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RESEARCH PAPER

Understanding Procrastination Among Prospective Teachers in Public-Sector Universities: A Phenomenological Study

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the experiences of procrastination among aspiring educators at Pakistani public universities in Lahore. Future teachers who procrastinate run serious risks to their academic performance and readiness for the workforce. Little is known about how cultural, institutional, and emotional factors interact to influence procrastination behaviors in developing nations, despite a wealth of research conducted in Western contexts. Six teacher-educators chosen by purposive sampling and eighteen aspiring teachers participated in in-depth interviews using a qualitative phenomenological design. Interpretative phenomenological analysis was used to analyze the data thematically. The results showed that emotional difficulties, ambiguous academic frameworks, peer normalization, technological distractions, and individual time management shortcomings all have an impact on procrastination. According to the participants, institutional impediments, emotional distress, and ingrained behaviors all contribute to long-term delays. In order to encourage proactive learning behaviors and professional development among aspiring teachers, it is recommended that teacher education programs incorporate training in emotional regulation, structured academic support, digital literacy development, and peer culture shifts.

KEYWORDS Procrastination, Prospective Teachers, Emotional Regulation, Academic Support, Peer Influence, Time Management

Introduction

Procrastination is very common among college students; estimates range from 30 to 60 percent (Rabin, Fogel, and Nutter-Upham, 2011) and as high as 70 to 95 percent (Steel, 2007). According to Kim and Seo (2015), procrastinating students usually suffer from poorer assignment grades, worse exam scores, and worse course outcomes. Procrastination is closely linked to psychological issues like increased anxiety, depression, stress, and poor emotional regulation, in addition to academic outcomes (Sirois, Melia-Gordon, & Pychyl, 2013; Stead, Shanahan, & Neufeld, 2010). These problems could have long-term effects on aspiring educators, influencing their resilience, sense of self-efficacy, and ultimate effectiveness in the classroom. In public-sector universities, aspiring teachers frequently face particular stressors that can make procrastination worse. These include the difficult task of juggling social, academic, and personal obligations; unclear role expectations; and academic pressures (Hen & Goroshit, 2014). Large class sizes, restricted access to academic resources, and out-of-date curricula are some of the other issues that demotivate students and prevent timely academic engagement in Pakistan's public universities (Ali, 2018). These institutional flaws foster an atmosphere that encourages procrastination, especially in students who struggle with self-control.

Self-regulation theories offer a solid framework for comprehending student procrastination. Baumeister and Vohs (2007) claim that procrastination is the result of a lack of self-control, where people find it difficult to start and finish tasks because of conflicting emotional and motivational demands. In an attempt to temporarily alleviate

feelings of anxiety, boredom, or failure-related fear, students may put off academic assignments in Favor of instant mood restoration (Sirois and Pychyl, 2013). Procrastination among aspiring teachers is significantly predicted by emotional regulation issues, particularly task aversion and fear of a poor evaluation. These individuals frequently view teaching assignments and tests as daunting.

Environmental factors also have a significant impact on procrastination behaviors. Students' academic engagement is influenced by peer culture, family expectations, and institutional support systems (Nordby, Kerns, and Larsson, 2017). In Pakistani public universities, students usually do not have access to academic advising, mentoring, and counseling services, which leaves them ill-equipped to meet the demands of teacher training programs. Furthermore, social and cultural pressures, like the stigma attached to academic failure, can make performance anxiety worse. As a coping mechanism, students may postpone their academic responsibilities (Hofstede, 2001).

Distractions from technology are another modern problem that causes procrastination. Students' ability to concentrate and manage their time is often hampered by the increasing use of digital devices, particularly smartphones and social media platforms (Dreier, 2018). Prospective teachers who engage in a lot of digital entertainment may find it harder to prioritize their academic work over more immediately gratifying online activities, which could further entrench their procrastination habits.

An increasing amount of research emphasizes how crucial it is to place procrastination in particular institutional and cultural contexts. The majority of research on academic procrastination has been done in Western settings (Klingsieck, 2013), with comparatively little focus on how procrastination behaviours are influenced by institutional shortcomings, sociocultural norms, and resource limitations in developing nations. Particularly little is known about the experiences of aspiring teachers in Pakistan's public universities in Lahore. Understanding and addressing procrastination among aspiring teachers is critical to guaranteeing the quality of education in the future, as teacher education programs play a critical role in preparing effective educators.

Procrastination has serious emotional repercussions. Procrastination, according to Sirois and Tosti (2012), is associated with worse mental health outcomes, such as depression, ongoing stress, and decreased life satisfaction. Prolonged procrastination among aspiring educators can result in emotional exhaustion, decreased confidence, and decreased teaching efficacy, all of which can jeopardize their future professional competence (Klassen, Perry, and Frenzel, 2012). Teachers act as behavioural role models for their students, so it is crucial that they exhibit good academic habits like finishing assignments on time in order to encourage similar behaviours in their students.

