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Impact of procrastination on everyday life

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to shed light upon a very common issue in everyday life, focusing on adolescents as the target group. A survey research design was used to perform this study, where respondents were asked the degree to which they agreed with 18 statements on a scale of 1-5. Findings show that most adolescents do struggle with this phenomenon as a part of their daily lives, and also touch upon the causes of why this might occur. Although this varies from individual to individual, a common trend is visible and must be addressed.

Keywords: Procrastination, Behavioural psychology, Deadlines, Priorities, Socio-personal variables, Productivity, Short-term pleasure, Emotional well-being, Psychophysiological reactivity, Structured goal setting, Time management, Self-efficacy

1. INTRODUCTION

Procrastination is a phenomenon that has become more and more widespread with each generation, and with the advent of technology, its impact has been felt even more. It is defined as the tendency to delay the initiation or completion of a goal pursuit (Krause, K., & Freund, A. M. (2014)). We have been procrastinating for centuries, so much so that Greek philosophers gave this type of behaviour a name- akrasia, which is the state of acting against your better judgment. Procrastination is an idea similar to this and is defined as the act of postponing a set of tasks. It shows a lack of self-control and also greatly reduces productivity. It might also end up becoming a vicious cycle, and this hurts one's performance in various facets. Procrastination is related to various personal, cognitive, emotional, and motivational factors that often lead to a somewhat fragmented representation of it (Fee, R. L., & Tangney, J. P. (2000)).

The reason we procrastinate relates to the branch of behavioural psychology. Behavioural psychology, or behaviourism, is the theory that suggests that environment shapes human behaviour, and it seeks to study the connection between our minds and our behaviour. It is used to help observe human behaviours and understand why we behave the way we do. By identifying common trends in our behavioural patterns, we can try to and understand predict human behaviour to improve it in the future. Some common techniques from behavioural psychology include modelling, systematic desensitization, token economy, and applied behavioural analysis.

Procrastination occurs due to a phenomenon part of this branch called 'time inconsistency' -the tendency of the human brain to value immediate rewards more highly than future rewards (Reuben, E., Sapienza, P., & Zingales, L. (2015)). There is a mismatch between what your future self and present self want, and this causes the need to delay because you don't know which one to listen to. Our brain values long-term benefits in the future, but instant gratification in the present (Kim, J., Hong, H., Lee, J., & Hyun, M. H. (2017)). This is why we don't end up taking action in the present, and sometimes feel motivated at night but agitated when we wake up.

Procrastination is prevalent in all age groups (although I plan to focus on only one), and through this study, I would like to understand the impact of procrastination on one's everyday life.

2. METHODOLOGY

- a. **Research Question:** How does procrastination impact one's everyday life and habits?

b. Description Of Method Used:

- **Survey:** This research approach allows researchers to examine a variety of ideas, attitudes, and social attributes by gathering data from a pre-defined set of respondents. The survey approach uses checklists, questionnaires, rating scales, telephonic surveys, and personal interviews to gather the necessary data. These can be carried out using email, phone calls, questionnaires, or face-to-face communication with respondents.
- **Questionnaire Survey:** The questionnaire survey is the simplest and most highly structured form of an interview in which the individuals write down their answers to a set of pre-determined questions. The questionnaire is used to collect information on a person's background and demographics, past behaviours, attitudes, opinions, knowledge of a certain subject, and, expectations and goals. This questionnaire survey intends to determine the ways in which procrastination impacts one's everyday life.
- Consists of predetermined set of questions that the respondent had to read and answer. There are 2 types of questionnaire surveys: open-ended questionnaires and close-ended questionnaires.
- This study will consist of both open-ended and close-ended questionnaires.
- There will be a scale of 1-5, where:
 - 5= Strongly Agree
 - 4= Agree
 - 3= Neutral
 - 2= Disagree
 - 1= Strongly Disagree

The scores will then be added at the end of the survey to see whether the person in question is being deeply impacted by procrastination or whether they are in control of their habits. If the overall score after summation is 18-49, the subject is managing their time well and not procrastinating or undergoing unhealthy delays with their tasks. If the score is between 50-70, some areas require improvement, but overall, the subject's performance with regards to procrastination is still satisfactory. If the score is between 70-90, the subject needs to improve their time management skills, work on setting deadlines and schedule their tasks.

c. Survey Size/Data Collected

The sample is selected from 31 adolescents, a majority from Vasant Valley School, ranging from ages 14-17. A simple sampling method was used to select the subjects who volunteered for the study. 64.5% of the people who participated were 16 years old, while 25.8% were 15 years old. 58.1% of the people who participated were male while 38.7% were female, and 3.2% were non-binary. The respondents were sent a link to the questionnaire via the social media app, 'WhatsApp'. All the participants had a choice to decide whether or not they wanted to participate in the study, the nature and the purpose of the study was explained to them beforehand and the questionnaire was entirely anonymous. Thus, the study was conducted ethically. The higher the score on the scale, greater the amount of procrastination exhibited by the subject.

d. Questionnaire/ Test Used/ Interview Questions/ Experimental Variables

18 statements were presented to the respondents, and they had to state the degree to which they agreed to each of these statements. The summation of their scores indicates the level of procrastination they are at.

