# The Influence of Parents' Family Education on Children's Procrastination Behavior

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**Abstract.** In daily life, procrastination significantly impairs efficiency, a behavior often originating in childhood and worsening over time. Research indicates that such delay is frequently rooted in inadequate family guidance, particularly in parental education, where well-intentioned but misguided practices exacerbate the issue. Crucially, procrastination does not stem from laziness, but from psychological resistance and fear of tasks. Academic procrastination is a complex phenomenon strongly influenced by familial factors--especially authoritarian parenting styles marked by criticism and unrealistic expectations, which undermine children's intrinsic motivation and foster emotional avoidance. Conversely, increased physical activity and reduced smartphone use can alleviate procrastination by improving cognitive function and self-regulation. Effective intervention requires a multidimensional approach that incorporates cognitive restructuring (e.g., combating perfectionism), emotional regulation, time management strategies, and external support mechanisms. A deeper understanding of these family-related and psychological mechanisms is essential for developing targeted strategies to ameliorate procrastination and enhance students' academic performance and mental well-being.

**Keywords:** Family education, children's procrastination behavior, mental well-being.

## 1. Introduction

Procrastination has emerged as a pervasive phenomenon among contemporary student populations, representing a complex psychological and behavioral response process. Academic procrastination is not only closely associated with an individual's time management skills and self-regulatory capacity but is also significantly influenced by parenting styles. Research indicates that individuals who experienced prolonged parental criticism, suppression, or neglect during childhood often exhibit reduced initiative, a lack of clear goal orientation, and diminished intrinsic motivation in their developmental trajectory. Such individuals frequently endure a state of psychological exhaustion and internal depletion: despite engaging in minimal high-intensity activities, they report profound mental and physical fatigue, a condition that may further exacerbate procrastinatory behaviors.

Furthermore, parental behavioral patterns within family education exert a profound impact on children's awareness of time management and executive functioning. If one parent demonstrates pronounced procrastination tendencies in daily life, children may acquire similar procrastination habits through observational learning. This imitative behavior subtly undermines the child's task initiation awareness and executive capacity, thereby increasing the likelihood of procrastination in both academic and daily contexts. Against this backdrop, the present study aims to analyze the etiology of academic procrastination among students, with particular emphasis on underlying familial education factors. This research holds significant implications for improving students' learning behaviors, enhancing self-management skills, and promoting psychological well-being.

## 2. Definition, Manifestations, and Impacts of Procrastination

### 2.1. Definition of Procrastination

Procrastination is a widespread phenomenon observed across all age groups, though it occurs more frequently among students. Commonly perceived as a negative habit, procrastination is often

associated with anxiety, stress, and inefficiency. However, from a psychological perspective, moderate procrastination may occasionally serve positive functions.

When individuals face highly challenging tasks, procrastination can act as an emotional regulation strategy, alleviating psychological pressure to some extent. It provides a mental buffer that helps individuals adapt to task-related stress and anxiety, facilitating gradual psychological adjustment. Nevertheless, for those with a tendency to procrastinate--characterized by low self-efficacy and a cognitive pattern of avoiding challenges--negative expectations regarding task outcomes may intensify. This can lead to increased resistance toward task completion due to fear of failing to meet expected standards.

While procrastination may appear to be a waste of time, its impact extends far beyond time management. Consequences range from missed deadlines to significant adverse effects on mental health, influencing various aspects of an individual's life. Severe procrastination can substantially hinder academic and professional progress: students may experience reduced learning efficiency and declining grades, while employees may face major errors, delays, decreased productivity, impaired teamwork, and hindered career development. These outcomes can ultimately limit educational advancement and future career opportunities [1].

### 2.2. Manifestations and Impacts of Procrastination

Procrastination is prevalent among student populations. Taking university students as an example, academic procrastination represents a widespread irrational behavior. It refers to a complex psychological phenomenon in which individuals voluntarily delay tasks despite being aware of the potential negative consequences. This behavior is highly prevalent in higher education settings. Studies indicate that 39.7% of Chinese university students exhibit significant academic procrastination, while 95.7% admit to having experienced procrastination [2]. Such behavior not only directly leads to declining academic performance but also triggers negative emotions such as anxiety and guilt. Prolonged procrastination may even impact personality development and social adaptability.

From a physiological and behavioral perspective, the dynamic relationship between physical activity and smartphone addiction significantly influences academic procrastination. A 2023 study by Bao Yuqing, involving 1,126 university students, revealed a significant negative correlation between physical activity levels and academic procrastination, indicating that higher physical activity correlates with lower procrastination [2]. This effect operates through two pathways: a direct effect, accounting for 68.25% of the total effect, wherein physical activity promotes the secretion of brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF), enhancing cognitive function and time management skills and thereby helping students plan academic tasks more efficiently; and an indirect effect, accounting for 31.75%, wherein physical activity reduces procrastination by mitigating smartphone addiction [2]. Data show a significant negative correlation between physical activity and smartphone addiction, while smartphone addiction is strongly positively correlated with academic procrastination [2]. This suggests that regular physical activity can reduce students' screen time and dependency on smartphones, thereby minimizing time spent on activities such as video-watching and gaming that encroach on study time and reduce attentional dispersion.