Procrastination tendencies are also strongly influenced by personal characteristics. Procrastination is strongly associated with characteristics like perfectionism, fear of failure, low self-efficacy, and impulsivity, according to research by Steel (2010) and Flett, Blankstein, and Martin (1995). Perfectionists who are aspiring teachers may put off finishing assignments because they worry that their work won't live up to their high expectations. Similar to this, students who have low self-efficacy may avoid difficult academic assignments because they doubt their capacity to succeed.

Procrastination is greatly influenced by academic practices, especially teaching-learning techniques and assessment. Klassen (2008) contend that while poorly designed courses and ambiguous assessment criteria tend to encourage procrastination, ongoing

evaluation, explicit deadlines, and constructive criticism can help students manage tasks more successfully. Students in Pakistani public universities might not receive the continuous feedback they require to remain motivated and focused throughout the semester because assessment practices frequently rely largely on final exams and memorization (Halai, 2011).

The Temporal Motivation Theory (Steel and König, 2006) offers a comprehensive theoretical framework for comprehending procrastination. According to this theory, impulsiveness, task value, expectancy, and time delay interact to cause procrastination. High impulsivity, far-off deadlines, and tasks that are viewed as low-value or extremely unpleasant increase the likelihood of delays. The necessity for education programs to create assignments that are significant, doable, and closely observed through ongoing assessment procedures is highlighted by applying this model to the experiences of aspiring teachers.

Phenomenological methods can be utilized to develop a richer description of procrastination's lived experience. Researchers can obtain a richer description of the intricate interplay of intellectual, institutional, and individual variables that initiate or impede procrastination by analyzing the subjective existence of possible educators. Phenomenological studies concentrate on the significance of understanding people's emotional and mental realms and not on making inferences from generalized quantifiable information, as Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009) posit.

In the context of Pakistan's public sector institutions, where barriers are extremely high at the systemic level, procrastination patterns of prospective teachers must be considered within a rich institutional and sociocultural context. Detailed, context-specific information about the etiology and continuation of procrastination in such a context can be obtained from a phenomenological study that investigates such experiences.

Aside from this, this research can be used as the foundation for the development of some interventions that can promote the academic resilience, time management, and emotional self-regulation of future teachers. Procrastination among future teachers in state universities is a multifaceted phenomenon that is influenced by personality, emotional difficulties, pedagogical models, environmental limitations, and cultural norms. To resolve this issue, an integrated solution that considers the emotional and contextual situation of future teachers must be implemented. By determining the most significant causes of procrastination and moving closer to the lived experience of the involved individuals, educational institutions can develop more supportive programs and interventions to better prepare future teachers to resist the challenges of teaching. Thus, the purpose of the current study is to explore and reinterpret the causes of procrastination among prospective teachers.

Literature Review

Procrastination is an archetypal self-regulation failure in personal, working, and educational contexts (Steel, 2007). Steel (2007) and Klingsieck (2013) view procrastination as intentional delay of tasks despite potential negative consequences. In classic definitions, procrastination was causally related to moral or character failures (Ferrari, 2010). Sirois and Pychyl (2013) define procrastination as a multi-dimensioned psychological behaviour as it is influenced by situational, cognitive, and affective considerations.

Procrastination was first operationally defined by Solomon and Rothblum (1984), who saw it as aversion to tasks caused by anxiety and fear of failure. Procrastination is a short-term mood regulation strategy in which people avoid tasks in order to avoid unpleasant emotions, according to later research by Sirois and Tosti (2012). Procrastination is a psychological coping mechanism as well as poor time management, according to this emotional regulation perspective (Sirois, Yang, & van Eerde, 2019).

Additionally, there are two categories of procrastination: active and passive. Chu and Choi (2005) made a distinction between passive procrastinators, who put things off because they are disorganized and avoid situations, and active procrastinators, who purposefully postpone but successfully manage deadlines. But according to research, students—including aspiring teachers are much more likely to engage in passive procrastination (Kim & Seo, 201).

The reasons behind procrastination are explained by a number of theoretical frameworks. Steel and König's (2006) Temporal Motivation Theory (TMT) is a prominent framework that suggests procrastination is caused by the interaction of impulsiveness, value, expectancy, and delay. TMT states that, particularly in people with high levels of impulsivity, motivation declines as the time between task initiation and reward increases. Self-Regulation Failure Theory, in addition to TMT, proposes that procrastination results from an incapacity to control emotions and actions when pursuing long-term objectives (Baumeister and Heatherton, 1996). This theory explains why work involving boredom or anxiety is most frequently delayed, highlighting the fact that procrastinators care more about short-term mood restoration compared to long-term achievement (Sirois & Pychyl, 2013). The Emotional Regulation Theory is further bolstered by the theory of procrastination being an emotion-avoidance mechanism.