Experimental Variables

Procrastination- The delaying of a task, or a set of tasks, usually borne out of feelings of the need for immediate gratification.

Adolescents- The set of individuals usually in a transition period from childhood to adulthood, and whose ages range from 13-20 years. Below is a table showing each question number, and the percentage of responses for each point on the scale:

Question Number	1	2	3	4	5
1	3.2%	3.2%	16.1%	32.3%	45.2%
2	9.7%	25.8%	25.8%	25.8%	12.9%
3	6.5%	12.9%	12.9%	35.5%	32.3%
4	16.1%	29%	9.7%	25.8%	19.4%
5	16.1%	35.5%	12.9%	9.7%	25.8%
6	6.5%	25.8%	12.9%	29%	25.8%
7	19.4%	22.6%	25.8%	19.4%	12.9%

8	3.2%	-	19.4%	35.5%	41.9%
9	6.5%	6.5%	22.6%	25.8%	38.7%
10	32.3%	25.8%	16.1%	16.1%	9.7%
11	9.7%	25.8%	16.1%	19.4%	29%
12	41.9%	35.5%	9.7%	3.2%	9.7%
13	16.1%	29%	6.5%	25.8%	22.6%
14	6.5%	6.5%	22.6%	22.6%	41.9%
15	9.7%	38.7%	12.9%	9.7%	29%
16	6.5%	6.5%	12.9%	29%	45.2%
17	9.7%	16.1%	22.6%	32.3%	19.4%
18	32.3%	29%	16.1%	12.9%	9.7%

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study show that adolescents do suffer from procrastination, as is the general trend. 46% of the sample said that they wait until the last minute to complete their tasks, while around 51% agreed that they usually don't set deadlines for the tasks they wish to pursue. 68% of the sample said they waste their time doing trivial things that usually don't increase their productivity. 77% said they get distracted very easily, while 39% agreed they do too many tasks simultaneously and end up completing none. These are just some of the examples which show us how deeply procrastination impacts us almost every day, and how it impacts other facets of our life. Also, the summation of most of the participants' scores surpassed 50, which shows that on average, no one is free from procrastination. The pandemic could have contributed to this increased need to delay tasks at hand, however this is mostly psychological, and fighting it might be hard sometimes. Thus, this study has shown the impact procrastination has through a comprehensive survey and detailed methodology.

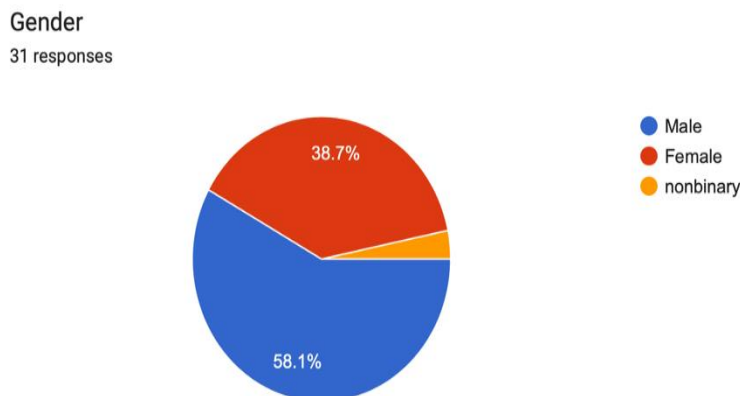
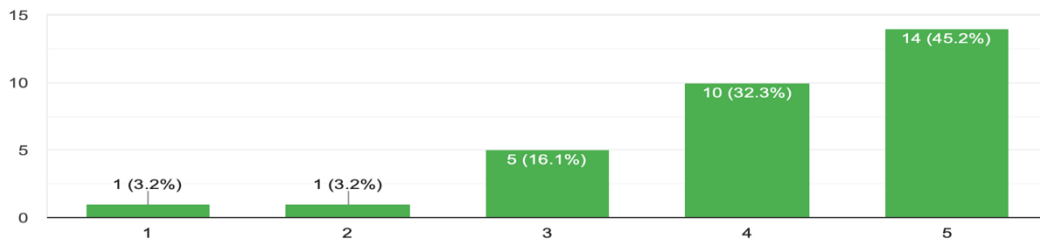


Figure 1: Gender of the respondents
Source: Own source

The figure shows that the majority of the respondents were male with 58.1%. Around 39% were female while around 3% were non-binary.

