



Superstition and Dysfunctional Attitude as predictors of Procrastination among college going girls

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Abstract

The Purpose of the present study was to find out how superstition and dysfunctional attitude predict procrastination. A sample of 100 college going girls was selected. Multiple regression analysis demonstrated superstition as a significant predictor of procrastination.

key words: Procrastination, superstition, dysfunctional attitude.

Introduction

Most of us are familiar with some form of superstitious belief or practice. As common as superstitious beliefs and behaviors are, they tend to be based on belief systems which cannot be empirically proven. Often people will hold a strong belief in superstitious phenomena and describe exactly what that phenomenon is, but cannot logically support why that phenomena should be considered substantial. Although there are several definitions of superstition (e.g. Beck & Miller, 2001; Jahoda, 1969; MacDonald, 1995; Peterson, 1978; Scheidt, 1973; Tobacyk & Milford, 1983), the present study will refer to superstitious belief as those that are inconsistent with scientific knowledge and are more self-oriented. The English word superstition is derived from Latin: super – "over, above, upon" and sisto – "stop, check, cause to stand, set up".

Different forms of superstition:

- Belief in unspecific bad consequences (e.g. walking under a ladder, a black cat crossing one's path, breaking a mirror, etc...)
- Belief in unspecific good consequences (e.g. finding a four-leaf clover, seeing a chimney sweep, etc...)
- Engaging in protective rituals (e.g. spilling water after someone, knocking on wood, etc...)
- Belief in specific consequences (e.g. "If your palm is itchy, money is coming to you", "If your nose is itchy you are going to have a quarrel with someone", etc...).

Superstition and culture:

Superstition is found both in rural as well as urban dwelling people. In spite of science making great progress the percentage of superstition is found to be increasing rather than decreasing. Educated young generations from rural and urban areas are found to be superstitious. People instead of believing in their own capacity are more relying on luck, fate etc. They are relating specific incidence or number as fortunate or unfortunate and taking action accordingly (no. 13 is unfortunate 9 is fortunate). This behavior can be attributed to factors such as insecurity, lack of affection in relationship, stress at workplace, changed lifestyle etc.

Superstitious rituals abound, even among those who claim not to be superstitious. To gain good fortune, for example, people pick up penny, cross their fingers, and carry lucky charms (Jahoda, 1969; Vyse, 1997; Zusne & Jones, 1989). Superstitious rituals are also enacted to “undo” bad fortune, often after an individual has said or done something that is believed to cause bad luck. In fact, one of the most common superstitions in Western society is for people to knock on wood after having “tempted fate” (Blum, 1976; Fliess, 1944; Keinan, 2002; Risen & Gilovich, 2008).

In addition, Feng Shui experts recommend that throwing away egg shells or pouring outwater is also effective in reversing bad fortune. At first glance, these rituals appear to be random, unrelated, and culturally specific traditions. However, these rituals share a common feature that we believe underlies their cultural “success” over other possible options: they involve motor movements that exert force awayfrom the representation of self. After tempting fate, when negative outcomes are especially accessible or “top-of-mind”—as if one just invited bad fortune (Risen & Gilovich, 2008), engaging in an avoidant action may help create the sense that the bad luck is being pushed away.

Numerous studies have shown that people have a natural tendency to approach positive objects and avoid negative objects in their environment (e.g.,Cacioppo, Priester, & Bernston, 1993; Chen & Bargh, 1999; Davidson, Ekman, Saron, Senulis, & Friesen, 1990; Dickinson & Dearing, 1979; Gray, 1994; Lang, Bradley, & Cuthbert, 1990; Strack & Deutsch, 2004). In most cases, avoiding negative stimuli reduces the risk of potential harm.