According to Sirois, Melia-Gordon, and Pychyl (2013), students put off academic assignments not because they are lazy but rather because they cause them to feel things like shame, low self-esteem, or fear of failing. As a result, procrastination is as much a time management issue as it is potentially an affect-based coping reaction. Combined, these models suggest that procrastination is a multifaceted phenomenon involving emotional vulnerabilities, impulsivity, and motivational deficits (Grunschel, Patrzek, & Fries, 2013).

Procrastination tendencies are significantly predicted by personality traits. According to research, procrastination and low self-efficacy are strongly correlated (Klassen, Krawchuk, and Rajani, 2008). When faced with difficulties, students who have self-doubt are more likely to put off doing their schoolwork. Perfectionism is yet another important component. According to research by Flett, Blankstein, and Martin (1995), pupils who exhibit maladaptive perfectionism (i.e. e. setting unreasonably high expectations and being afraid of making mistakes) frequently put things off in order to avoid failure.

Similarly, Rozental and Carlbring (2014) found that academic procrastination is strongly predicted by perfectionistic worries, such as fear of receiving a poor grade. By causing task aversion and elevating anxiety, fear of failure makes procrastination worse (Schraw, Wadkins, & Olafson, 2007). In order to preserve their self-esteem, fearful students frequently put off assignments; however, this backtracking paradoxically raises the likelihood of failure, resulting in a vicious cycle (Ackerman & Gross, 2005). Procrastination and impulsivity are closely related. Highly impulsive people find it difficult to avoid short-term temptations like social media, which causes them to overlook long-term academic objectives (Reinecke et al. Steel, 2007; 2018). Academic settings have a big impact on procrastination habits. According to Nordby, Kerns, and Larsson (2017), students who attend disorganized schools with unclear expectations and delayed feedback report severe.

Procrastination is greatly impacted by environmental factors, such as peer dynamics, institutional culture, and technological distractions. Procrastination can be mitigated or made worse by social factors. Students' procrastination tendencies tend to rise when their peers normalize last-minute work habits (Nordby et al. (2017). Distractions from technology have become a major environmental factor in recent years. Reinecke and associates. (2018) showed a significant correlation between academic procrastination and frequent use of social media and smartphones. Particularly in online or blended learning settings, digital multitasking shortens attention spans, increases impulsive behavior, and interferes with deep learning processes. The situation is made more difficult in Pakistani

public universities by the restricted availability of structured digital learning platforms. According to Hussain (2013), students frequently turn to unstructured internet use, which exposes them to more distractions and encourages procrastination.

Procrastination is well documented in general student populations, but less research has been done on aspiring teachers. The quality of future education, however, is seriously impacted by procrastination in teacher preparation (Klassen et al. (2010). High levels of reflective practice, proactive engagement, and self-directed learning are required in teacher training programs (Darling-Hammond, 2006). By undermining these skills, procrastination leaves aspiring teachers unprepared for the challenges of lesson planning, classroom management, and student engagement. According to Klassen and Kuzucu (2009), academic performance, practicum satisfaction, and teaching self-efficacy are all negatively correlated with procrastination among preservice teachers. Similar findings were made by Balkis and Duru (2017), who found that procrastinating teacher candidates suffer from worse classroom performance during their teaching practicums, increased academic stress, and decreased wellbeing. Systemic obstacles like overcrowding in classrooms, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and a lack of individualized mentorship also make procrastination behaviours worse in public-sector teacher education programs (Halai, 2011; Ali, 2018).

As Shah (2016) argued, attempts to reduce procrastination through individual interventions alone will remain insufficient unless systemic institutional reforms take place. Academic procrastination has been extensively studied, but there are still a lot of unanswered questions. First, Western contexts have been the site of the majority of empirical research (Steel, 2007; Klingsieck, 2013). Few studies have looked at the ways procrastination appears in developing nations, especially in South Asian and Muslim-majority cultures. Second, little is known about the ways in which institutional, cultural, and socioeconomic factors interact to influence procrastination in particular among aspiring teachers. This is a crucial area for research because teacher preparation is a key factor in forming national educational systems.

Third, the majority of procrastination research uses quantitative cross-sectional designs, with a primary focus on correlational and prevalence factors (Kim and Seo, 2015; Sirois, Melia-Gordon, & Pychyl, 2013). The lived experiences, emotional difficulties, and contextual difficulties related to procrastination are explored in relatively few studies using qualitative, phenomenological approaches. Last but not least, procrastination interventions are still lacking. Though a number of studies indicate that counseling services and time management workshops can decrease procrastination (van Eerde & Klingsieck, 2018), few interventions are designed especially for aspiring teachers working in public sector environments with limited resources.