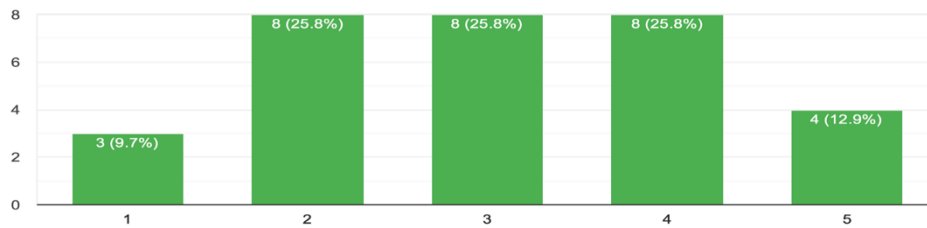
I wait until the last minute to complete my tasks.
31 responses



Statement 1: I wait until the last minute to complete my tasks
Source: Own source

The figure shows that a majority of the respondents strongly agreed that they wait until the last minute to complete their tasks.

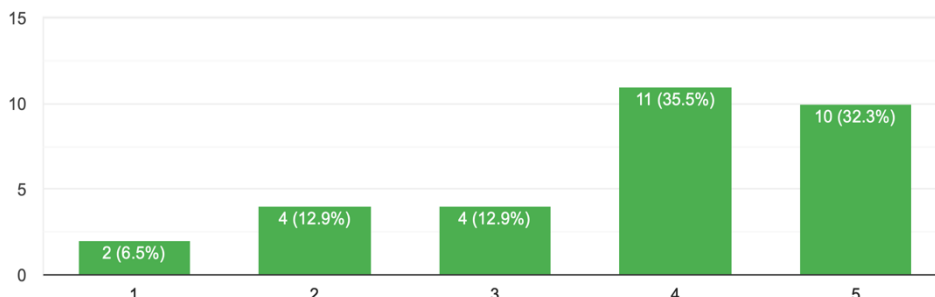
I avoid setting deadlines and sticking to them.
31 responses



Statement 2: I avoid setting deadlines and sticking to them.
Source: Own source

The respondents showed a neutral response to this statement, with an equitable distribution of them agreeing, disagreeing, and being neutral.

I spend a lot of time on trivial things that do not help increase my productivity.
31 responses

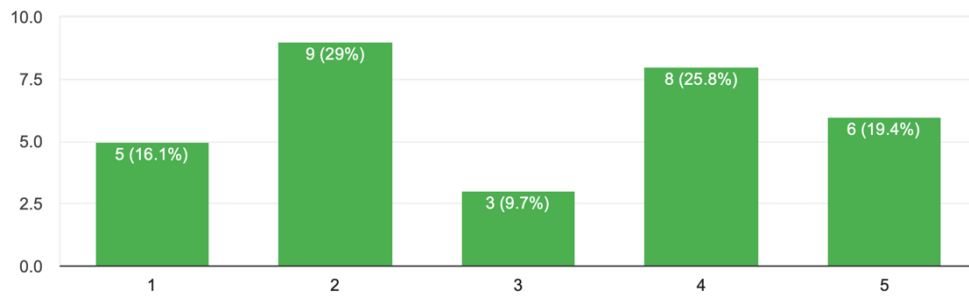


Statement 3: I spend a lot of time on trivial things that do not help increase my productivity
Source: Own source

A majority of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that they spend a lot of time on trivial things that do not help increase their productivity.

I avoid setting a daily schedule on how to best spend my time.

31 responses



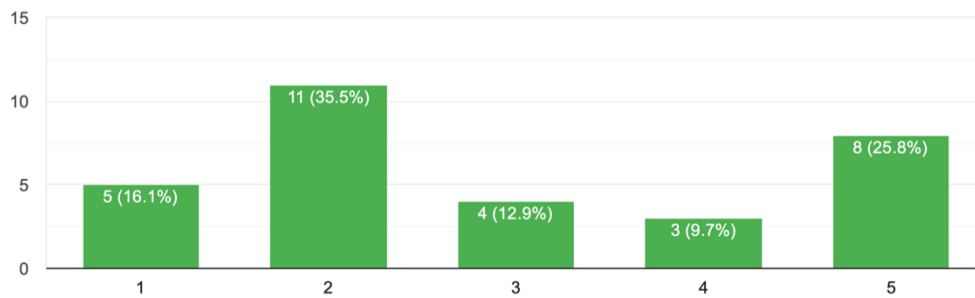
Statement 4: I avoid setting a daily schedule on how to best spend my time.