For example, avoiding sick or dangerous people reduces the chance of being infected or injured. The natural tendency to approach the good and avoid the bad is repeated often enough that the actions themselves come to influence judgment and behavior. For instance, people rate neutral objects more positively when they engage in approach actions that pull something toward the self, and more negatively when they engage in avoidant actions thatpush something away from the self (Cacioppo et al., 1993). In addition, people identify positive stimuli more quickly when engaging in approach actions and identify negative stimuli more quickly when engaging in avoidant actions (Chen & Bargh, 1999

The Differential Psychology Perspective:

The differential psychology perspective understands procrastination as a personality trait. Studies in this perspective have built up an extensive nomological network of procrastination (cf. Ferrari, 2010; Steel, 2007) and have focused on studying the relationship of procrastination with other traits and trait-like variables. Increased procrastination is mainly related to decreased conscientiousness and increased neuroticism (e.g., Johnson & Bloom, 1995; Lee, Kelly, & Edwards, 2006; van Eerde, 2003, 2004; Watson, 2001), increased perfectionism (e.g., Flett, Hewitt, & Martin, 1995; Pychyl & Flett, 2012), low self-esteem (e.g., Ferrari, 1994, 2000; Pychyl, Coplan, & Reid, 2002), decreased optimism (e.g., Jackson, Weiss, & Lundquist, 2000), and different identity aspects (e.g., self-concept and self-

presentation, Ferrari, Driscoll, & Daz-Morales, 2007; e.g., ego identity, Shanahan & Pychyl, 2007). Procrastination is also often associated with self-handicapping (e.g., Ferrari, 1991; Lay, Knish, & Zanatta, 1992) as a strategy to preserve one's self-esteem.

Review of literature

Most people view procrastination as a negative personality trait. Procrastinators are thought to be indifferent to the quality of their work and possibly of lower cognitive ability than their non procrastinating peers. Previous empirical studies have supported this view of procrastination, revealing that procrastination results in lost time, poorer health, decreased long-term learning, and lower self-esteem (Burns, Dittman, Nguyen, & Mitchelson, 2000; Ferrari, Johnson, & McCown, 1995; Milgram, Dangour, & Raviv, 1992; Tice & Baumeister, 1997; Wolters, 2003). A number of studies also have indicated that procrastination may be linked to anxiety and fear of failure (Ferrari & Tice, 2000). These findings suggest that procrastination is an impediment to academic success because it decreases the quality and quantity of learning while increasing the severity of stress and negative outcomes in students' lives (Ferrari et al., 1995; Milgram, Gehrman, & Keinan, 1992) These findings suggest that procrastination is common among college students.

A variety of studies also have examined the relationship between procrastination and social-affective variables. Ferrari et al. (1995) reported positive correlations between procrastination and self-handicapping, task avoidance, perfectionism, irrational beliefs, and depression. Negative correlations were reported for self esteem, internal locus of control, and personal standards. Schouwenburg (1995) found a negative correlation between procrastination and conscientiousness but no relationship with fear of failure. Lay (1994) reported a modest yet significant correlation between procrastination and dejection. Flett, Blankstein, and Martin (1995) concluded that procrastination increases anxiety and depression.

Procrastination – the needless delay of things one intends to do – is a phenomenon that has accompanied humankind at least since the times of Cicero (cf. Steel, 2007) and has intensively attracted researchers' interest, especially in the last four decades.

It is a well-known phenomenon in everyday life. Study results point to prevalence rates as high as 20–25% in the general population (e.g., Ferrari, DazMorales, O'Callaghan, Daz, & Argumedo, 2007). Students who procrastinated were more anxious (Rothblum, Solomon, & Murakami, 1986) and stressed (Tice & Baumeister, 1997) across the entire semester, and were more agitated before a test (Lay & Schouwenburg, 1993). Compatibly, the wide variety of self-help books (e.g., Burka and Yuen, 2008; Ferrari, 2010; Steel, 2011) conveys the picture of a phenomenon that is often accompanied by distress. The resulting need for reducing procrastination (e.g., Solomon & Rothblum, 1984) is met by different kinds of intervention programs (for an overview see Schouwenburg, Lay, Pychyl, & Ferrari, 2000).

There is significant evidence to suggest that procrastination is prevalent and problematic (Steel, 2007). For instance, Harriott and Ferrari (1996) found that 20% of the adult population claim to chronically procrastinate. However, research on procrastination has focused primarily on academic not on workplace settings. This is a considerable shortcoming given that procrastination could negatively impact organizations through reductions in performance (Steel, 2007; Steel, Brothen, & Wambach, 2001).

Objectives:

1. To study how superstition will predict procrastination in college going girls.
2. To study how dysfunctional attitude will predict procrastination in college going girls.

Hypotheses:

1. Superstition will not predict procrastination in college going girls.
2. Dysfunctional attitude will not predict procrastination in college going girls.