The current study addresses these gaps in knowledge by employing a phenomenological strategy to explore the determinants of procrastination among prospective teachers in public-sector universities in Lahore, Pakistan. Beyond mere quantitative indicators, the current study will emphasize lived experiences to expand the knowledge of emotional, cognitive, academic, and institutional determinants of procrastination. Understanding these dynamics is necessary in order to create culturally and contextually appropriate interventions that enhance the academic engagement, emotional hardness, and professional competence of prospective teachers. For the overall enhancement of teaching in Pakistan's public school system, prospective teachers need to stop procrastination.

Material and Methods

A qualitative phenomenological design was employed in this research to explore the lived experience of procrastination among prospective teachers in Pakistani public universities in Lahore. Why phenomenology was employed is that it offers an opportunity

to explore in-depth participants' meaning and meanings of a phenomenon in its natural setting (Creswell, 2013; Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009).Based on the interpretivist paradigm, the study made the assumption that people's experiences provide the best understanding of reality, which is socially constructed (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The University of Education and the Institute of Education and Research, University of the Punjab, two prestigious public universities in Lahore, served as the study's sites. Because these institutions reflect the features of Pakistani public teacher education, they were specifically chosen (Halai, 2011; Shah, 2016).

Participants were selected through purposive sampling based on their ability to provide rich insights into the experience of academic procrastination. A total of 24 participants were involved, comprising 18 prospective teachers and 6 teacher-educators. Diversity in gender, academic background, and residential setting was ensured. Participation criteria included current enrolment in a teacher education program and personal experience with academic procrastination. Data saturation was considered achieved when interviews began to yield repetitive information, consistent with recommendations by Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006).

Semi-structured, in-depth interviews served as the primary data collection method. Separate interview protocols were developed for students and teachers, covering areas such as study habits, emotional triggers, institutional practices, and perceived support systems. Interviews, conducted in Urdu or English as per participant preference, lasted between 35 and 45 minutes. All interviews were audio-recorded with consent, transcribed verbatim, and where necessary, translated into English for analysis.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis principles served as the foundation for thematic analysis (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin, 2009). Multiple transcript readings, preliminary noting, the development of emergent themes, and the identification of patterns across cases while preserving the unique voice of each participant were all part of the data analysis process. Long-term interaction with participants, member verification, keeping an audit trail were all used to guarantee trustworthiness.

Results and Discussion

Theme 1: Emotional Experiences of Procrastination

The emotional experience of procrastination was a prominent and recurrent theme that emerged from the participant narratives. Anxiety, fear, guilt, and self-doubt were all closely linked to procrastination for many aspiring teachers and teacher-educators. Procrastination was frequently characterized by participants as a coping strategy for handling intensely negative emotions related to academic demands, rather than just as a failure of time management. A number of aspiring educators reported that the prospect of starting coursework caused them to experience severe anxiety, which frequently prevented them from starting.

Avoidance behaviours were exacerbated by this emotional distress, as students postponed assignments out of emotional discomfort rather than a lack of comprehension. "Every time I sit down to begin an assignment, my mind is filled with thoughts like 'What if I do badly?' and 'Maybe I am not smart enough,'" reflected Prospective Teacher 1. I leave the work and start doing random things because these thoughts make me feel so uneasy. This statement encapsulates how the desire to complete academic assignments is subordinated to emotional fear. In the same way, (Prospective Teacher 4) described how beginning a new project is like climbing a mountain. Even if it's a simple task, it keeps growing in my head until it seems unachievable. I put things off because it seems more difficult to face that fear than to put off doing the work.

Teacher-educators confirmed these findings, pointing out that students' procrastination tendencies were frequently motivated by emotional factors. According to Teacher Educator 2, students who procrastinate the most tend to be extremely anxious about their academic performance. They completely put off doing the task because they are afraid, they won't live up to expectations. Another teacher (Teacher Educator 5) said, "We find that students rarely request extensions because they are struggling with the material. Their emotional overload is usually the cause. Remarkably, some participants connected procrastination to perfectionistic tendencies, causing immobilization due to the fear of delivering subpar work.

According to (Prospective Teacher 11), "I sometimes don't even begin because I want my work to be great and I think it won't be.". So, I just put it off until the last minute, when I have no other option, rather than doing a mediocre job. Such perfectionistic worries highlight the paradoxical way that having high personal standards can encourage avoidance rather than motivation. The participants also mentioned that the institutional setting frequently lacked emotional support, which exacerbated their emotional difficulties. (Prospective Teacher 15) observed, "We don't really have anyone to talk to or counsellors when we're feeling stressed. We are simply supposed to handle everything ourselves". Without emotional support, aspiring educators had to contend with academia.

Theme 2: Academic and Institutional Factors Contributing to Procrastination

The prevalent problem that emerged from the findings was the influence of institutional and academic factors on the determination of procrastination inclinations in prospective teachers. The participants explained that the tendency to delay study was mainly caused by aspects that are a part of the system, such as vague expectations, delayed feedback, pedagogical bureaucracy, and poor academic support systems. Participants often complained about the ambiguity of instructions and guidelines for assignments.

