

The Silent Pause: A Review Study Of Procrastination And Associated Variables On Youth

Dr. Mukta Mrinalini

Assistant Professor ,Department of Psychology, Patna Women's College ,Autonomous Patna University ,mukta.psy@patnawomenscollege.in

Abstract

Prevalence of Academic procrastination among youth, aged 15 to 25 years old presents a significant challenge to their ability to self-regulate and thus achieve educational goals and successfully adjust to other aspects of their personal lives; specifically, how they handle their psychological health and/or future goals. This paper presents a complete systematic qualitative literature review of empirical studies from 2010-2025 on how various cognitive variables such as self-regulation, academic self-efficacy, emotional regulation, perfectionism, and fear of failure, as well as contextual variables (i.e., parenting styles, teacher support, digital distractions, task characteristics and academic climate) impact students' development. Adhering to the PRISMA Guidelines and following the guidelines of contemporary "Big Data" reviews, thematic analysis identified two different academic settings; in one type of academic setting, students have a strong level of self-regulatory skills supported by a positive environment that suppresses delays in completing their tasks; in the second setting, students suffer from maladaptive cognitive-behavioral disorders that result in procrastination behaviors being exacerbated by distraction caused by digital media. The proposed Integrated Theoretical Models demonstrate a bi-directional influence of cognitive and contextual pathways on students' level of academic engagement, academic performance and psychological health and well-being. Multi-level intervention strategies addressing both the student's capabilities and the student's support structures/environment should be developed for the benefit of educators, counsellors and policymakers.

Keywords: Procrastination, Self-regulation, Academic self-efficacy, Emotion regulation, Perfectionism, Fear of failure.

Introduction

The span of years from age 15 to 25 is the time when someone travels throughout adolescence and into early adult life. This time frame includes many significant actions such as a definitive increase in educational responsibilities, growing independence, and the way to transit from a secondary school student through a college/university setting. It is at this transitional point when a majority of students will become procrastinators. Academic procrastination can be defined as the conscious choice to delay/perhaps avoid the completion of educationally directed assignments/tasks even though there is a defined expectation of a negative consequence. Therefore, academic procrastination is a failure in one's self-control and can be found across the spectrum of students', from high school students to college/university students, and it contributes to poor academic performance and increased levels of emotional stress and decreases the acquisition of necessary life skills (González-Brignardello, Sánchez-Elvira Paniagua & López-González, 2023; Ragusa et al., 2023; Rozental et al., 2014; Xu, 2021).

The field of scholarship has changed considerably from the original view based on a collection of individual differences (i.e., traits) that students possessed, to one where researchers are looking at cognitive processes in combination with the context in which those cognitive processes occur to better understand how students learn. For example, many of the cognitive processes that are central to the success of a student in completing his/her academic responsibilities include self-regulation (e.g., setting goals, planning, monitoring, reflecting), academic self-efficacy beliefs, emotion regulation skills, perfectionism, and fear of failing. Additionally, the context in which an academic task is

performed plays a great role in terms of whether or not cognitive processes will be fully utilized (i.e., whether or not the task allows for self-regulated learning) (Türkcan & Kızıldağ-Şahin, 2025; Huang et al., 2025; Elizondo et al., 2024; Sirois & Pychyl, 2013). Earlier reviews have shown that self-regulation plays a key role in procrastination, but there are still many gaps in understanding how cognitive vulnerabilities interact with the context in which young people develop their autonomy (age 15 to 25). There is an increasing need to create more culturally sensitive approaches to support students facing academic pressures in different educational settings; as evidenced by regional surveys for Mental Health Services. This qualitative systematic review will attempt to answer three major research questions: What are the cognitive and contextual factors that have been consistently linked to academic procrastination amongst youth (15 - 25 years)? How do these factors cluster thematically according to the level of protection offered by the educational setting? What integrated theoretical models can inform the development of effective preventive interventions? Using a thematic synthesis of the recent empirical research, this paper will provide recommendations for both educators and policymakers (Apsari, Atmoko & Setyowati, 2026; Xu, 2021; Ragusa et al., 2023; Steel, 2007).

