

The Relationship between Life Stresses and Academic Procrastination among University Youth

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Abstract

The study aimed to identify the relationship between life stresses and academic procrastination among university youth. The study also aimed to identify indicators for social work practitioners regarding professional interventions to alleviate both life stresses and academic procrastination among university youth. The study sample was chosen randomly from (364) university youth at the Faculty of Social work, Helwan University. The result of this study proved positive and statistically significant relationship between life stresses and academic procrastination among university youth.

Keywords:

Academic procrastination - life stresses - university youth

Introduction

The youth stage is one of the most important stages of life, characterized by its psychological, social and behavioral traits, both positive and negative. Although it represents strength, the ability to learn and produce, and the possession of ambition and the desire to develop (Habib, Hanna, 2016, p. 250), it also comes with its own set of challenges.

University youth are one of the most important sectors because this sector represents the creative energy and innovative forces on which the building of society is based politically, socially and economically, especially in developing societies. University students face various types of stresses. The most prominent source of stress for university students is academic stress. Key sources of academic stress include lack of available time, the abundance of required reading, competition for success, the student-professor relationship. Additionally, some students living in university dorms often encounter many psychological and social problems without full social and emotional support from their families. Financial problems and improper planning that fail to provide the student with a decent life after graduation also affect their psychological stability, leading to feeling of despair, frustration and pessimism about their professional future (Boucharaia, 2012, p. 505).

Young people at the university level represent a large percentage of the population. The number of students enrolled in higher education has reached about 3.7 million, with (51.2%) being males and (48.84%) being females. Of these, 2.5 million students are enrolled in public and Al-Azhar universities, compared to 660.6 thousand students enrolled in private higher institutes (Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics, 2023).

There are many stresses that may originate from an individual's life and are related to daily life events, known as life stresses. Since stressful events and situations are imposed on a person in the present time, they are inevitable and fundamentally affect psychological balance and personal and social compatibility (Abdul Hamid, 2016, p. 141). This is supported by ecological theory, which confirms the lack of separation between a person and their environment. The mutual interactions between a person and all elements of their environment are central to the ecological model, as they are viewed in an integrated manner.

The external stresses that affect university youth and the resulting internal stresses have also multiplied. In this context, the results of one study showed that the most important external stresses they suffer from fall into four categories: academic, social, family and economic stresses. The results also indicated that the most common internal stresses or symptoms of stress include a lack of self-confidence, feelings of loneliness, anxiety, tension, aggressive behaviors and withdrawal. These stresses had clear effects on the academic performance of students (Devi, Mohan, 2015).

In this context, Al-Anzi's study (2015) showed that the most prominent stresses that university youth suffer from are academic stress, followed by family stress, social stress, economic stress, health stress, and finally future stress. The study also showed that the relationship between practicing student activities and life stresses: the more student activities are practiced, the less life stress that university youth experience.

The study by Ribeiro, Pereira and Freire (2017) also aimed to determine the relationship between life stress and quality of life for university youth. The study concluded that there is a negative correlation between life stress and quality of life for university youth. Since ecological theory, in its analysis of life stress, is concerned with the mutual influence between the individual and the surrounding environment, transformations in lifestyle, social relations and patterns of participation can contribute to changing an individual's motives, trends and values. This requires professional practice to adopt a more comprehensive view in dealing with contemporary problems, as the ecological theory views humans as inevitable products of their environment- from which they emerge, in which they live and to which they will return- regardless of their abilities, talents, inabilities and shortcomings. Therefore, human behavior cannot be studied in

isolation from the environment in which individuals live (Adolph, 2019, p.188).

Al-Nahhas (2024) also found a statistically significant direct relationship between life stresses and anxiety about the professional future in its various dimensions among university youth. These dimensions include negative thinking about the future, thinking about studying, and the possibility of obtaining a profession, as well as achieving family and social stability with a significance level of 0.01.

