



Factors Contributing to Procrastination Behaviors Among University Students in Jalalabad: A Quality Assurance Perspective

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Abstract

fostering autonomy-supportive learning environments, enhancing time management skills, and strengthening student support services to reduce procrastination. Integrating SDT Procrastination is a common issue among university students, negatively impacting academic performance, well-being, and the effectiveness of Quality Assurance (QA) mechanisms. In Jalalabad, Afghanistan, research on factors driving student procrastination and its implications for educational quality remains limited. This study investigates personal, academic, and institutional determinants of procrastination and their effects on QA processes. A descriptive cross-sectional survey was conducted with 130 students from diverse programs. Data were collected using structured questionnaires based on Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which highlights autonomy, competence, and relatedness as drivers of intrinsic motivation. Quantitative analyses identified key contributors to procrastination, including poor time management, excessive social media use, low self-efficacy, limited motivational support from educators and family, and feelings of lethargy. Students recognized the adverse effects of procrastination on academic outcomes. From a QA perspective, these behaviors threaten academic standards, increase attrition risk, and hinder institutional objectives. The study recommends -informed interventions into QA frameworks can improve timely academic progression, boost student engagement, and sustain educational quality. These findings offer evidence-based insights into behavioral factors affecting higher education in Afghanistan and suggest practical strategies to enhance institutional effectiveness and student outcomes.

Keywords: Procrastination, Self-Determination Theory, Academic Performance, Quality Assurance, Higher Education.

Introduction

Procrastination, defined as the voluntary delay of intended tasks despite anticipating negative outcomes, is a widespread challenge among university students globally, with estimates suggesting that 50–95% of undergraduates engage in this behavior (Fentaw, 2022; Hidayat & Hasim, 2023; WorldMetrics, 2024). This pervasive tendency negatively impacts academic performance, psychological well-being, timely graduation, student retention, and the effectiveness of Quality Assurance (QA) systems in higher education institutions (Hyland, 2019; Ahmed & Malik, 2021). In developing higher education contexts, such as Afghanistan, particularly in Jalalabad, limited empirical evidence exists

regarding the determinants of student procrastination and its institutional consequences, representing a critical research gap.

Personal Factors contribute significantly to procrastination. Traits including low self-efficacy, inadequate self-regulation, fear of failure, anxiety, and perfectionism have been consistently linked to delayed task completion (Guay, Senécal, & Vallerand, 2003; Steel, 2007; Fentaw, 2022; Hidayat & Hasim, 2023). Empirical studies indicate that students with limited academic confidence or maladaptive perfectionism tend to postpone challenging tasks, often using delay as a short-term coping mechanism (Sirois & Pychyl, 2013; Zhang et al., 2023).

Task and Academic Factors further influence procrastination. Ambiguous assignments, excessive workload, unclear deadlines, low perceived relevance, and overly difficult tasks exacerbate avoidance behaviors (Hidayat & Hasim, 2023; Steel, 2007; Pychyl, 2013). Teaching styles and institutional support play pivotal roles: autonomy-supportive instructional approaches reduce procrastination, whereas controlling or unsupportive practices increase delay tendencies (Valenzuela, Codina, & Castillo, 2020; World Bank, 2023).

Social and Environmental Factors also shape procrastination behaviors. Distractions from digital media, insufficient study environments, peer influence, and cultural norms impact students' likelihood to delay tasks (Steel, 2007; Klingsieck, 2013; Rozentel et al., 2014). These influences highlight that procrastination is a multifaceted phenomenon arising from complex interactions between psychological, cognitive, academic, and environmental domains.

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) provides a comprehensive framework to understand the motivational underpinnings of procrastination (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2017). SDT posits that satisfaction of the basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness fosters intrinsic motivation and effective self-regulation, thereby reducing procrastination (Valenzuela et al., 2020; Komarraju & Nadler, 2013). Conversely, environments that neglect these needs increase delay behaviors. Evidence shows that autonomy-supportive teaching, constructive feedback, and social connectedness lower procrastination and enhance academic engagement (Howell & Watson, 2007; Reeve, 2016). Procrastination and Quality Assurance in Higher Education are closely interconnected. Beyond individual performance, procrastination undermines institutional objectives, including academic standards, timely course completion, and student retention, all central to QA frameworks (Hyland, 2019; Ahmed & Malik, 2021; Conceição et al., 2020). In contexts like Jalalabad, unchecked procrastination can impede alignment with global educational standards and compromise QA effectiveness (World Bank, 2023). SDT-informed interventions can therefore enhance QA outcomes by fostering autonomy, competence, and relatedness, supporting both student success and institutional quality.