Participants:

The research was conducted on a purposive sample of 100 college going girls, age ranging from (18-20 years) from various colleges- Banasthali Vidyapith (Rajasthan), Institute For Excellence In A High Education (Bhopal), Sarojini Naidu Girls College (Bhopal). Each participant was given a choice to participate in the research.

Research design and Statistical Technique:

Correlational design was used. Data was analyzed through multiple regression. All assessments were also correlated with one another to view any existing relationships between the variables. Mean, standard deviation were also calculated for the same.

Variables:

Predictor Variable- Superstition and dysfunctional attitude.

Criterion Variable- Procrastination. **Control Variable-**Age and Gender. **Instrumentation:**

1. **Superstition Scale:** This scale was developed by L.N Dubey and B.M Dixit (2008).
2. **Procrastination Scale:** Procrastination was assessed as the score on the measure of procrastination scale authored by (Lay, 1986).
3. **Dysfunctional Attitude Scale:** This scale was developed by Arlene Weissman (1978).

Results And Discussion

Raw scores do not give any results or we cannot interpret anything through raw scores. Hence, we use different statistical techniques to interpret the raw scores. Statistical techniques not only guide us in framing statements of predictive nature but also enable us to say something definite regarding the trustworthiness of our prediction. Thus, this chapter undertakes analysis and interpretation of the results.

Table 4.1 Mean and standard deviation

Variables	Mean	Standard deviation
Superstition	61.09	11.04
Dysfunctional Attitude	170.75	22.46
Procrastination	56.38	16.42

Table 4.1 depicts the mean and standard deviation of the variables- superstition, dysfunctional attitude and procrastination. The mean score for superstition is 61.09 which seems to deviate by 11.04. Dysfunctional Attitude has a mean score of 170.75 deviating by 22.46. Similarly the mean score of procrastination is 56.38 with the standard deviation of 16.42.

Table 4.2 Table Showing Regression Analysis For Procrastination

Predictor variables	R Square	F	Standardized coefficient Beta
Superstition	.518	52.044*	.758*
Dysfunctional attitude			-.051

*significant $p < 0.01$

The above table exhibits the results of multiple regression analysis where criterion variable was procrastination. R Square indicates the amount of variation in the criterion explained by the combination of predictor variables in the model, thereby indicating whether the model is the good predictor of criterion variables. The value of R^2 was found to be .518 indicates that 51% of the variance in procrastination scores is to be accounted for by variable superstition and dysfunctional attitude. The value of F is 52.04 ($p < .01$). This indicates that the R square is statistically significant, i.e., the effect of superstition and dysfunctional attitude on procrastination is significant. Beta Coefficient allows us to distinguish the relative importance of each independent variable in determining the value of the dependent variable. Beta value of superstition is .758 ($p < .01$) which shows that there is a strong positive relation between superstition and procrastination. Beta value of dysfunctional attitude is -.051 ($p > .05$) which shows that there is a insignificant relation between dysfunctional attitude and procrastination but there is a negative relation between them, i.e., (when procrastination increases dysfunctional attitude decreases).

Hence the null hypothesis “Superstition will not predict procrastination in college going girls.” is Rejected And “Dysfunctional attitude will not predict procrastination in college going girls” is Accepted.

Ferrari et al. (1995) reported positive correlations between procrastination, irrational beliefs and paranormal beliefs. Procrastinators are thought to be indifferent to the quality of their work and possibly of lower cognitive ability than their non procrastinating peers. Superstition has been found to be higher among girls, lower intelligence levels, lower socioeconomic statuses, and students with a high level of suggestibility (Zapf, 1945). Other factors found to correlate with a high degree of superstitious belief include emotional maladjustment (Maller

&Lundeen,1934),lowercognitiveability(Musch&Ehrenberg,2002),andirrationalbelief tendencies (Tobacyk& Milford,1983)., if superstitious beliefs become too extreme, they can also become risky.