Method

In adhering to PRISMA guidelines, this systematic literature review was conducted qualitatively, with a focus on transparent reporting and methodological rigor similar to approaches used in contemporary psychological syntheses using big-data visualization methods. The databases examined during the comprehensive search of the literature included Scopus, PubMed, PsycINFO, Google Scholar, Web of Science, and Elsevier. These searches were conducted between January 2010 and December 2025, and they involved the use of multiple Boolean combinations of key search terms, specifically: "academic procrastination" OR "student procrastination" OR "adolescent procrastination", "self-regulation" OR "self-efficacy" OR "time management" OR "emotion regulation" OR "fear of failing" OR "perfectionism" OR "parenting" OR "teacher support" OR "social media" OR "digital distractions" OR "academic climate", and "youth" OR "adolescents" OR "students" OR "15-25" OR "high school" OR "college".

These criteria were as follows:

- (1) Participants aged 15 through 25, including those enrolled in high school, college or university;
- (2) Procrastination was assessed using validated measures, including Tuckman Procrastination Scale, Pure Procrastination Scale, and Academic Intentions Scale or their equivalents;
- (3) Significant studies examining designated cognitive or contextual factors related to procrastination;
- (4) English-language peer-reviewed journals;
- (5) Access to the full text of the studies. Non-empirical studies, age-inappropriate samples, and studies with no procrastination measure or relevant factors associated with procrastination were excluded.

Two phases of screening began with identifying records and then reviewing them by Title/Abstract and assessing them to determine their full-text eligibility. The purpose of the study was to provide a systematic approach for the synthesis of findings through Thematic Synthesis organized into Cognitive and Contextual Domains, and to develop variable clusters based on Network Visualization concepts. Through the iterative pattern analysis of the data, Protective and Risk Academic Settings were developed, and the results yielded integrated Theoretical Models that were comparable to the Positive-Negative Psychology Frameworks.

Table 1. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Participants aged 15-25 years (high school/university students)	Children (<15 years) or adults (>25 years)
Validated procrastination measure (Tuckman, PPS, AIQ, etc.)	No procrastination assessment or unvalidated scales
Analysis of cognitive/contextual variables of interest	Exclusively affective/physiological focus
English journal, 2010-2025	Books, theses, conference papers, gray literature
Full-text accessible	Non-English; restricted access

Results and Discussion

3.1 Characteristics of Reviewed Literature

A variety of studies were synthesized to analyze procrastination in high schools and universities in various parts of Asia, North America, Europe, and other areas, providing findings that reflect the impact of different cultures on procrastination. Studies using convenience sampling methods dominated the cross-sectional design of the review and utilized standardized measuring instruments such as the Tuckman Procrastination Scale, the Pure Procrastination Scale, and the Academic Intentions Questionnaire to collect data. The studies also provided evidence of common themes concerning cognitive factors and other contextual influences that are associated with agonistic behavior throughout different educational settings and geographical areas (Adawiyah, Rodiyah & Hasanati, 2024; Xu, 2021).

3.2 Cognitive Variables: Protective Academic Settings

Protective cognitive frameworks are built on the foundations of self-regulation processes. Using self-regulation, such as goal setting, strategic planning, monitoring performance, and evaluating reflexively, allows students to take initiative when starting a task, stick with it through adversity, and change the way they approach the task based on the results. Time management skills, namely, ability to priorities, effectively plan and adhere to schedules, and complete tasks on time, also contribute to task persistence even though they do not rely on a student's self-regulation ability (Elizondo et al., 2024; Ragusa et al., 2023; Valenzuela et al., 2020).

Academic Self-Efficacy developed into a central belief structure that supports confidence in one's ability to succeed and to recover from temporary academic setbacks. Students who perceive themselves as having a high level of ability to master a specific task reported fewer instances of avoidance behavior when faced with challenges and greater levels of involvement. The Adaptive Emotion Regulation Process facilitated Cognitive Reappraisal of the emotional state, Problem-focused coping strategies, and Mindfulness-based practices that diminish negative feelings associated with accomplishing a particular task (Rad et al., 2025; Jing, Zainudin & Othman, 2025).

Table 2. Cognitive-Protective Variables

Variable	Key Characteristics	Protective Mechanisms
Self-Regulation	Goal setting, planning, monitoring, reflection	Proactive task initiation and persistence
Time Management	Prioritization, scheduling, deadline adherence	Sustained effort through structured routines
Academic Self-Efficacy	Confidence in competence and mastery	Resilience against setbacks
Adaptive Emotion Regulation	Reappraisal, problem-focused coping	Mitigation of task-related negative affect

3.3 Cognitive Variables: Risk Academic Settings

The fear of failing to do well was the main reason for cognitive vulnerability because people try to protect their self-worth and avoid anticipating shame by putting off tasks. Excessive perfectionism, which includes worrying about mistakes and doubting oneself, as well as setting your own personal standards too high, increased the incidence of delay-pattern behaviour as it increased the amount of pressure put on your performance above realistic expectations (Abdi Zarrin & Gracia, 2020).