Source: Own source

A majority of the respondents stated that they do set a daily schedule on how to best spend their time.

I am bad at setting priorities and treat everything as equal.

31 responses



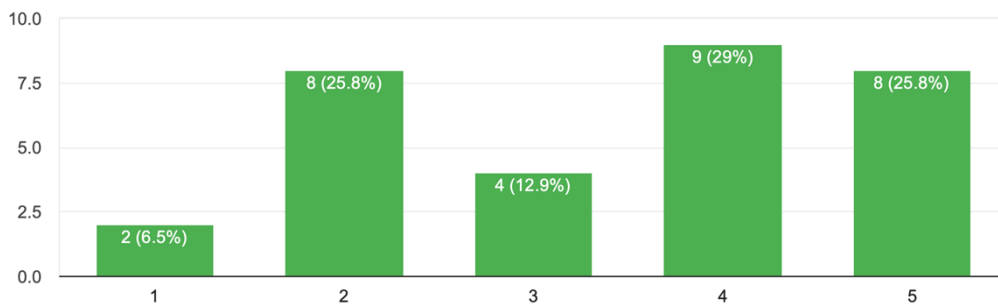
Statement 5: I am bad at setting priorities and treating everything as equal.

Source: Own source

A majority of the respondents stated that they can set priorities and treat everything as equal.

It's hard for me to say no when someone asks me for something.

31 responses



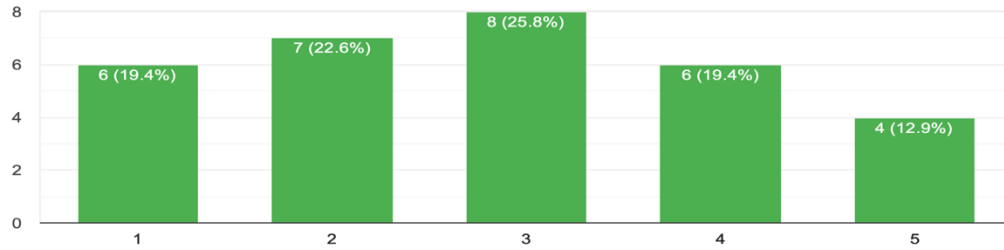
Statement 6: It's hard for me to say no when someone asks me for something.

Source: Own source

A majority of the respondents agreed that it's hard for them to say no when someone asks them for something, while most also stated that they disagreed or strongly agreed.

I spend more time socialising than I spend working/studying.

31 responses



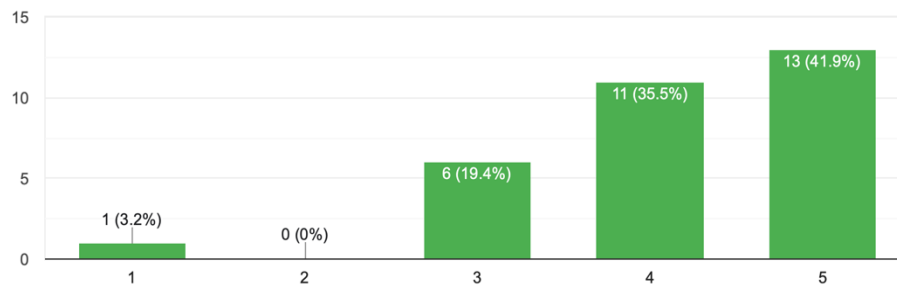
Statement 7: I spend more time socialising than working/ studying.

Source: Own source

A majority of the respondents were neutral when asked if they spend more time socialising than working/ studying.

I get distracted very easily.

31 responses



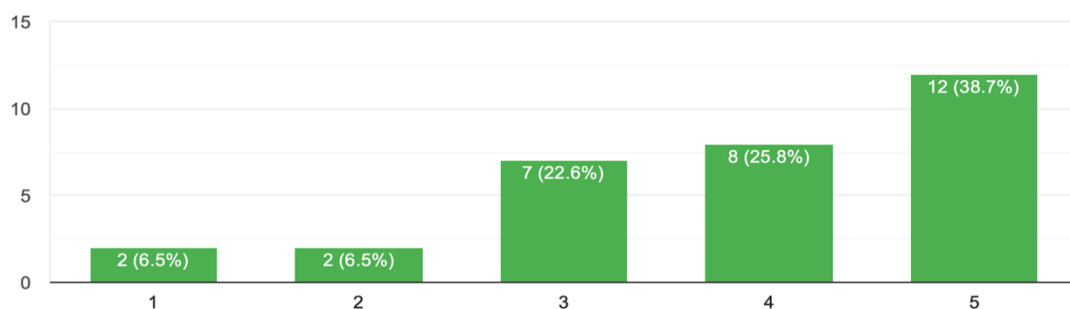
Statement 8: I get distracted very easily.