Academic procrastination is a phenomenon that university students particularly suffer. They often postpone studying academic subjects or activities despite having the necessary ability to complete their work, choosing to delay it until a later time. In addition, this issue has become more widespread among university students due to the transfer of full responsibility for performing academic tasks to them (Elsayed, 2022, p.160).

Academic procrastination negatively affects students' academic performance, as they are unable to show their true abilities in the educational aspect. This results in negative outcomes such as delays – failure and dropping out of school. It may also lead to serious damage to the student's psychological health, including feelings of guilt, tension and anxiety about the possibility of obtaining poor grades. Additionally, students often complain about the large number of required assignments, which alienates them from academic subjects. They also experience fear during their studies due to a lack of excellence and success. (Abdul Razzaq, 2022, p. 446).

In this regard, the study by Al-Bahas, Sayed Ahmed (2010) indicates that the majority of students delay submitting the required activities and research until the end of the semester. This is observed across various academic stages, scientific and literary specializations, and between genders. The delay is attributed to misconceptions, such as underestimating the importance of activities in the academic calendar and believing that university students have outgrown the need for immediate task completion. Instead, they prioritize life and entertainment matters.

The study by Sichan He (2017) focused on understanding the prevalence of academic procrastination, the reasons that lead to procrastination among university students, and the psychological impact resulting from procrastination. The results showed that 97% of students are affected by procrastination to varying degrees, and 48% of students "often" or "always" procrastinate. The main reasons for

academic procrastination include laziness, lack of motivation, stress, excessive time spent using the Internet, and the difficulty of the tasks. More than 80% of students experience stress when procrastinating.

The study by Al-Anzi and Al-Daghim (2003) aimed to reveal the behavior of academic procrastination and its relationship to some personality variables. The study sample consisted of (324) male and female students from the College of Basic Education in Kuwait. The results showed no statistically significant differences between males and females on the academic procrastination scale. However, the results of the study also revealed a statistically significant negative relationship between academic procrastination on the one hand, and both self-confidence and academic average on the other. The study found a statistically significant relationship between age and academic procrastination.

The study by Moti et al. (2012) found that a large percentage of students engage in procrastination behavior in studying and exams, suffering from stress as a result of overthinking this matter. It also explained that procrastination has negative consequences, such as late submission of tasks and social anxiety. Despite being fully aware of these negative consequences, students continue to procrastinate, which can lead to a decrease in their performance levels.

The study by Tuckman (2002) also found that students who suffer from high academic procrastination obtain much lower achievement grades than those who suffer from medium and low academic procrastination. In light of the theoretical framework and the results of previous studies, the problem of the study is determined by the following question: What is the relationship between life stresses and academic procrastination among university youth?

Study objectives: This study aims to achieve the following main objectives:

- 1- Determine the nature of the relationship between life stresses and academic procrastination among university youth.
- 2- Identify indicators of the role of the social worker in alleviating life stresses and academic procrastination among university youth.

Study Concepts:

1- Life stresses:

- Social work defines pressure as any effect that conflicts with the normal functional performance of a living organism and results in internal emotion or tension (Al-Sukari, 2000, p. 517)

- It is also defined as the external stimuli and requirements of life or the internal tendencies, desires and thoughts that require the individual to adapt. These stresses may be familial, academic, economic, social, personal or related to the university environment. (Al-Zahrani, 2014, p. 765)
- Al-Nuhi also sees that life stresses as situations that an individual goes through in life and imagines that they exceed their capabilities and personal and environmental resources necessary to integrate with them. Therefore, the individual attributes feelings of anxiety, fear or inability to control them because of these stresses (Shalaby, 2015, p. 16)

Life stresses are theoretically defined in the current study as: the situations that university youth face in their daily lives, causing them physical, psychological and mental stress until they adapt to these situations.