Impulsivity, lack of coping skills, unclear emotional thinking, and inappropriate escape coping strategies caused people with emotional dysregulation to be more likely to exhibit these behaviours. The irrational beliefs of individuals that lead them to associate "inevitable failure" with a certain task and feel overwhelmed by their tasks create a self-defeating cycle connecting delayed action with a reduction in self efficacy (Türkcan & Kızıldağ-Şahin, 2025; Huang et al., 2025).

3.4 Contextual Variables: Protective Academic Settings

Teachers' support for autonomy helped their students develop intrinsic motivation, competence, and self-determination through the use of highly structured, but flexible, instructional practices. Through positive parenting, by balancing both warmth and appropriate behavioural monitoring, adolescents developed self-regulation skills during their transition toward autonomy. High clarity/utility of tasks increased perceived task value, reduced task aversiveness, and increased task engagement for students. Collaborative learning environments and supportive feedback helped to diminish the isolation-related procrastination students experienced (Huang et al., 2025).

Table 3. Contextual-Protective Variables

Variable	Key Characteristics	Protective Mechanisms
Teacher Autonomy Support	Structured flexibility, constructive feedback	Enhanced motivation and competence

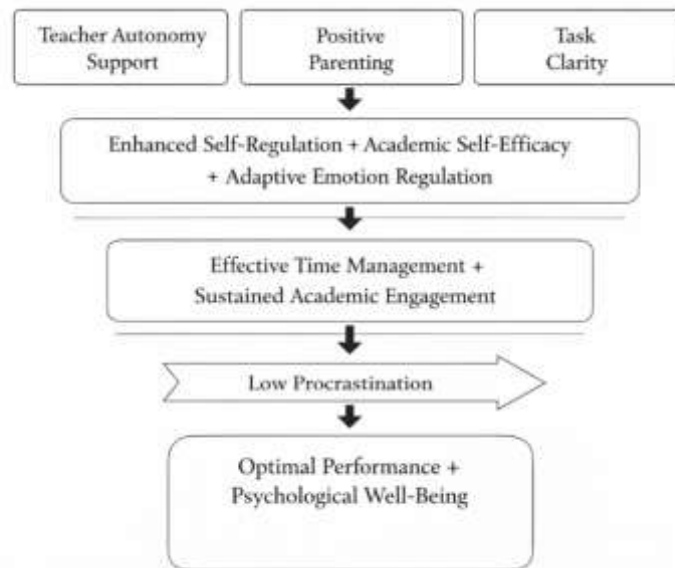
Positive Parenting	Warmth, appropriate monitoring	Self-regulation development
Task Clarity/Relevance	Clear instructions, meaningful purpose	Reduced aversiveness
Collaborative Environments	Peer support, reduced isolation	Enhanced engagement

3.5 Contextual Variables: Risk Academic Settings

Digital distractions became a dominant feature of many of today's risk environments, including problems associated with social media addiction, smartphone-related nomophobia, and multitasking environments that encourage the fragmentation of one's attention and the use of immediate gratification alternatives. Certain parenting practices (e.g., over-controlling parents) created an increased fear of failure and a higher need for perfectionism due to perfectionistically high expectations along with the creation of inconsistent parenting practices that discouraged the development of self-regulatory skills. Academic workload vagueness, high-stakes exam anxiety, and non-supportive institutional culture also contributed to the development of emotional dysregulation and tendencies toward avoidance behaviours (Huang et al., 2025).