The majority of the prospective teachers reported that it was difficult to start working with confidence when tasks were unclear, leading to procrastination. "Sometimes we just get told to 'Turn in an assignment on this topic,' but there isn't clear information about the form, word limit, or even exactly what the instructor wants us to do," explained Prospective Teacher 5. I freeze trying to decide what to do, and days go by and nothing happens. Such ambiguity led to mental blocks, with starting academic work delayed due to vagueness and shyness.

Teacher-educators agreed that students' procrastination was influenced by unclear instructions and a lack of support systems. According to (Teacher Educator 3), "Teachers, including myself occasionally, are managing large groups and multiple courses, so students are frequently confused about assignment requirements.". Too little time exists to offer thorough one-on-one advice. This claim emphasizes how academic interactions between teachers and students are negatively impacted by institutional workload pressures, which in turn encourage procrastination. Another significant institutional factor that participants identified was delayed feedback. Prospective teachers complained that they were less motivated to begin new assignments when they received little or no feedback on their earlier work. "You feel disconnected when you don't know how you performed in the last assignment," shared Prospective Teacher 9. You begin to wonder if putting in a lot of effort is really worthwhile. In this sense, students' engagement with upcoming academic responsibilities was weakened by the lack of timely academic reinforcement.

Participants also said that the academic environment as a whole was bureaucratic, inflexible, and uncreative. Teacher education programs were frequently characterized as assessment-driven and mechanical rather than encouraging intrinsic motivation and active learning. According to (Prospective Teacher 14), "Most assignments are simply copy-and-paste work. True creativity is not permitted. This eliminates the motivation to begin the task

ahead of schedule. Teacher-educators were also aware of the shortcomings of the conventional teaching strategies used. (Teacher Educator 6) acknowledged that the system prioritizes finishing the curriculum over making sure that students are actually learning. Students consequently see assignments as formalities rather than worthwhile educational experiences. One notable institutional shortcoming that was found was the absence of official mentorship or academic counseling programs. Participants reported that there were no organized programs available to help students who were having trouble with motivation, emotional stress, or academic planning. "We never had any workshops or training about how to manage academic stress or organize our tasks," said Prospective Teacher 17. The students are left to solve everything on their own. When faced with academic difficulties, many students found it simpler to put off assignments in the absence of structured support because there was no organized intervention or direction to guide them.

Teacher-educators concurred that there was little institutional funding for student support services and academic counseling. "There is no academic advisor system like in some international universities," observed Teacher Educator 1. Given the pressures they face, it is unrealistic to expect students to manage their studies without any kind of scaffolding. In conclusion, procrastination behaviours were greatly influenced by the institutional and academic environment of public-sector teacher education programs. In a setting where there was a lack of academic counseling, inflexible bureaucratic procedures, unclear expectations, delayed feedback, and little individualized support, aspiring teachers frequently felt lost, discouraged, and confused. Students' emotional vulnerabilities were exacerbated by these systemic problems, which also strengthened procrastination as a coping mechanism for dealing with academic difficulties.

Theme 3: Peer Influence and Cultural Normalization of Procrastination

The strong influence of peer culture and the normalization of procrastination in the university setting emerged as the third important theme from the participant accounts. Procrastination was consistently reported by participants to be influenced and reinforced by their social environment rather than being solely an individual behavior. The social norm of peers delaying schoolwork lessened the pressure to start work early and frequently promoted group last-minute efforts. Numerous aspiring educators reported that their academic behaviors, including procrastination tendencies, were significantly influenced by their peer groups. According to (Prospective Teacher 8), "Almost everyone in my friend group begins working just two or three days prior to the deadline. Avoid starting too early; otherwise, people will accuse you of being overly serious or behaving like a "bookworm.". Social norms encouraged conformity to common procrastination behaviors and subtly discouraged proactive academic engagement, as this statement illustrates.

Participants explained how discussions with peers frequently focused on last-minute study plans, deadline pressures, and reciprocal delays, fostering an atmosphere where procrastination was accepted and even amusingly praised. "When someone says they haven't started the assignment yet, others laugh and say, 'Same here, don't worry,'" explained Prospective Teacher 2. Since everyone is starting at the same time, it gives you the impression that it's acceptable to start later. By downplaying personal guilt and rationalizing delays, these conversations established procrastination as a socially acceptable behavior. Collective last-minute work strategies were also a result of procrastination becoming more accepted. According to some participants, group study sessions were frequently scheduled just a few days prior to tests or deadlines, which emphasized the value of haste over methodical preparation. "We typically plan group studies just one or two nights before exams," shared Prospective Teacher 13. We quickly go over the material and somehow pass. Despite being stressful, it has become the norm. These last-minute partnerships increased stress levels and promoted superficial learning strategies, even though they occasionally offered short-term assistance.