Life stresses are measured procedurally by the degree that university youth obtain on the dimensions of the life stress scale represented in the following:

2-Academic procrastination:

- Senecal (1995) defined academic procrastination as an individual's failure to motivate themselves to perform tasks within a specific time frame (Senecal, Koestner, and Vallerand, 1995).
- Academic procrastination means postponing academic goals to the point where optimal performance becomes highly unlikely, leading to a state of psychological distress (Ferrari, Johnson, and McCown, 1995).
- Academic procrastination is defined as delaying or postponing academic tasks, such as preparing for exams and homework, until the last minute for fear of making mistakes. This results from poor time management, which leads to a feeling of discomfort (Al-Saadi, 2018, p. 36).

Theoretical definition of academic procrastination: Academic procrastination is defined as the postponement of the required academic tasks, such as studying lessons, doing homework, writing research, and studying for exams, until the last minute without a logical justification for completing them on time. It includes the following dimensions: cognitive, - behavioral -, and emotional.

The concept of academic procrastination is measured procedurally by the degree that students obtain on the dimensions of the academic procrastination scale represented in the following: the cognitive dimension, the behavioral dimension, and the emotional dimension.

Theoretical guidelines of the research:

1- Ecological theory

The ecological theory in social service focuses on the environmental scope in which humans live. There is no room for thinking about individual human behavior or obstructing the growth of different systems in isolation from their interaction with their environments. (Martín-López, & Montes, 2015, p. 700).

The ecological theory looks forward to assuming that humans are unable to cope with illness, disability, or frustration. If they are limited to psychological treatment or the self alone, they will remain unable or incapable of dealing with life stresses, as long as the environment refuses to give them a chance to live, work, marry, eat, and be healthy, etc. (Martín-López & Montes, 2015, p. 701).

From the ecological perspective, humans are members of many systems, play many roles, and are exposed to many stresses while striving to satisfy their needs and fulfill their desires. Humans may fail to some extent to satisfy their personal needs or The needs of those he supports, cares for, and protects their interests, which makes him strive to restore balance, satisfy needs, solve problems, and relieve stresses (Jabal, 2018, p. 41).

2-Behavioral Theory

Behaviorism has been a major focus of modern psychology for several decades. It is a trend in psychology in general, and focuses on observable behaviors that are equally important in scientific theory. Historically, behaviorism has represented a departure from Freudian reasoning and psychoanalytic methods (Cloninger, 2013, p185).

Many researchers and theorists have contributed to the development of behaviorism, to which Pavlov and Skinner paid special attention. These researchers have provided conclusive evidence that behavior is a learned process that is influenced by the results of the antecedents and consequences of behavior (Pavlov (1928) Skinner 1957) (Granillo&Perron&Jarman&Gutowski, 2013, p102).

Methodology:

This study belongs to the descriptive analytical studies pattern that determines the relationship between the variables of life stress and academic procrastination among university youth. This study relied on the social survey sample method. Through a simple random sample, the study was applied to (364) university youth at the Faculty of Social Work, Helwan University.

Study hypotheses:

The main hypothesis of the study is that there is a statistically significant direct relationship between life stresses and academic procrastination among university youth.

The sub-hypotheses are the following:

- 1-Hypothesis one: There is a statistically significant direct relationship between life stresses and the cognitive dimension among university youth.
- 2-Hypothesis two: There is a statistically significant direct relationship between life stresses and the behavioral dimension among university youth.
- 3- Hypothesis three: There is a statistically significant direct relationship between life stresses and the emotional dimension among university youth.

Study sample: The researchers relied on a simple random sample of fourth-year social work students at Helwan University, numbering (6798) male and female students. The optimal sample size was chosen after applying Stephen Thompson's law, resulting in a sample size of (364) during the period between April 2024 to July 2024

Study tools:

1- the first scale :Life stress scale for university youth prepared by (Abdul Mawjoud, 2019)

Description of the first scale-:

The scale consists of(40) statement and five main dimensions.

The researchers re-conducted validity and reliability operations for the scale to verify its suitability for the current research.