At some level people started believing in superstition too much that it hampered their daily life tasks. Among few students superstition had an impact on their academic performance and they started delaying academic tasks that lead to procrastination. There is evidence that procrastination results in detrimental academic performance, including poor grades, and course withdrawal. Many researchers suggest numerous possible reasons for the behavior pattern. Some of these possible reasons for procrastination are evaluation anxiety, difficulty in making decisions, rebellion against control, lack of assertion, fear of the consequences of failures. Procrastination is widespread in Academic contexts, where students are required to meet deadlines for assignment completion in an environment full of events and activities which compete for the student's time and attention. (Tice & Baumeister, 1997; van Eerde, 2003) their finding have supported that in the academic domain, procrastination is related to poor academic performance

Several studies have reported that many college students procrastinate despite these apparent consequences (Conti, 2000; Saddler & Buley, 1999). More than 70% of college students reported that they procrastinate regularly, and roughly 20% do so habitually (Schouwenburg, 1995). Whereas most of the students believe that at some level their irrational beliefs had an impact on their performance which lead them to become procrastinators. Higher ability students procrastinate more than lower ability students, and procrastination tends to increase as students advance in their academic careers and become more self-regulated (Ferrari, 1991). These findings suggest that procrastination is common among college students. Lay, Edwards, Parker, and Endler (1989) reported a positive correlation between procrastination, dysfunctional attitude and anxiety. Procrastination – the needless delay of things one intends to do – is a phenomenon that has accompanied humankind at least since the times of Cicero (cf. Steel, 2007) and has intensively attracted researchers' interest, especially in the last four decades. It is a well-known phenomenon in everyday life. Study results point to prevalence rates as high as 20–25% in the general population (e.g., Ferrari, DazMorales, O'Callaghan, Daz, & Argumedo, 2007).

The prevalence rates of academic procrastination (i.e., procrastination of study-related activities; e.g., writing a term paper, studying for an examination) among university students are considerably higher. Up to 70% of university students consider themselves procrastinators (e.g., Schouwenburg, 2004), and 50% procrastinate consistently and problematically (e.g., Day, Mensink, & O'Sullivan, 2000; Solomon & Rothblum, 1984). Students have reported that procrastination typically accounts for more than one third of their daily activities and is often carried out through sleeping, reading, or watching television (Pychyl, Lee, Thibodeau, & Blunt, 2000).

Students who procrastinated were more anxious (Rothblum, Solomon, & Murakami, 1986) and stressed (Tice & Baumeister, 1997) across the entire semester, and were more agitated before a test (Lay & Schouwenburg, 1993).

Though there is a tremendous change in the life of human beings due to progress in science yet superstitions still remain in Indian people. In India, women are more superstitious than men mostly due to the lack of education. Since women are suppressed in every sphere, it has made them prone to superstition. We live in male dominated society. Also women are usually not self-dependent. This is mostly seen in rural parts of the country. But their urban counterparts too are equally blindfolded. Superstition is found both in rural as well as urban dwelling people. In spite of science making great progress the percentage of superstition is found to be increasing rather than decreasing. Educated young generations from rural and urban areas are found to be superstitious. People instead of believing in their own capacity are more relying on luck, fate etc. They are relating specific incidence or number as fortunate or unfortunate and taking action accordingly (no. 13 is unfortunate 9 is fortunate). This behavior can be attributed to factors such as insecurity, lack of affection in relationships, stress at workplace, changed lifestyle etc. Finding by Santhi (1982) supported that superstitions are prevalent among people of all levels of formal education. Patel (1984) has pointed out that the majority of Indians had beliefs in superstitions. Sumaranjitha & Sreedhar, (1992) found superstitions beliefs in the first year female college students.

Intelligence, creativity and academic ability were found inversely related to the superstition beliefs. Gupta (1999) found the prevalence of superstitious behavior among male and female students of different professional courses. This finding by George and Sreedhar (2006) supported this study that students coming from urban areas believe more in superstition than those from rural areas. They also found that females have more irrational beliefs than males.

Religiosity has been found to correlate with the occurrence of superstitious and paranormal beliefs in many studies (Beck & Miller, 2001; MacDonald, 1995; Orenstein, 2002; Tobacyk & Milford, 1983). MacDonald (1995) found that a higher degree of religiosity correlated with a higher frequency of reporting belief in paranormal experiences such as telepathy, but not belief in experiences such as clairvoyance. Beck and Miller (2001) found a correlation between a high degree of religiosity and higher levels of dysfunctional belief in the supernatural. They also found that students high in religiosity who had also encountered an emotionally negative experience in the past year decreased in their degree of supernatural belief.

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