Teacher-educators attested to the fact that students' procrastination tendencies were significantly influenced by their peers. "Students frequently reinforce each other's bad habits," said Teacher Educator 2. Peer pressure pulls motivated students back, causing them to put off assignments and relax. Sometimes students develop a group mentality that "it's okay to be late" or "everyone will ask for an extension," and this mindset permeates the classroom, according to another teacher (Teacher Educator 5).

In certain instances, participants expressed that their early involvement in academic tasks was discouraged by their fear of social isolation. (Prospective Teacher 10) mentioned, "You may feel alone if you ask questions in class and finish your work early because people may think you're being ostentatious. Students' attempts to plan and complete assignments ahead of schedule were further hampered by the pressure to fit in with the group's expectations. All things considered, peer pressure and the societal acceptance of procrastination have become significant social factors influencing the academic conduct of aspiring teachers. According to the participant narratives, procrastination was socially embedded in university peer cultures and was not just an individual struggle. Peer acceptance, encouragement, and even celebration of procrastination fostered an atmosphere in which putting off academic obligations was the norm rather than the exception.

Theme 4: Technological Distractions and Their Role in Procrastination

A fourth strong theme in participant accounts was the ubiquitous impact of technological distractions, in the form of social media, smartphones, and internet entertainment, on procrastination. In spite of the academic benefits technology had to offer, prospective teachers frequently lamented that it was a ubiquitous distractor that made it very difficult to concentrate and meet assignment deadlines. Participants explained how ready access to the digital device made it a habitual disruption of the study routine that frequently encroached on study time scheduled. Prospective Teacher 6 explained, "I settle down to study with my laptop, and I plan to do research on my assignment, but in a few minutes, I'm browsing Instagram or wasting time watching other videos." I lose control. This illustrates how easily study and recreational uses of technology get confused, resulting in significant wastage of time. Prospective Teacher 12 explained, "Even when I put away my phone, I am always thinking of looking at it." It usually takes a couple of hours, despite my promise of checking for just five minutes. One of the biggest barriers to sustained academic concentration has proven to be the addictive nature of digital platforms.

Technology distractions were typically used as an emotional diversion from academic anxiety, some participants explained. They used passive entertainment for temporary relief instead of dealing with their academic anxiety or bewilderment frontally. "I instinctively take out my phone if I'm anxious about assignments," explained Prospective Teacher 16. I can temporarily forget about my anxiety talking to friends or watching comedies, but I then feel guilty. The emotional regulatory function of digital distractions in the procrastination process is revealed here. Teachers and educators also explained how technology influenced students' procrastination. We observe that students are typically stuck to their phones even in class," explained Teacher Educator 4.

Technology distractions were an emotional escape from academic demands, as reported by several participants. For temporary relief, they used passive entertainment instead of directly addressing their academic anxiety or confusion. Prospective Teacher 16 described, "When I worry about assignments, I automatically reach for my phone". I can talk to friends or watch humorous videos to leave my worry for a while, but then I feel guilty. This behavior illustrates how digital distractions affect emotional regulation and cause procrastination. The effect of technology on students' procrastination behavior was also

observed by teachers and educators. We notice that even in class, students are usually glued to their phones," Teacher Educator 4 continued.

All of them acknowledge their "busy online" existence causes them to start assignments later than they would like. The allure of the virtual world is turning into a study issue. Besides offering information at their fingertips, technology has also made it more difficult not to get sidetracked, says Teacher Educator 6, "Unfortunately, we don't pay enough attention to digital discipline, even though students need training on how to handle it".

It is strange to note that some of the participants indicated trying to exercise self-discipline by physically moving away from electronics, employing study apps, or turning off notifications. These attempts were usually fleeting, however. As (Prospective Teacher 3) described, "I tried putting my phone in a different room while I was studying, but eventually the urge to check it got to be too much." It is like fighting yourself. Not only does it lose valuable study time, the constant temptation of digital distractions caused attention span fragmentation, making it more difficult for students to study for long periods of time and continuously. The majority of the participants complained of suffering huge losses in productivity from even brief interruptions. "Even a small distraction, like a WhatsApp message, disrupts my concentration," Prospective Teacher 18 described. Resuming a serious study routine after that takes time. "In conclusion, one major external influence on prospective teachers' procrastination is distraction by technology. The ease of access to smartphones and internet entertainment, and the emotional comfort these sources offered, led to a cycle of guilt and avoidance. The difficulties of concentrating in the digital age, where short-term pleasures tend to override long-term goals of academic achievement, were evident in the participants' descriptions".

Theme 5: Personal Habits and Time Management Issues

The analysis' final major finding was how time management problems and habitual behavior influence prospective teachers' tendencies to procrastinate. Participants tended to justify that habitual behavior, a lack of planning, overly optimistic scheduling, and overconfidence in their capacity to get things done under pressure were the main causes of procrastination. Most prospective teachers admitted that their own work habits were both a cause of procrastination and a solution to institutional problems or emotional pressure. "I keep telling myself that I work better under pressure," Prospective Teacher 7 stated. Because I am most concentrated at the last minute, I procrastinate, but in all fairness, it just makes me more stressed and lowers the quality of my work. Though participants came to see eventually the negative effects of delays, this experience of last-minute productivity was often an excuse.