Validity and reliability were verified as follows-:

A- Validity of the scale-:

-Validity of internal consistency-:

The researchers verified the validity of the life stress scale for university youth, as the researchers used internal consistency, where this type of validity was calculated by applying the scale once on a sample consisting of (35) individuals, and the correlation

coefficients were calculated and the resulting correlation coefficient values are high and significant at a significance level of (0.01) and (0.05), which indicates the validity of the scale to an appropriate degree, as its results can be relied upon .

Table No. (1) Exhibits the validity of internal consistency between the dimensions of the life stress scale for university youth as a whole

m	Dimensions	Correlation coefficient	sig
1	Family stress	0.879	**
2	Academic stress	0.918	**
3	Economic stress	0.932	**
4	Peer stress	0.961	**
5	Service stress	0.926	**
6	Validity of the Life Stress Scale as a whole	0.923	**

Table No. (1) shows that the resulting correlation coefficient values ranged between (0.879) and (961), and all of these coefficients are high and significant at a significance level of (0.01), which indicates the validity of the scale to an appropriate degree, as its results can be relied upon.

B - Scale stability:

The researchers calculated the stability of the scale using the following coefficients:

- 1 Cronbach's alpha coefficient.
- 2 Split-half (Spearman-Brown).

Table No. (2) shows the reliability coefficients of the scale using Cronbach's alpha and split-half methods.

m	Variables	Cronbach's alpha coefficient	Spearman-Brown equation
1	Family stress	0.826	**0.815
2	Academic stress	0.911	**0.906
3	Economic stress	0.979	**0.917
4	Peer stress	0.879	**0.947
5	Service stress	0.899	**0.846
6	Validity of the Life stress Scale as a whole	0.898	**0.886

Table No. (2) shows a high degree of stability in all dimensions of the scale, such that the results obtained by the tool can be relied upon. This indicates that the scale has an appropriate degree of stability.

The second scale: Academic procrastination of university students (prepared by / Noura Adel Zaki, 2020).

Description of the scale: - The scale consists(29) statement and three main dimensions, which are :-The cognitive dimension-The behavioral dimension-The emotional dimension.

A- Validity of the scale-:

Validity of internal consistency-:

The researchers verified the validity of the academic procrastination scale for university students, as the researchers used internal consistency, where this type of validity was calculated by applying the scale once on a sample consisting of (35) individuals, and the correlation coefficients were calculated and shows that the resulting correlation coefficient values are high and significant at a significance level of (0.01) and (0.05), which indicates the validity of the scale to an appropriate degree, as its results can be relied upon.

Table No(3) Exhibits the validity of internal consistency between the dimensions of the academic procrastination scale for university students as a whole n=(35)

m	Dimensions	Correlation coefficient	sig
1	Cognitive dimension	0.945	**
2	Behavioral dimension	0.916	**
3	Emotional dimension	0.906	**
4	Validity of the academic procrastination scale as a whole	0.922	**

Table No. (3) shows that the resulting correlation coefficient values ranged between (0.906) and (945), and all of these coefficients are high and significant at a significance level of (0.01), which indicates the validity of the scale to an appropriate degree, as its results can be relied upon.

B - Scale stability:

The researchers calculated the stability of the scale using the following coefficients:

- 1- Cronbach's alpha coefficient.
- 2-Split-half (Spearman-Brown).

Table No. (4) shows the scale stability coefficients using the Cronbach's alpha method and the split-half method n=(35)

m	Variables	Cronbach's alpha coefficient	Spearman-Brown equation
1	Cognitive dimension	0.915	**0.879
2	Behavioral dimension	0.899	**0.905
3	Emotional dimension	0.910	**0.918
4	Validity of the academic procrastination scale as a whole	0.908	**0.901

Table No. (4) shows a high degree of stability in all dimensions of the scale, such that the results obtained by the tool can be relied upon. This indicates that the scale has an appropriate degree of stability.

Table No. (5) Exhibits the relationship between life stresses and academic procrastination among university youth N=364

Dimensions	Mean	Std. Deviation	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)
Life stress	167.67	11.324	**0.213	0.01 level
Academic procrastination	70.81	10.878		

The previous table shows the following:

- There is a statistically significant correlation between life stress and academic procrastination among university students at a significance level of 0.01, and therefore the main hypothesis of the study is accepted.