Despite extensive international research on procrastination, studies in Afghan higher education remain limited, particularly regarding its implications for QA processes. This study addresses this gap by investigating the personal, academic, and institutional determinants of procrastination among university students in Jalalabad. It further examines how these behaviors affect educational quality and QA standards. By applying an SDT-informed perspective, the study aims to provide evidence-based recommendations to promote autonomy, competence, and academic responsibility, ultimately enhancing both student performance and institutional effectiveness.

Material and Method

Study Design

A descriptive, cross-sectional survey design was employed to examine the factors contributing to procrastination behaviors among university students. This approach allows for the systematic collection of self-reported data on individual, academic, and institutional contributors to procrastination, as well as perceptions of its impact on academic performance and institutional quality.

Sample Collection

A total of 130 students participated in the study. Participants were recruited through university networks, social media platforms, and email invitations, ensuring voluntary participation. Prior to participation, students were informed about the research objectives, guaranteed confidentiality, and provided with informed digital consent. The survey included a structured questionnaire with both closed-ended and open-ended items, capturing demographic information, the frequency and nature of procrastination behaviors, contributing factors, and perceived effects on academic and institutional performance.

Data Collection Tools

The questionnaire was administered electronically via Google Forms. Closed-ended questions were designed to provide quantitative insights, while open-ended questions facilitated qualitative exploration of personal experiences, challenges, and perceptions regarding procrastination and QA.

Statistical Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using Google Forms' built-in analytical tools to generate frequency distributions and descriptive statistics. Microsoft Excel was used for data organization, visualization, and graphical representation. Thematic analysis was applied to open-ended responses to identify recurring patterns and key insights relevant to procrastination and QA challenges in higher education.

Findings

The age distribution of university students who participated in a study examining procrastination behaviors in Jalalabad. The majority of respondents, comprising 59.5%, were between the ages of 20 and 24 years, indicating that they represent the predominant demographic within the university student population. Additionally, 26.6% of the participants were aged between 18 and 20 years, while 13.9% were older than 24 years. This data highlights that most of the surveyed students belong to the typical age range for individuals pursuing higher education, thereby offering valuable insights into the procrastination behaviors exhibited by active university students.

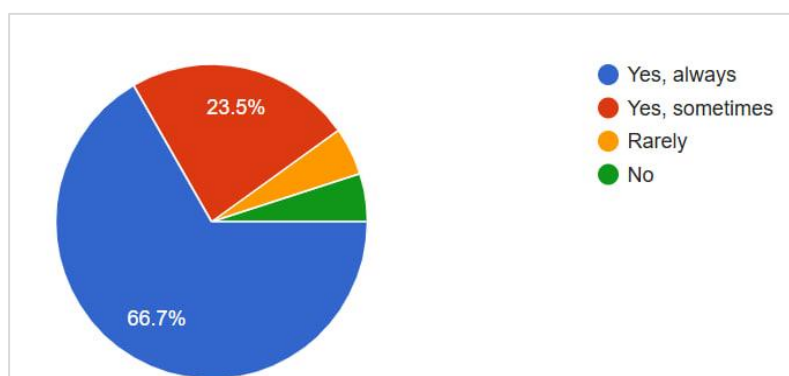


Figure 1. Specific Plans for Studying and Completing Assignments

Figure 1, The pie chart illustrates students' responses regarding whether they have specific plans for studying and completing assignments. A significant majority, 66.7%, reported that they always make specific plans, indicating that most students approach their academic responsibilities with a high level of organization and consistency. These students likely manage their time effectively, set goals, and follow structured routines to complete their coursework efficiently. Another 23.5% of students responded that they sometimes make plans, suggesting that while they may not always follow a fixed schedule, they still make an effort to organize their studies when needed. A smaller percentage of students indicated that they rarely plan, and an even smaller group reported that they do not plan at all. These groups may struggle with time management or prefer a more spontaneous approach to their studies. Overall, the pie chart highlights that the majority of students engage in some form of planning, though the consistency and effectiveness of these plans may vary. This data emphasizes the importance of encouraging planning skills to support academic success across the student body.