Another significant contributing factor that emerged was inaccurate estimation of time. Most of the participants reported that they used to overestimate the time required for school work, and this led to inevitable delays and rushed submissions. "Whenever I receive an assignment, I think I can easily complete it in one night," mused Prospective Teacher 5. But it is a lot of work, and it is already too late when I sit to do it. School work was usually delayed on the account of this optimistic bias towards time and task requirements. A pattern of excessive planning without action was mentioned by a few participants. They clarified that although they frequently created thorough study plans and to-do lists, they found it difficult to follow through on them. (Prospective Teacher 9) said, "I spend hours creating flawless schedules and meticulously recording everything. But I keep putting things off when it comes to sticking to the plan. Planning seems to provide a fictitious sense of accomplishment. This demonstrates how, in the absence of execution, planning itself can take the place of genuine academic involvement.

These findings were supported by teacher-educators, who pointed out that many students lacked efficient time management techniques. "Students often think they can finish serious assignments overnight," said Teacher Educator 1. They rarely begin early unless there is outside pressure, and they rarely divide big tasks into smaller ones. "We observe that students who struggle with procrastination also lack regular study habits," stressed Teacher Educator 3, another educator. They only study when they have to meet deadlines. Additionally, procrastination has been connected to more general personal habits of daily life, like trouble setting priorities, irregular sleep patterns, and inconsistent routines. (Prospective Teacher 12) revealed, "I watch television or engage in online chats late at night. I'm too exhausted to study effectively the following day. It turns into a vicious cycle of being exhausted, putting off work, and then worrying about it. It's interesting to note that some participants acknowledged their ineffective behaviors but said they had trouble breaking them in spite of numerous setbacks. (Prospective Teacher 15) acknowledged, "I make a self-promise to begin assignments earlier each semester. For the first few weeks, I even manage to succeed, but then my old habits return. "In conclusion, the procrastination experiences of aspiring teachers were closely linked to personal habits and poor time management techniques. Last-minute work habits, an excessive dependence on stress-induced motivation, etc.

Discussion

This study set out to investigate the lived experiences of procrastination among aspiring educators enrolled in public universities. The results show that procrastination is a complicated, multidimensional phenomenon influenced by social norms, technological distractions, emotional vulnerabilities, academic and institutional deficiencies, and ineffective personal habits. These findings support and broaden previous research, emphasizing significant contextual elements unique to Pakistan's public education system. The substantial emotional cost of procrastination was one of the main conclusions. Procrastination was consistently associated by participants with anxiety, guilt, perfectionism, and fear of failure. This bolsters the claim made by Sirois and Tosti (2012) that procrastination is an emotional regulation technique in which people put off tasks in order to prevent unpleasant emotions. In a similar vein, Constantin, Holman, and Hojbota (2011) discovered that procrastination is more common among people with higher anxiety levels as a short-term stress reliever. T The emotional experiences of the participants, such as relief followed by guilt and self-blame, are consistent with those of Pychyl and Sirois (2016), who assert that procrastination paradoxically intensifies emotional distress in the long run. This procrastination role of emotional control may be particularly risky for future teachers.

This research also uncovered the crucial role played by institutional and academic factors. The respondents identified strict teaching style, ambiguous assignment instructions, late feedback, and the absence of academic guidance as the predominant reasons for procrastination. These are consistent with Tuckman's (2002) findings, which found that procrastination was more likely to happen in classrooms with ambiguous expectations and variable reinforcement. Grunschel, Patrzek, and Fries (2013) also highlighted the role played by institutional structures failing to provide sufficient academic guidance to lead students' procrastination behavior to rise indirectly. Procrastination is not just an individual issue but also a systemic institutional byproduct in Pakistani universities, where systemic problems like high teacher-to-student ratios and ineffective bureaucracy may exacerbate these impacts. Another significant finding was the role played by peer pressure and cultural tolerance of procrastination. Respondents reported that procrastination was discouraged early participation in academic activities since it was socially acceptable and even promoted among peers. This finding is consistent with Klassen, Krawchuk, and Rajani's (2008) research that peer groups play a significant role in influencing the way students act in class, including procrastinating.