3.6 Integrated Theoretical Models

Figure 1. Protective Cognitive-Contextual Model



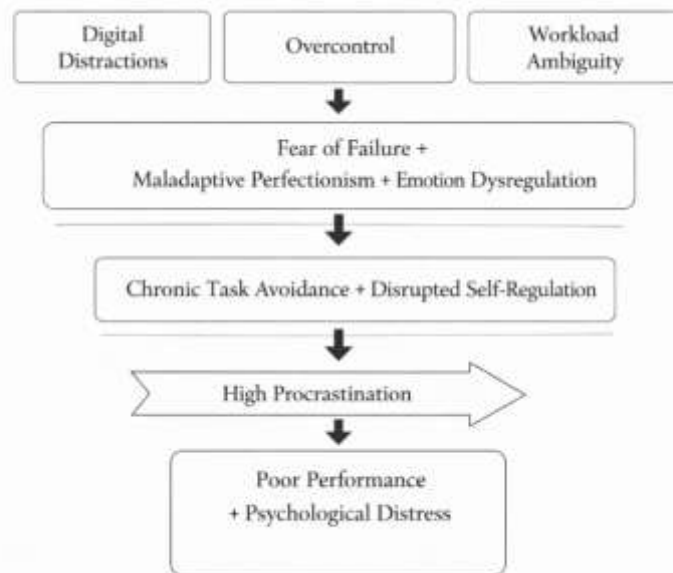
Based on the researches done on the cognitive and contextual models it can be concluded that, the teacher's support, positive parenting style and clarity of task combines to maintain daily life activity and managing regular emotional balance in interpersonal relationships. Teachers should not only focus on regular teaching and examination but also some activities for assessment and enhancement of knowledge gaining attitude. Parenting pattern is the initial preventive method where individuals can shape their habits and interests. Both involvement of parents and teachers can

develop the clarity about task internally as well as externally. Once the individual is clear about task and keeps regularity it will lead to a balanced emotions.

After accomplishment of regularity, one can get involved in academic activities and can complete the task on time as required. Once these work gets in a regular flow the everyday life satisfaction will enhance, which can further reinforce same behavior and lower procrastination.

Lower procrastination can influence the overall performance of the individual and will lead to Psychological Well-Being. These are based on cognitive theories and include protective mechanism. Protective mechanism refers to such behaviors which can prevent future failures and problems, in academic settings the readiness in behavior for daily academic task is the key to right future direction. (Van Eerde & Klingsieck, 2018; Rozental et al., 2014)

Figure 2. Risk Cognitive-Contextual Model



The theoretical models based on risk factors which can enhance procrastination explains such factors like, workload, online distraction and over strictness involved in developing a fear of failure, inability of emotional balance and an expectation of being perfect at any cost. These can be an initiation of avoiding task due to the assumption of doing it imperfectly. After repeated such behavior a tendency of delaying the task will enhance, which will leads to high procrastination and poor academic performance. Psychological distress is not always triggered due to severe stress but also it can be triggered by these factors.

Bidirectional models demonstrate that procrastination is not a static characteristic of an individual, but rather a dynamic person-context dynamic similar to the theoretical frameworks of self-compassion and academic persistence within the educational literature (Apsari, Atmoko & Setyowati, 2026; Valenzuela et al., 2020).

Implications for Educational Practice

Counselors and educators must provide a combinatory intervention package (e.g., cognitive behaviour self-regulatory training and environmental reorganizing). School-based programs aimed at developing time management, enhancing self-efficacy, and

teaching emotion regulation, seem to be very effective. Workshops for parents designed to teach best practices for encouraging autonomy of children should be given priority by educational institutions. Digital literacy programs about smartphone dependency and concentrated focus training are becoming accepted ways for dealing with modern-day problems. Autonomy-enhancing instructional practices are areas for growth through ongoing professional development for educators (Salguero-Pazos & Reyes-de-Cózar, 2023; Van Eerde & Klingsieck, 2018).

Limitations and Future Directions

Cross-sectional prevalence limitations in regard to causal inference due to self-report data collection methods lead to possible shared-method variance. Geographic and cultural boundaries limit generalizability across other settings. Therefore, future research should emphasize longitudinal study designs in order to discern developmental patterns, an experimental intervention approach in testing relations of the model, and mixed-method research approaches in order to fully capture the richness of participants' experiences. Culturally relevant approaches for collectivist educational contexts should be emphasized.

Conclusion

The relationship between academic procrastination and 15-25-year-olds is a complex interplay of cognitive factors and contextual variables. The protective pathways of academic achievement interact with self-regulatory strengths found in a supportive context; but the hazardous pathways of academic procrastination are enhanced by fear-based avoidance, particularly through digital fragmentation and controlling environments. The development of multi-level interventions that encompass this intersection has significant implications for enhancing academic success, the development of psychological resiliency, and the development of lifelong learning skills for young adults.