Recent findings from the questionnaire indicate that a substantial proportion of university students – 65.8% – acknowledged postponing the commencement of their assignments due to inadequate planning. This underscores a significant issue related to time management and organizational skills among students, which can adversely affect their academic performance and overall educational experience. From a quality assurance standpoint, this finding is of paramount importance as it highlights the necessity for institutional support aimed at assisting students in cultivating improved planning habits.

Conversely, the remaining 34.2% of respondents reported that they do not experience delays in assignment completion due to poor planning, suggesting that while some students are effectively managing their workloads, a considerable number continue to encounter challenges in this regard. These results emphasize the critical need for the integration of structured time management resources, academic skills workshops, and advisory services within university support systems. Enhancing these areas may contribute to the reduction of procrastination behaviors and the improvement of student outcomes, thereby aligning with broader objectives of educational quality and student success.

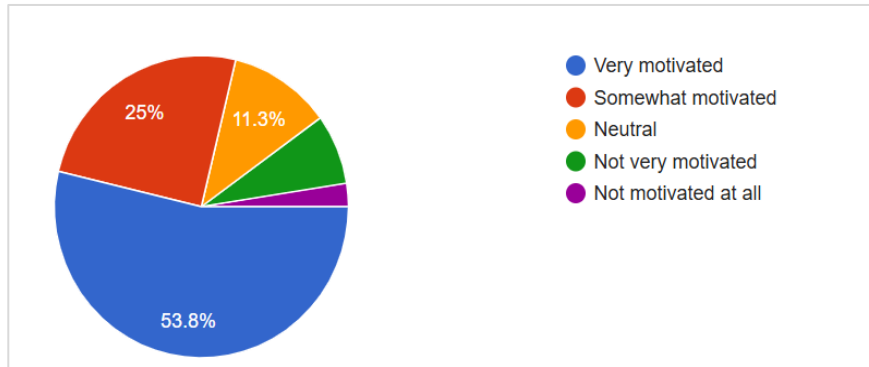


Figure 2. Motivation from Teachers and Parents

Figure 2 presents the findings from the questionnaire, which reveal a significant correlation between teacher encouragement and student motivation. A substantial majority of respondents—53.8%—reported experiencing high levels of motivation attributed to the encouragement received from their teachers. This result suggests that supportive interactions between educators and students are highly effective in enhancing students' engagement and commitment to academic pursuits.

Additionally, another 25% of students indicated that they feel somewhat motivated, further reinforcing the positive influence of teacher encouragement, although this effect varies among individuals. Moreover, 11.3% of respondents expressed a neutral stance, indicating that teacher encouragement does not exert a notable positive or negative impact on their motivation.

A smaller segment of the population, comprising 6.3% (as estimated from visual assessment), indicated they are not very motivated, while a minimal percentage reported being entirely unmotivated. These findings underscore the critical need to sustain and refine strategies for teacher encouragement as a pivotal component in promoting student motivation and fostering academic success. Furthermore, to ensure quality assurance in higher education, these results emphasize the importance of cultivating supportive learning environments that empower students through constructive and consistent encouragement.

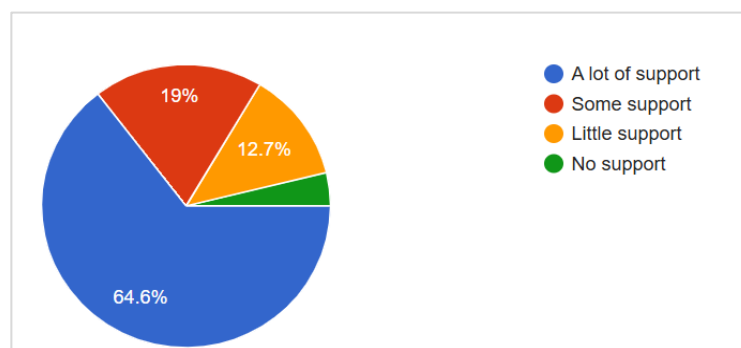


Figure 3. Motivation from Family Regarding Studies

The bar chart illustrates findings from the questionnaire which reveal that a substantial majority of students receive significant encouragement from their families concerning their academic endeavors. Specifically, 64.6% of respondents indicated that they receive

considerable support, suggesting that family involvement is crucial in motivating students and contributing positively to their academic success.

