselor, and classmates. According to the homeroom teacher, AD is generally polite and respectful toward teachers and has not been reported to cause personal conflicts. Despite his lack of motivation in academic learning, AD is considered active in extracurricular activities, particularly in the supporter group, where he often takes on leadership roles. He frequently assists peers, demonstrates initiative, and shows strong communication skills. Although not formally the leader, AD often helps organize and guide activities, reflecting his natural leadership qualities. He is also consistent in attending extracurricular practices, even when they are scheduled almost daily after school.

However, the homeroom teacher also noted that AD struggles with emotional regulation. As a field leader, he tends to focus on his own development and prefers to complete tasks independently, often limiting opportunities for younger peers to participate. This tendency sometimes makes him appear easily frustrated and quick to anger in stressful situations. Teachers further highlighted AD's recurring tardiness,

which has become a significant issue. Records show that his violation points increased sharply from 37 in grade 10 to 92 in grade 11, with the majority related to lateness. AD often explained his tardiness as oversleeping, but the pattern persisted despite disciplinary measures such as written warnings and formal reprimands.

Subject teachers added that AD's attendance was inconsistent, with frequent absences without clear justification. They observed that he rarely showed genuine interest in lessons and was often distracted by online games during class, even while teachers were delivering material. His lack of focus and reliance on his phone were seen as barriers to his academic progress.

Classmates confirmed these observations, describing AD as someone who frequently arrived late or skipped classes altogether. They noted his tendency to use his phone during lessons despite repeated warnings from teachers, and his preference for chatting with peers rather than engaging in classroom activities. These accounts collectively portray AD as a student who demonstrates responsibility and enthusiasm in non-academic contexts, yet struggles with motivation, discipline, and focus in academic settings.

C. Interview Results (Participant)

The autoanamnesis interview with AD provided a comprehensive picture of his personal background, family relationships, interests, and academic behavior. AD is the eldest of three siblings, including a twin brother and a younger sister. He currently resides in Surabaya with his mother, stepfather, and siblings, after spending much of his childhood in Gresik with his grandmother due to his parents' separation. His contact with his biological father has been minimal since elementary school, and their relationship was strained by frequent criticism, particularly regarding his use of mobile phones. In contrast, AD described his mother as supportive and encouraging of his school and extracurricular activities, while his stepfather is caring and often bonds with him through gaming.

AD's relationship with his twin brother is close but sometimes difficult, as he perceives his sibling as stubborn and undisciplined. He noted that waiting for his twin to prepare in the mornings often contributes to his lateness at school. On the other hand, AD expressed affection for his younger sister and enjoys spending time with her. He described himself as shy in new environments, preferring to wait for others to initiate social interactions, though he maintains many friendships across different classes and grades. He values these friendships highly, especially with close peers who share similar hobbies such as gaming and extracurricular activities, and admitted to feeling lonely when his closest friends are absent.

In terms of interests, AD emphasized his passion for gaming, which began in elementary school when he received his first gadget. He enjoys playing Free Fire, Mobile Legends, and PUBG, and has participated in online competitions and account-leveling services to earn money. He also enjoys cooking with his mother and finds practical activities more engaging than theoretical lessons. His enthusiasm extends to extracurricular activities, particularly as a member of the supporter group, where he actively participates, demonstrates leadership, and shows strong communication skills. Academically, AD admitted to disliking mathematics and other calculation-heavy subjects, despite years of private tutoring arranged by his parents. He often avoided assignments by copying from classmates and expressed little guilt, believing such behavior was common among peers. He also reported low interest in Bahasa Indonesia, finding the readings too long and monotonous. Conversely, AD enjoys English and vocational subjects like PKWU, especially when they involve practical cooking tasks,

even though his grades in English often fall below the passing standard. He supplements his English learning by watching films and reading books.

AD explained that he prefers hands-on practice to lectures, as he struggles with concentration and memory during classroom learning. He often feels distracted by unrelated thoughts, which makes it difficult to retain information. He rarely asks teachers questions directly, citing shyness, and instead relies on peers to communicate his concerns. He admitted to feeling anxious about presentations, finding it difficult to organize his thoughts and prepare adequately, often waiting until school hours to do so. Homework is often postponed or completed at school by copying from peers, as he lacks motivation to work on it at home. He tends to prioritize easier tasks and delay or avoid more challenging ones.

Despite these challenges, AD expressed aspirations to pursue higher education, particularly in culinary arts, which he finds enjoyable due to its practical nature. He also mentioned an interest in law but doubted his ability to succeed in that field. According to AD, his motivation to attend school comes largely from his friendships, as his parents restrict his social activities outside of school. He spends most of his free time at home playing games or watching films. When facing personal problems, AD tends to keep them to himself rather than sharing with family or friends, preferring to resolve or forget them independently.