References

1. Abdi Zarrin, S., & Gracia, E. (2020). Prediction of academic procrastination by fear of failure and self-regulation. *Educational Sciences: Theory and Practice*, 20(3), 34-43. <https://doi.org/10.12738/jestp.2020.3.003>
2. Adawiyah, R., Rodiyah, I., & Hasanati, N. (2024). Systematic review: Academic procrastination in students. *International Journal of Research Publication and Reviews*, 5(7), 1322-1328. <https://doi.org/10.55248/gengpi.5.0724.1729>
3. Apsari, D. A., Atmoko, A., & Setyowati, N. (2026). Self-compassion in an academic setting: A big data-driven systematic literature review. *G-COUNS: Jurnal Bimbingan dan Konseling*, 10(1), 583-596. <https://doi.org/10.31316/g-couns.v10i01.7070>
4. Elizondo, K., Valenzuela, R., Pestana, J. V., & Codina, N. (2024). Self-regulation and procrastination in college students: A tale of motivation, strategy, and perseverance. *Psychology in the Schools*, 61(3), 887-902. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.23088>
5. González-Brignardello, M. P., Sánchez-Elvira Paniagua, A., & López-González, M. Á. (2023). Academic Procrastination in Children and Adolescents: A Scoping Review. *Children*, 10(6), 1016. <https://doi.org/10.3390/children10061016>
6. Huang, S., Li, Z., Li, J., & Ding, X. (2025). A network analysis of academic procrastination, psychological and environmental factors among medical students. *BMC psychology*, 13(1), 574. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40359-025-02916-5>

7. Jing, Z., Zainudin, Z. N. B., & Othman, A. B. A. (2025). A review on the relationship between self-efficacy and academic procrastination among college students. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 15(7), 1301–1312 <http://dx.doi.org/10.46886/IJAREG/v15-i7/17355>
8. Rad, H. F., Bordbar, S., Bahmaei, J., Vejdani, M., & Yusefi, A. R. (2025). Predicting academic procrastination of students based on academic self-efficacy and emotional regulation difficulties. *Scientific reports*, 15(1), 3003. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-025-87664-7>
9. Ragusa, A., González-Bernal, J., Trigueros, R., Caggiano, V., Navarro, N., Minguez-Minguez, L. A., ... & Fernandez-Ortega, C. (2023). Effects of academic self-regulation on procrastination, academic stress and anxiety, resilience and academic performance in a sample of Spanish secondary school students. *Frontiers in psychology*, 14, 1073529. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1073529>
10. Rozental, A., Forsell, E., Svensson, A., Forsström, D., Andersson, G., & Carlbring, P. (2014). Psychometric evaluation of the Swedish version of the pure procrastination scale, the irrational procrastination scale, and the susceptibility to temptation scale in a clinical population. *BMC psychology*, 2(1), 54. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40359-014-0054-z>
11. Salguero-Pazos, M. R., & Reyes-de-Cózar, S. (2023). Interventions to reduce academic procrastination: A systematic review. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 121, 102228. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2023.102228>
12. Sirois, F. M., & Pychyl, T. A. (2013). Procrastination and the priority of short-term mood regulation: Consequences for future self. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 7(2), 115-127. <https://doi.org/10.1111/spc3.12011>
13. Steel, P. (2007). The nature of procrastination: A meta-analytic and theoretical review of quintessential self-regulatory failure. *Psychological Bulletin*, 133(1), 65–94. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.133.1.65>
14. Türkcan, N., & Kızıldağ-Şahin, S. (2025). Investigating academic procrastination within the framework of temporal motivation theory: The impact of hopelessness and academic resilience. *International Journal of Contemporary Educational Research*, 12(3), 214–228. <https://doi.org/10.52380/ijcer.2025.12.3.778>
15. Valenzuela, R., Codina, N., Castillo, I., & Pestana, J. V. (2020). Young university students' academic self-regulation profiles and their associated procrastination: autonomous functioning requires self-regulated operations. *Frontiers in psychology*, 11, 354. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.00354>
16. Van Eerde, W., & Klingsieck, K. B. (2018). Overcoming procrastination? A meta-analysis of intervention studies. *Educational Research Review*, 25, 73-85. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.edurev.2018.09.002>
17. Xu, S. (2021). Academic procrastination of adolescents: A brief review of the literature. *Psychology and Behavioral Sciences*, 10(6), 198-208. <https://doi.org/10.11648/j.pbs.20211006.12>