The first sub-hypothesis: There is a statistically significant direct relationship between life stress and the cognitive dimension among university youth.

Table No. (6) Explains the relationship between life stress and cognitive dimension among university youth
N=364

Dimensions	Mean	Std. Deviation	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)
Cognitive dimension	20.15	3.987	**0.213	0.01 level
Family stress	37.36	2.623		
Cognitive dimension	20.15	3.987	**0.298	0.01 level
Academic stress	36.07	3		
Cognitive dimension	20.15	3.987	**0.158	0.01 level
Economic stress	34.02	3.234		
Cognitive dimension	20.15	3.987	**0.139	0.01 level
Peer stress	29.86	3.082		
Cognitive dimension	20.15	3.987	**0.138	0.01 level
Service stress	30.36	2.688		

The previous table shows the following:

There is a direct relationship with statistical significance between life stress in all their dimensions and the cognitive dimension among university youth at a significance level of 0.01, and therefore the first hypothesis of the study is accepted.

The second sub-hypothesis: There is a statistically significant direct relationship between life stress and the behavioral dimension among university youth

Table No.(7) Explains the relationship between life stress and behavioral dimensions among university youth
N=364

Dimensions	Mean	Std. Deviation	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)
Behavioral dimension	28.37	4.437	**0.212	0.01 level
Family stress	37.36	2.623		
Behavioral dimension	28.37	4.437	**0.153	0.01 level
Academic stress	36.07	3		
Behavioral dimension	28.37	4.437	**0.320	0.01 level
Economic stress	34.02	3.234		
Behavioral dimension	28.37	4.437	**0.254	0.01 level
Peer stress	29.86	3.082		
Behavioral dimension	28.37	4.437	**0.269	0.01 level
Service stress	30.36	2.688		

The previous table shows the following:

There is a direct relationship with statistical significance between life stress in all their dimensions and the behavioral dimension among university youth at a significance level of 0.01, and therefore the second hypothesis of the study is accepted.

The third sub-hypothesis: There is a statistically significant direct relationship between life stress and the emotional dimension among university youth.

**Table No. (8) Explains the relationship between life stress and the emotional dimension among university youth
N=364**

Dimensions	Mean	Std. Deviation	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)
Emotional dimension	22.29	3.551	**0.266	0.01 level
Family stress	37.36	2.623		
Emotional dimension	22.29	3.551	**0.278	0.01 level
Academic stress	36.07	3		
Emotional dimension	22.29	3.551	**0.267	0.01 level
Economic stress	34.02	3.234		
Emotional dimension	22.29	3.551	**0.274	0.01 level
Peer stress	29.86	3.082		
Emotional dimension	22.29	3.551	**0.251	0.01 level
Service stress	30.36	2.688		

The previous table shows the following:

There is a direct relationship with statistical significance between life stress in all their dimensions and the emotional dimension among university youth at a significance level of 0.01, and therefore the third hypothesis of the study is accepted.

Discussion

The results of the study concluded that there is a statistically significant direct relationship between life stresses and academic procrastination among university students at a significance level of 0.01. The results of the study also proved the validity of the main hypothesis as well as its sub-hypotheses. This result is consistent with the study of Ahmed & Attia (2008), which found that students' life stresses increase when they postpone the completion of academic tasks until the last moments. Similarly, the study by Nirbhay & Kevin (2004) that when individuals are unable to overcome stressful life situations in the face of various educational obstacles, they resort to academic procrastination.

Samli & Hassan bin Idris Abdo (2020) also confirmed the existence of a relationship between academic procrastination and life stresses among male and female students at Najran University. The results showed that the level of life stresses among university students is high, with the ranking of these indicators according to the arithmetic mean as follows: family stresses, academic stresses, economic stresses, service stresses, and finally peer stresses.