Technological distractions also arose as a dominant theme that impacted students' procrastination. Respondents explained how internet surfing, social media, and smartphones interrupted study habits and split their focus. This finding is in accordance with Panek's (2014) study, which found a strong correlation between academic procrastination and heavy usage of social media. Similarly, Meier, Reinecke, and Meltzer (2016) emphasized that online multitasking deprives academic focus and task persistence, leading to long-term delays. In order to enable students to manage technological temptations more effectively, teacher education courses need to integrate digital literacy and self-regulation training, particularly as learning settings become more digitalized. Finally, it was found that chronic procrastination in future teachers was based on habits and time management issues. Poor planning, last-minute working, exaggerated time estimates, and stress-based motivation were all revealed by the respondents. These findings are in accordance with van Eerde's (2003) study, which found that procrastination is strongly predicted by poor time management habits. Moreover, habitual procrastinators have an overconfidence in their ability to complete tasks on time, which leads to repeated cycles of anxiety and delay, as per Ferrari, O'Callaghan, and Newbegin (2005). Developing a solid sense of personal organization is imperative in the case of teacher education.

All of these findings point to the need to view procrastination among aspiring teachers as a combination of institutional, social, technological, emotional, and personal factors rather than just an individual weakness. By showing how environmental and cultural factors in public universities exacerbate these self-regulatory issues, this multi-layered understanding builds on Steel's (2007) conceptualization of procrastination as a self-regulatory failure. Crucially, by offering qualitative, phenomenological insights into procrastination in the context of developing nations, the current study also fills in gaps in the literature. Few studies have examined how cultural norms, institutional shortcomings, and digital environments interact to affect procrastination in South Asian contexts; the majority of prior research has concentrated on Western educational systems (Klingsieck, 2013; Steel, 2010). The results of this study indicate that interventions to reduce procrastination among aspiring teachers should be multifaceted, addressing institutional reforms, peer culture changes, digital self-management skills, and individual emotional and cognitive strategies.

Furthermore, the findings show that in order to help students build emotional resilience and productive study habits, educational policymakers and university administrators must fund organized academic support systems, transparent communication techniques, continuous feedback systems, and counseling services. According to Kim and Seo (2015), interventions that combine environmental restructuring with cognitive-behavioral techniques are more successful than those that only target motivation improvement. The study concludes by offering a multifaceted explanation of procrastination of future teachers in public universities. In study and intervention design, it emphasizes the need to look at emotional, academic, social, and technological explanations. Procrastination can be indeed overcome by shifting the frame from the individual to a more comprehensive explanation of the structural and cultural determinants of students' study habits. This is achieved to prepare future teachers who are not only academically qualified but also emotionally sound and responsive to their employers.

Conclusion

Procrastination is a multifaceted problem driven by numerous factors, as evidenced by a study among would-be teachers in public universities. It involves severe emotional problems such as anxiety, guilt, fear of failure, and perfectionism, more than time management. The participants indicated that procrastination escalated because of ambiguous academic expectations, slow feedback, and institutional support lack. The research also found the negative impact of peer culture in validating procrastination and discouraging active participation. Technological distractions, especially smartphones and

social media, were key obstacles to academic concentration. Besides, unrealistic planning and inefficient time management routines maintained procrastination, resulting in emotional suffering and prolonged academic failure.

This study fills a significant gap in the largely Western-focused literature by using a phenomenological approach to better understand how procrastination is experienced within a particular cultural and institutional context. The results highlight the need for procrastination interventions to take a comprehensive approach, addressing not only behavioral and emotional aspects of the individual but also institutional changes, peer pressure, and digital self-control. The findings urge the creation of all-encompassing support systems, such as improved academic communication, prompt feedback systems, emotional counseling services, and training in digital literacy, for educational policymakers and teacher education initiatives. To prepare future educators who can set an example of successful academic behaviour and make a positive contribution to educational environments, it is crucial to strengthen the emotional resilience, time management, and self-regulation skills of aspiring teachers.

By fighting procrastination among future teachers requires working against the broader scholarly, institutional, and cultural environments that shape student habits instead of individual shortcomings. Building scholastic success, professional readiness, and psychological health in the future generation of teachers requires a collaborative, systemic strategy.

Recommendations

To counter procrastination among prospective teachers in state universities, some of the suggestions emanate from the study. They are institutional change, cultural change, and personal growth. Teacher education curriculum should first incorporate systematic training in time management, emotional regulation, and self-regulation. Goal-setting, task allocation, prioritization, and coping with perfectionism workshop training can prepare prospective teachers with the competencies to avoid procrastination. Cognitive-behavioral interventions, which have been effective (Rozental and Carlbring, 2014), should be incorporated in academic skills courses or in orientation courses.

Second, colleges must have clearer and more consistent academic expectations. Giving explicit assignment instructions, examples, and rubrics and prompt feedback can lower student confusion. Faculty development programs must promote open communication and active learning strategies rather than passive compliance. Third, formal academic mentoring and counseling programs must be introduced to support students academically and emotionally. Trained advisors or counselors can provide individualized support to students with anxiety or organizational issues. Check-ins and monitoring on a regular basis ensure accountability and offer timely interventions. Fourth, universities must tackle technological distraction right away. Workshops on digital competence and self-management must educate students to balance technology use and limit distractions. Methods such as focus apps, site blockers, and digital detox programs can facilitate reflective use of technology during study sessions.

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