Furthermore, 19% of students reported receiving some degree of support, indicating that, while not overwhelming, family encouragement remains present for a noteworthy segment of the student population. In contrast, a smaller percentage, 12.7%, articulated that they receive minimal support, and an even lesser number reported no support whatsoever. These latter results highlight a minority of students who may encounter academic challenges without the advantageous backing of a robust support system at home.

Additionally, the questionnaire shows that 81% of students believe a lack of motivation from teachers and parents contributes to their procrastination. In contrast, 19% of respondents do not perceive this as a contributing factor. This indicates that external motivation from key figures such as educators and family members plays a significant role in influencing students' study behaviors and time management.

From a quality assurance perspective, these findings emphasize the necessity of recognizing and addressing disparities in familial support, as such factors can markedly influence student engagement, confidence, and overall academic performance. Consequently, educational institutions may consider implementing additional mentoring, counseling, or peer support programs for students who lack familial encouragement, thereby ensuring equitable opportunities for academic achievement.

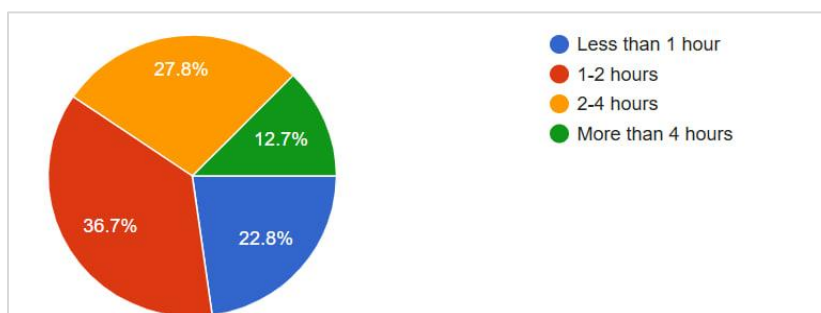


Figure 4. Social Media Usage

Findings from the questionnaire reveal varying patterns of social media usage among students. The majority, 36.7%, reported spending 1–2 hours daily on social media, indicating moderate use that may still affect study time and productivity if not managed effectively.

A further 27.8% of students stated they spend 2–4 hours per day on social media, suggesting a more significant portion of their time is dedicated to online activity, which could potentially contribute to procrastination or reduced academic focus. Additionally, 22.8% of respondents indicated they use social media for less than 1 hour per day, reflecting more limited and possibly more intentional use.

A smaller group, 12.7%, reported spending more than 4 hours daily on social media, raising concerns about the possible impact on their academic performance and time management. Overall, the data highlights the importance of promoting digital balance and awareness among students, especially when addressing procrastination behaviors in a university setting.

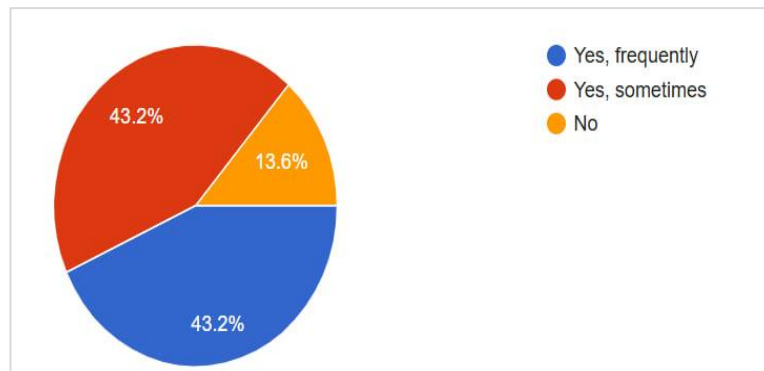


Figure 5. Social media distraction from studying or completing assignments

Findings from the questionnaire indicate that social media serves as a significant source of distraction for numerous students when engaged in studying or completing assignments. Specifically, 43.2% of respondents acknowledged that social media frequently distracts them from their academic responsibilities. An equivalent percentage, 43.2%, reported that they are sometimes distracted by social media. This suggests that, although it may not consistently hinder their focus, it still disrupts their concentration and productivity on occasion.