This is consistent with the study by Devi & Mohan (2015), which indicated that the most important external stresses that university youth suffer from are represented in four categories: academic, social, family and economic stresses. The results also showed that the most common internal stresses or symptoms of stress include lack of self-confidence, feeling of loneliness, anxiety, tension, aggressive behaviors and withdrawal. These stresses had clear effects on the academic level of students.

In the same way, the study by Al-Anzi (2015) found that the most prominent stresses that university youth suffer from are academic stresses, followed by family stresses, social stresses, economic stresses, health stresses, and finally future stresses. The study by Aqashi (2017) confirmed that university students are exposed to multiple and varied life stresses, including health, academic, family, economic, and social stresses. This agrees with the results of the study by Damush, Hays and DiMatteo's, Damush, Hays and DiMatteo's (1997), which found that university students suffer from stressful life events.

The results of the current study also confirmed that the level of academic procrastination among university youth is high. The ranking of these indicators according to the arithmetic mean is as follows: the behavioral dimension, followed by the emotional dimension, and finally the cognitive dimension. This is consistent with the study by Hanaa Saleh (2015), which found that a large percentage of university students, estimated at 75% of, suffer from academic procrastination, as they postpone the completion of their academic work. All sample members explained that they suffer from this problem.

This is also consistent with the study by Moti et al (2012), which found that a large percentage of students engage in procrastination behavior in studying and exams, experiencing stress as a result of overthinking. The negative effects of academic procrastination are not limited to the academic side, but extend to include the emotional side and mood, such as anger, anxiety,

discomfort, regret, mental stress, and psychological exhaustion. This was confirmed by the study by Grunschel, et al. (2013).

The results of the current study also differed from the studies by Shaima Hussein Rabie Abdel Razek (2022), which showed that the level of academic procrastination among university students and social service students was low. It confirmed that the reasons for academic procrastination included feeling anxious about the possibility of obtaining poor grades, the large number of required assignments alienating students from academic subjects, and students feeling fear during their studies due to lack of excellence and success.

The results of the current study also differed from the studies by Balkis & Duru (2009) and Al-Sharif, Bandar Abdullah, Al-Ahmadi, and Nasser Abdullah (2007), whose results revealed a low rate of academic procrastination among university students.

• **According to the ecological theory**, stress is a response to daily life and suffering characterized by a state of emotional disturbance or imbalance, or both. It is associated with feelings of anxiety, fear, inferiority, frustration, helplessness, and despair. Therefore, continued pressure and failure to adapt to it can lead to a lack of psychological, emotional, and social performance. External stresses arise as a result of negative interactions between the individual and their environment and an attempt to re-adapt to the surrounding environment.

Behavioral theory explains academic procrastination as a learned, measurable, and observable behavior, where feelings or thoughts are not taken into account. It results from inappropriate learning of the response or learning an inappropriate response. Postponing a task has a more reinforcing effect than performing the task itself. Procrastination behavior can be extinguished by modifying the environmental conditions of the procrastinating person and using systems of reinforcement and punishment.

Indicators of the role of the social worker in alleviating life stresses and academic procrastination among university students :

-**The therapeutic role:** By developing therapeutic programs for university students with the aim of alleviating the various stresses they suffer from and reducing their feelings of anxiety and tension, and also providing assistance to university students in developing and presenting appropriate suggestions and solutions to reduce academic procrastination behavior

-The role of the mediator: The social worker acts as a mediator between students and officials at the college and university regarding choosing appropriate and possible methods and approaches to reduce academic procrastination behavior

-The role of the activist: Encouraging students to communicate with others and organize personal and social relationships through which personal and social adaptation is achieved, as well as pushing the environment surrounding them to provide the necessary support for them

-The role of the teacher: This role depends on the social worker providing students with the necessary information about the resulting damages and the nature of the life skills necessary to improve their abilities to perform socially and increase their ability to adapt to these stresses.

-The role of the assistant: The social worker provides assistance and possible suggestions to students in choosing the methods and capabilities available to the university to use in reducing procrastination behavior

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