Source: Own source

A majority of the respondents strongly agreed that they get distracted very easily.

I spend too much time on my phone or on social media.

31 responses



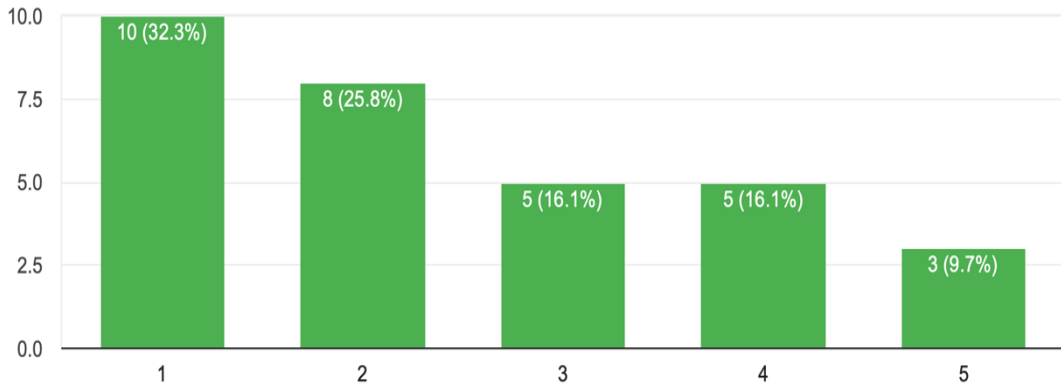
Statement 9: I spend too much time on my phone or social media.

Source: Own source

A majority of the respondents strongly agreed that they spend too much time on their phones or social media.

I don't have clear goals or objectives for what I want to do.

31 responses



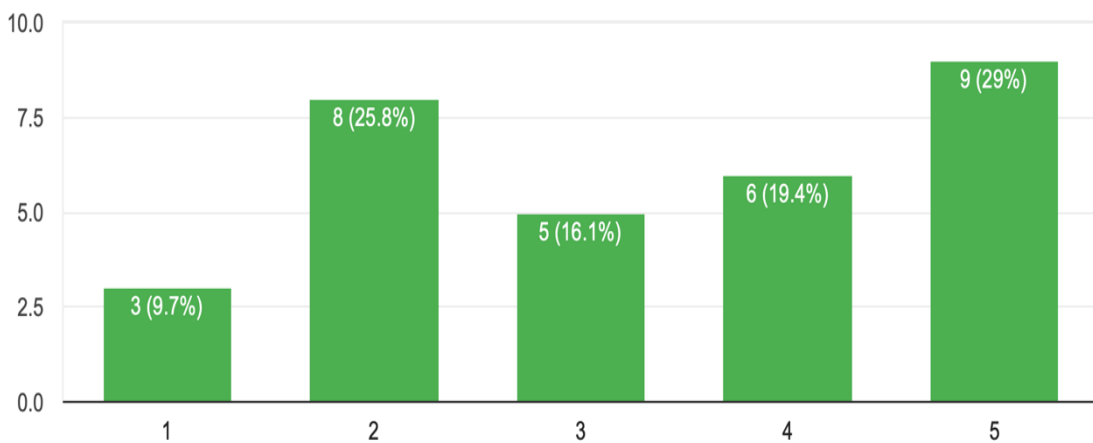
Statement 10: I don't have clear goals or objectives for what I want to do.

Source: Own source

A majority of the respondents stated that they do have clear goals or objectives for what they want to do.

I rarely ask others for help with my tasks.