Only 13.6% of students indicated that social media does not distract them at all, revealing that a minority can successfully establish boundaries between their academic tasks and digital engagements. These findings indicate that, for a considerable majority of students, social media presents a degree of interference with their academic work.

From a quality assurance perspective, these results underscore the necessity for educational institutions to provide guidance on digital self-regulation, time management, and the implementation of productivity tools. Such measures could assist students in reducing distractions and improving their focus.

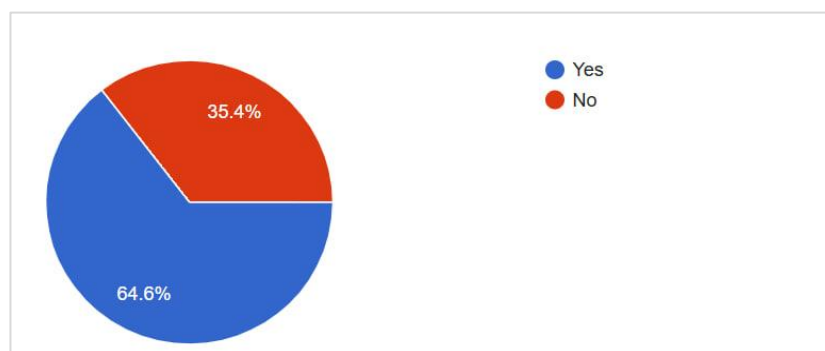


Figure 6. Procrastination due to excessive social media use

Findings derived from the questionnaire reveal that 64.6% of students acknowledge frequently engaging in procrastination as a result of excessive social media usage. This indicates that a substantial segment of the student population is experiencing adverse academic consequences attributable to high levels of engagement with digital platforms.

Conversely, 35.4% of respondents indicated that their social media use does not contribute to procrastination, implying that a considerable number of students exhibit either greater discipline in their usage or are less susceptible to its potential distractions. These results highlight concerns regarding the impact of digital behavior on academic delays and emphasize the necessity for awareness campaigns, digital well-being workshops, and academic time management programs. Addressing excessive social media use may serve as a critical element in mitigating procrastination and enhancing overall student performance and productivity.

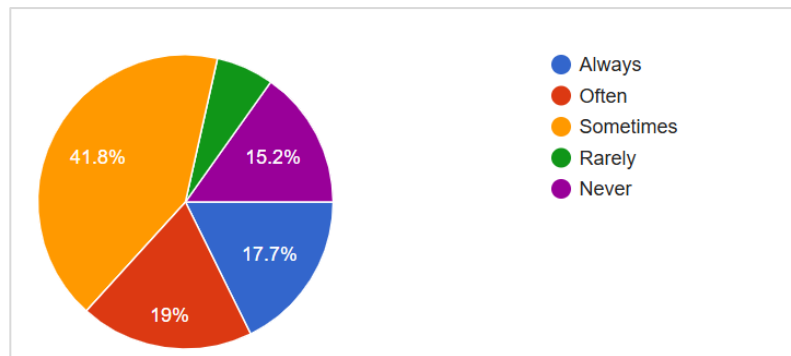


Figure 7. Feelings of Laziness

The pie chart shows how often students feel too lazy to start their academic tasks. According to the results, the highest percentage, 41.8%, of students said they sometimes feel lazy to begin their tasks. 19% of students mentioned they often feel this way, while 17.7% admitted they always feel too lazy to start their academic work. On the other hand, 15.2% of the participants reported that they never experience this problem, and only 6.3% said they rarely feel lazy. Furthermore, when asked whether laziness is a major reason for their procrastination, a significant 79.7% of students answered yes, while 20.3% believe laziness is not the main reason for their delay in academic tasks. Overall, the data shows that many students face laziness at different levels, and most of them consider it a key factor behind procrastination, which can affect their academic performance.