Discussion

The case of AD illustrates how academic procrastination is not a single-cause phenomenon but rather emerges from a web of interconnected influences. His internal struggles low motivation, difficulty concentrating, and reliance on his mobile phone mirror what (Munawwaroh et al., 2022) identified as critical predictors of procrastination: poor time management and diminished learning motivation. In AD's daily life, the inability to regulate his study time and the preference for immediate gratification through gaming exemplify how weak self-regulation translates into habitual delay. This resonates with the broader literature that emphasizes the role of self-discipline and attentional control in mitigating procrastination.

AD's learning preferences further reinforce this pattern. He gravitates toward practical, hands-on activities such as cooking and extracurricular supporter events, while perceiving theoretical subjects like mathematics and Bahasa Indonesia as tedious and burdensome. This aligns with (Setiawati & Nurjanah, 2024), who found that subject characteristics difficulty, perceived relevance, and task complexity are decisive in shaping procrastination tendencies. AD's avoidance of mathematics, despite years of tutoring, illustrates how task aversion and perceived irrelevance can override external support systems.

From the external perspective, AD's family background plays a significant role. His strained relationship with his biological father, coupled with limited autonomy at home, pushes him to seek escape through gaming and peer interaction. This echoes findings by (Ndruru et al., 2022), who highlighted parental neglect and peer influence as dominant external factors in academic procrastination. AD's reliance on peers for motivation—stating that his primary reason for attending school is to meet friends—illustrates the strong pull of social conformity. This is consistent with (Panzola & Taufik, 2022), who demonstrated a significant positive correlation between peer conformity and procrastination, showing that students often prioritize group activities over academic responsibilities.

Interestingly, while parenting style is often assumed to be a major determinant, (Hendrawan & Sulastra, 2022) found that the dimensions of responsiveness and demandingness did not significantly predict procrastination. AD's case reflects this nuance although his mother and stepfather provide support and care, their parenting style does not appear to directly reduce his procrastination. Instead, the more immediate influences of peer conformity and family routines exert stronger effects. This suggests that in AD's context, parenting style operates indirectly, while peer and sibling dynamics have more direct consequences on his academic behavior.

School factors also emerge as relevant. Despite repeated warnings and sanctions from teachers, AD's procrastination persists. This reflects the observation in (Ndruru et al., 2022) that school control mechanisms are often insufficient to counteract entrenched procrastination habits. Moreover, the lack of consistent enforcement or meaningful consequences, as noted in (Setiawati & Nurjanah, 2024) regarding unclear task instructions and lenient deadlines, may reinforce AD's tendency to delay. His behavior demonstrates how institutional structures can inadvertently sustain procrastination when disciplinary measures fail to address underlying motivational and regulatory deficits.

Taken together, AD's case exemplifies the multidimensional nature of academic procrastination described across the literature. His internal tendencies toward avoidance and distraction intersect with external pressures from family dynamics, peer conformity, and school practices. Each factor amplifies the others, creating a cycle of delay that is difficult to break.

Conclusions

Based on the observations and interviews, academic procrastination in the case of AD is influenced by multiple interconnected factors. Internally, AD shows low learning motivation, weak concentration, poor self-regulation, and a tendency to prefer practical activities such as cooking or gaming over theoretical learning. He often delays assignments, avoids difficult subjects, and relies on copying tasks from peers.

Externally, family and social environments play a significant role. A strained relationship with his biological father, limited freedom from parents, and the undisciplined habits of his twin brother contribute to his lateness and lack of focus. His main motivation for attending school is social interaction with peers rather than academic goals, while ineffective school control allows procrastination behaviors to persist.

Thus, AD's case highlights academic procrastination as a multidimensional phenomenon, shaped by the interaction of internal tendencies and external influences that reinforce patterns of delay in academic activities.

Suggestions

In light of the patterns observed in AD's case, several recommendations can be directed toward him, his family, and the school environment. For AD, it is essential to cultivate stronger self-discipline and focus by gradually reducing his reliance on mobile phones during study hours and developing consistent routines for completing assignments. His enthusiasm for practical activities such as cooking and extracurricular involvement can be leveraged to build motivation, linking academic responsibilities to areas he already enjoys. By doing so, AD can begin to see academic tasks not as burdens but as opportunities to strengthen skills that are relevant to his interests.

For the family and school, collaborative support is crucial. Parents can provide balanced guidance by granting AD more autonomy while still monitoring his study habits, ensuring that leisure activities do not overshadow academic obligations. Teachers and counselors should reinforce classroom management by setting clearer instructions, deadlines, and consequences, while also creating group learning environments that encourage accountability rather than conformity to non-academic distractions. By working together, both family and school can provide consistent reinforcement, helping AD to develop healthier study habits and gradually reduce his tendency to procrastinate.

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