31 responses



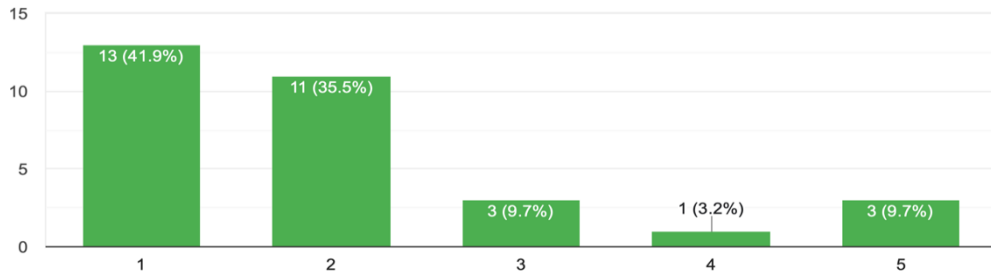
Statement 11: I rarely ask others for help with my tasks.

Source: Own source

A majority of the respondents rarely ask help for help from others with their tasks.

I have trouble following instructions.

31 responses



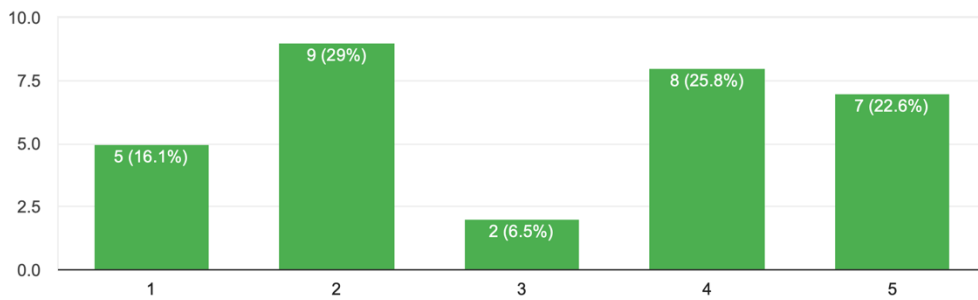
Statement 12: I have trouble following instructions.

Source: Own source

Most of the respondents don't have trouble following instructions.

I find it difficult to start a project or homework.

31 responses



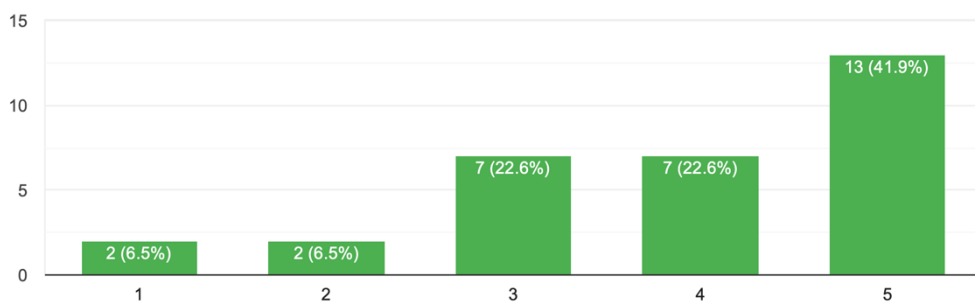
Statement 13: I find it difficult to start a project or homework.

Source: Own source

A majority of the respondents do not find it difficult to start a project or homework.

I commit to too many things at once.

31 responses



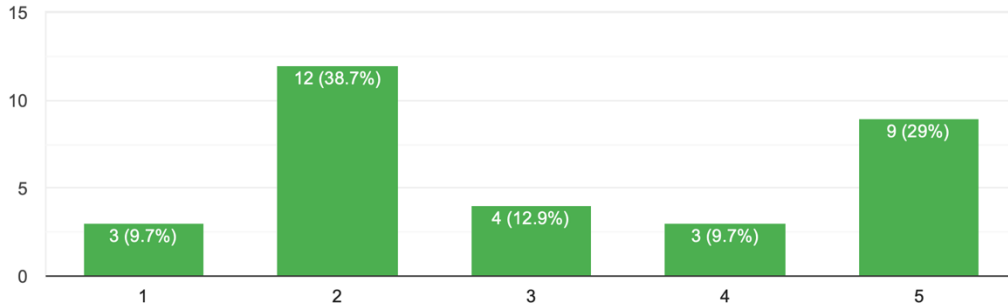
Statement 14: I commit to too many things at once.

Source: Own source

An overwhelming majority of the respondents agreed that they commit to too many things at once.

I do too many tasks simultaneously and end up finishing none.