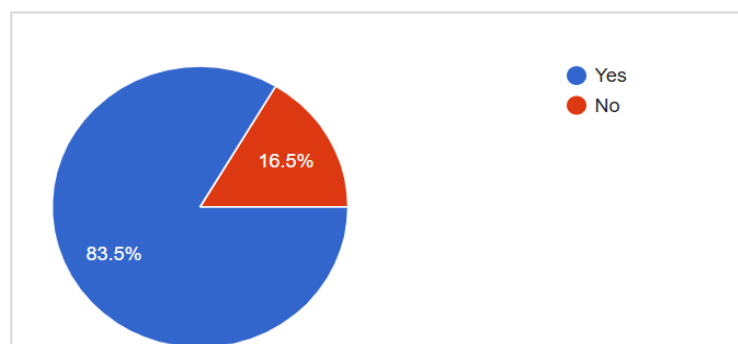


Figure 8. Leaving Assignments till the last minutes

The pie chart presented illustrates the frequency with which students postpone their assignments or tasks until the last minute. The data reveals that a substantial majority of respondents, accounting for 45.6%, indicated that they sometimes defer their tasks until the deadline. Furthermore, 17.7% of students reported that they often engage in procrastination, while another 17.7% confessed to consistently delaying their assignments. Conversely, 11.4% of participants stated that they rarely postpone their tasks, and merely 7.6% affirmed that they never do so. These findings underscore that procrastination is a prevalent challenge among students, affecting a significant portion of them to varying extents, which can adversely influence their academic performance.

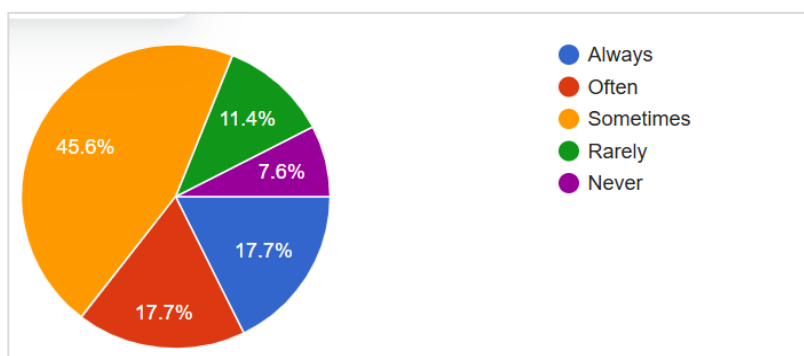


Figure 9. Procrastination effects on academic performance

The pie chart presents the results of a survey in which students were asked whether they believe that procrastination negatively impacts their academic performance. The findings reveal that a substantial majority, 83.5%, responded affirmatively, indicating their belief in the detrimental effects of procrastination on their academic success. Conversely, 16.5% of respondents indicated that they do not perceive procrastination as an influencing factor in their academic achievements. The data underscores a heightened awareness among students regarding the adverse consequences of procrastination on their studies. This awareness emphasizes the necessity for students to implement more effective time management and planning strategies to mitigate procrastination and enhance their academic outcomes.

Additionally, the analysis of the participants' responses identified several key factors that contribute to procrastination among university students in Jalalabad. These factors include inadequate motivation from educators and parents, excessive engagement with social media, fear of failure, poor time management skills, economic challenges, academic overload, and low self-esteem.

In response to the issue of procrastination, students proposed several solutions aimed at alleviating this challenge. These solutions encompass reducing social media engagement, improving time management capabilities, fostering self-motivation, and encouraging educators to utilize more engaging and motivational teaching methodologies. Furthermore, some participants emphasized the importance of providing economic support and recruiting qualified educators as critical measures to mitigate procrastination and enhance overall academic performance. The pie chart presents the results of a survey in which students were asked whether they believe that procrastination negatively impacts

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Discussion

This study elucidates that procrastination among university students in Jalalabad is a pervasive and multifaceted issue with substantial implications for academic success and the efficacy of Quality Assurance (QA) in higher education. In alignment with previous global findings (Steel, 2007; Sirois et al., 2019), the results suggest that procrastination transcends mere time management failures, emerging from a complex interplay of psychological, motivational, and contextual influences.

A considerable proportion of students reported frequently postponing academic tasks, corroborating research that indicates between 50% and 95% of university students worldwide engage in procrastination (Fentaw, 2022; Hidayat & Hasim, 2023). The significant role of inadequate planning and distractions from social media identified in this study is consistent with Klingsieck's (2013) conclusion that digital technologies have exacerbated procrastination by providing readily accessible sources of distraction. Notably, over 60% of students acknowledged that excessive social media use directly contributed to their procrastination, underscoring the urgent need for interventions aimed at enhancing digital self-regulation.

This research further substantiates Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2017), which posits that autonomy, competence, and relatedness are critical for maintaining motivation and regulating behavior. Many respondents indicated low levels of encouragement from educators and family members, which correlated with higher levels of procrastination. These findings align with Valenzuela, Codina, and Castillo's (2020) evidence that students who perceive their educational environment as autonomy-supportive and feel socially connected are less likely to engage in procrastination.

Conversely, controlling learning environments that lack support tend to undermine intrinsic motivation and promote avoidance behaviors.

Additionally, low self-efficacy and fear of failure were frequently cited, in accordance with research indicating that students who doubt their competencies are more susceptible to procrastination (Guay, Senécal, & Vallerand, 2003; Klassen, Krawchuk, & Rajani, 2008). This observation emphasizes the necessity of fostering confidence through constructive feedback and skill development. Furthermore, the involvement of maladaptive perfectionism—where students establish unrealistically high standards and fear falling short—reflects the patterns described by Ferrari (2010) as central to chronic procrastination.

From a Quality Assurance perspective, these behaviors jeopardize several key indicators of institutional performance, including timely assignment completion, student retention, and academic standards (Ahmed & Malik, 2021; Hyland, 2019). In Afghanistan, where universities are endeavoring to align with international benchmarks (World Bank, 2023), unmanaged procrastination poses a threat to both institutional credibility and student outcomes.

The findings of this study suggest that effective interventions must extend beyond the mere teaching of time management skills. While training in planning and organizational skills is beneficial, existing evidence indicates that addressing deeper motivational and emotional factors is essential (Sirois & Pychyl, 2013). For instance, the creation of supportive learning environments that fulfill students' psychological needs for autonomy and relatedness can mitigate procrastination and enhance engagement (Ryan & Deci, 2017; Valenzuela et al., 2020). Additionally, given the substantial influence of social media, universities should contemplate implementing digital literacy programs, structured academic support, and tools designed to assist students in managing online distractions (Rozental, Carlbring, & Andersson, 2014).

This study represents a significant contribution by offering context-specific insights into procrastination within Afghan higher education. However, several limitations must be acknowledged. The reliance on self-reported data may introduce response bias, including potential underreporting due to social desirability. The cross-sectional design limits the ability to make causal inferences regarding the identified relationships. Furthermore, while the sample included diverse participants from various institutions in Jalalabad, the findings may not be generalizable to all university students in Afghanistan.

Future research should explore longitudinal approaches to track procrastination patterns over time, as well as experimental designs to assess the effectiveness of interventions informed by Self-Determination Theory. Qualitative studies could also yield deeper insights into the cultural and institutional contexts that shape procrastination behaviors.

In conclusion, procrastination among university students in Jalalabad constitutes a prevalent challenge with significant academic and institutional ramifications. Addressing this issue necessitates integrated strategies that enhance students' self-regulation skills, promote autonomy-supportive teaching, and assist in managing digital distractions. Such efforts are vital for improving educational quality and supporting the sustainable development of Afghanistan's higher education sector.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that procrastination among university students in Jalalabad is a multifaceted issue influenced by psychological, motivational, and contextual factors. Key contributors include low self-efficacy, fear of failure, insufficient autonomy, excessive social media use, and poor time management. Grounded in Self-Determination Theory, the findings indicate that unfulfilled psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness significantly increase the likelihood of procrastination, highlighting the importance of supportive, autonomy-enhancing learning environments. From a Quality Assurance perspective, procrastination undermines educational effectiveness by affecting timely task completion, student engagement, retention, and overall academic performance. To mitigate these challenges, universities should implement comprehensive interventions combining skill development in time management and self-regulation with structural support, such as mentoring programs, academic counseling, and faculty training in autonomy-supportive teaching. Addressing procrastination in a systematic, student-centered manner can enhance individual academic outcomes, promote student well-being, and strengthen institutional quality and accountability, thereby supporting the sustainable advancement of higher education in Jalalabad.

Acknowledgment

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Data Availability Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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