31 responses



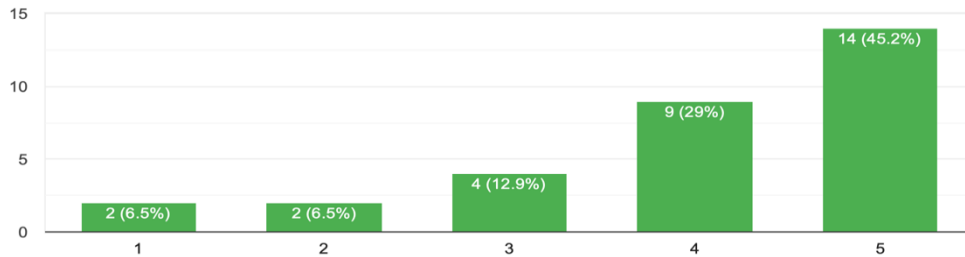
Statement 15: I do too many tasks simultaneously and end up finishing none.

Source: Own source

A majority of the respondents disagreed that they do too many tasks simultaneously.

I have too many tasks to do at the last minute, which makes me anxious.

31 responses



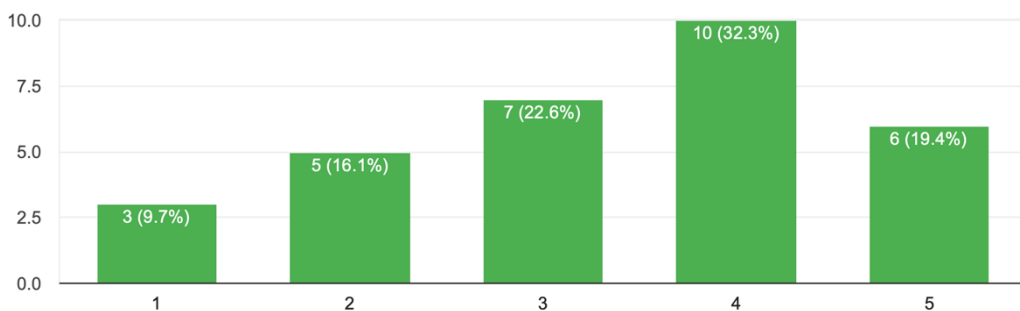
Statement 16: I have too many tasks to do at the last minute, which makes me anxious.

Source: Own source

Respondents agreed that they have too many tasks to do at the last minute, which builds up a sense of anxiety within them.

I only start my tasks when I'm forced to.

31 responses



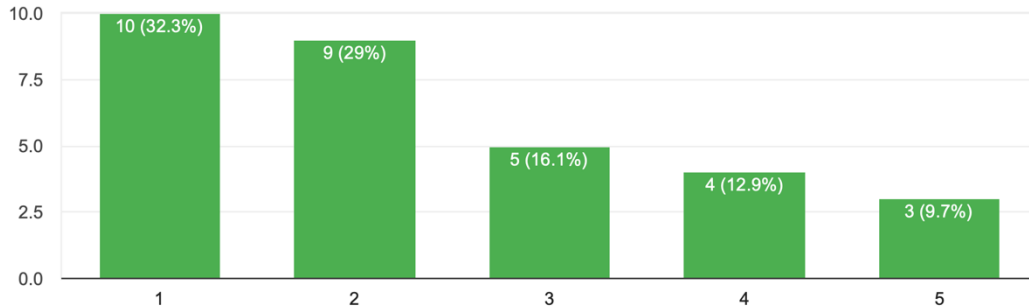
Statement 17: I only start my tasks when I'm forced to.

Source: Own source

Most respondents only start their tasks when they're forced to.

I often do things in a hurry, which forces me to redo them due to too many mistakes.

31 responses

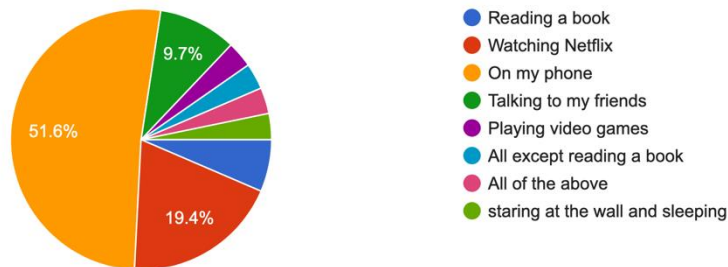


Statement 18: I often do things in a hurry, which forces me to redo them due to too many mistakes
Source: Own source

Most participants do not do things in a hurry, and it can thus be implied that they are organised and efficient in their tasks.

Most of the time when I am procrastinating, I am:

31 responses



Open-ended question 1: Most of the time when I am procrastinating, I am:
Source: Own source

A majority of the participants are on their phones when they are procrastinating, which displays the role of the advent of technology on a commonly recurring phenomenon in adolescents.

Statements

1. I wait until the last minute to complete my tasks.
2. I avoid setting deadlines and sticking to them.
3. I spend a lot of time on trivial things that do not help increase my productivity.
4. I avoid setting a daily schedule on how to best spend my time.
5. I am bad at setting priorities and treat everything as equal.

6. It's hard for me to say no when someone asks me for something.
7. I spend more time socialising than I spend working/studying.
8. I get distracted very easily.
9. I spend too much time on my phone or on social media.
10. I don't have clear goals or objectives for what I want to do.
11. I rarely ask others for help with my tasks.
12. I have trouble following instructions.
13. I find it difficult to start a project or homework.
14. I commit to too many things at once.
15. I do too many tasks simultaneously and end up finishing none.
16. I have too many tasks to do at the last minute, which makes me anxious.
17. I only start my tasks when I'm forced to.
18. I often do things in a hurry, which forces me to redo them due to too many mistakes.

Remedies

Procrastination seems to occur due to the need to feel satisfied in the present, while dealing with the consequences later on. It is a way of convincing the mind and body that the tasks will be completed later, and struggling at a time where the time could've been used more efficiently. Its connection with time is monumental, and also its psychological impact and the vicious cycle it might create as a result of it. *Marie My Lien Rebetz, Lucien Rochat, Martial Van der Linden (2014)* linked procrastination to self-regulation using a sample of 180 French speaking students. *Chinah Chang (2018)* also used psychological factors such as anxiety and depression that are related to procrastination, with a sample of students going to a southern Californian university.

These studies show us that people undergoing procrastination must receive emotional support from people around them.

There are ways that procrastination can be remedied through one's own actions as well. *Carol Kountz (1999)* used examples of writers and a case study to show strategies through which we can remedy procrastination. She states that we must let emotions run their course, and not restrict or confine them in any way. We can also use our own reactions to diagnose these feelings of delay.

Dr. Maria Shaikh, Dr. Sumra Shaikh, Dr Samiuddin Shaikh, Eng. Haseeb Haleem Shaikh (2020) studied workplace procrastination and identified remedies such as scheduling of tasks, arrangement of tasks, rethinking and trainings.

Ucar, H., & Bozkurt, A. (2019) used motivation, volition and performance models to overcome procrastination.

These studies show us the variety of ways in which procrastination can be remedied in different domains and spheres, as well as how it varies in these spheres.

Suggestions And Limitations

The study might have certain factors that could affect its results. Firstly, the **low sample size** may affect the results as it isn't as diverse as it possibly can be. The higher the number of respondents, the higher the reliability, and validity of the study. The norms should also have been elucidated in a more concise manner at the beginning of the study. The study could also have been conducted with a **wider age group**, and included more people to reflect the opinion of the general public. The restriction of the study to adolescents does not help us generalise the impact of procrastination to the population as a whole, and limits the opinions of people to an age group which is predominantly suffering with the phenomenon. It doesn't help us gain insights on the past and future

generations, which does not help us compare the results of the study with other parts of the population. The results could've been expressed in a more concise manner and the instructions could've been clearer. The answers given by respondents might also not be fully honest due to the **online version of the questionnaire**. It might also be expressed in a manner which is socially desirable rather than honest, and **acquiescence** could've been a significant part of the responses. Some studies have also shown that procrastination could be a means of protection of one's own image (Fee, R. L., & Tangney, J. P. (2000)). Future studies must focus on addressing this, as well as finding remedies to this cause.

In the future, studies should try to include all these limitations, and conduct it in a way that could be more comprehensive and trustworthy. A variety of age groups should be included, and the results should be meaningfully compared to help us gain an understanding of where each generation stands in relation to others with respect to procrastination. This could help us identify whether procrastination is a result of current ways of behaving, or whether the phenomenon has been apparent in the behaviour of individuals for a longer period of time. Studies should also focus on suggestions to improve procrastination, and include real-life situations to help increase the degree to which people can relate to such situations.

Provisions should also be made to support those who are currently procrastinating to a degree which is having an impact on their lives.

4. CONCLUSION

This study, in line with other studies, contributes to the research question and reiterates the growth of procrastination on teens. It explains some of the causes and also touches upon some solutions. Furthermore, it encourages action against it in all age groups by showing the depth at which it has impacted a certain age group. It explains the impact it has on physical and mental health and calls for remedies to help tackle what is now a long-standing issue. The study aimed to understand its impact in a normal school environment, and identify the shared feelings towards procrastination, and results have shown that there are certainly common trends in students' responses towards the statements. Results from the study should be utilised for further studies on procrastination in the future, and try to further understand the reasons as to why procrastination occurs, such as low self-esteem and self-efficacy (Ozer, B. U., & Ferrari, J. R. (2011)).

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