Notably, the current state of physical activity among university students is concerning: 50.53% engage in low levels of exercise, with significant group disparities. Male students exhibit higher physical activity levels than female students, science majors higher than humanities majors, and third-year students higher than first and second-year students [2]. These differences indirectly contribute to variations in the distribution of academic procrastination across demographic groups.

## 3. Family-Induced Factors of Procrastination

Among contemporary student populations, procrastination has become a common phenomenon, representing a complex psychological and behavioral response process. Academic procrastination is closely linked not only to individual time management and self-regulation abilities but also

significantly influenced by family upbringing. Psychological research indicates that individuals who experienced prolonged criticism, suppression, or neglect from parents during childhood often exhibit reduced initiative, lack of clear goal orientation, and an absence of intrinsic motivation in later development. Such individuals frequently exist in a state of psychological exhaustion and internal conflict: despite engaging in minimal high-intensity activities, they experience significant mental and physical fatigue, which may further exacerbate procrastinatory behaviors.

### 3.1. Parental Behavior and Student Psychological Environment

Parental statements and actions subtly yet profoundly shape children's behavioral patterns, including the development of procrastination tendencies. For instance, when parents frequently use delaying phrases such as "wait a moment," "I'll do it soon," or "I'll get to it later" in daily life, children unconsciously mimic these expressions and internalize them as coping strategies. Over time, children habitually employ similar language to defer action in response to external demands or personal tasks, often until external pressure (e.g., reprimands or emotional outbursts) forces compliance. Once entrenched, this behavioral pattern can impair future learning efficiency and sense of responsibility.

Moreover, excessively harsh parenting styles or unrealistic expectations can exacerbate procrastination. When parents impose unattainable standards, children may develop intense self-doubt and fear of failure, worrying that inability to meet expectations will make them "appear incompetent." This fear undermines their courage to act, causing them to succumb to anxiety and self-negation before initiating tasks, ultimately leading to avoidance. Prolonged exposure to such dynamics not only damages self-confidence but also intensifies procrastinatory behaviors.

Furthermore, parental behavioral patterns in family education profoundly influence children's time management awareness and executive function. If one or both parents exhibit significant procrastination in daily life, children may develop similar habits through observational learning. This mimicry subtly impairs task initiation awareness and execution capability, increasing the risk of procrastination in academic and daily contexts.

The development of procrastination is not merely a result of laziness or simple habit formation but is often closely tied to educational approaches during individual growth. When children lack scientific guidance and emotional support in learning or life tasks, their psychological regulatory mechanisms may gradually develop a fear response to specific tasks. Particularly in family settings, if parents persistently compel children to complete tasks they find uninteresting or difficult without understanding their emotional and motivational states, such high-pressure environments can forge strong associations between tasks and negative emotions. Over time, individuals instinctively activate avoidance mechanisms when facing similar tasks, resorting to procrastination for temporary psychological relief--during these delays, anxiety is momentarily suppressed, creating a false sense of ease. This short-term emotional numbness reinforces the cycle of procrastination: children mistakenly believe that "as long as I don't start, I won't have to face pressure," leading to continual postponement.

In contrast, when engaged in activities they find interesting or excel at, children often demonstrate proactive involvement and rapid initiation with minimal procrastination. This disparity suggests that procrastination stems not from insufficient capability but from an imbalance between psychological security and task cognition. Thus, effective education should focus not on exerting pressure but on helping children develop positive task cognition and emotional regulation skills.

### 3.2. Parenting Styles in Family Education

From the perspective of the long-term shaping of the family environment, parents' parenting styles have a continuous effect on the delay of their children's studies by influencing their psychological mechanisms and behavioral patterns. Wang's research classifies parenting styles into three types: authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive [3].

The results show that authoritarian parenting positively predicts academic procrastination through severe punishment, refusal to communicate, etc. Children in such families tend to rebel against

authority through procrastination due to being under high-pressure control for a long time, thereby obtaining a sense of psychological autonomy. Authoritative parenting mainly focuses on rational guidance and emotional support, negatively predicting procrastination.

Children raised in this way are more likely to develop good self-management skills and a sense of responsibility, and can proactively plan their study tasks. However, permissive parenting has no significant effect on procrastination, but the long-term lack of effective supervision may lead to weak time management ability in children, indirectly increasing the risk of procrastination. Further research has found that parents' psychological control can also influence procrastination through mediating variables. Ma Liyun et al. surveyed 590 junior high school students and found that students in the group with high parents' psychological control were more likely to have problematic social media use, and this excessive use behavior significantly exacerbated academic procrastination [4]. Form a transmission chain of "parental control → social media dependence → academic delay".

### 3.3. Dynamic Process of Emotion Regulation

From the perspective of the dynamic process of emotion regulation, the relationship between anxiety and academic procrastination presents a "positive U-shaped" feature, and different types of anxiety have differentiated effects. Yu's research on primary school students found that trait anxiety, as a stable personality trait, was significantly positively correlated with procrastination [5]. People with high trait anxiety often avoid action due to excessive worry about task failure and fear of negative evaluations, forming a vicious cycle of "anxiety → avoidance → more anxiety". As a situational emotion, the impact of state anxiety varies with intensity. Moderate state anxiety (such as the sense of urgency before a task deadline) can reduce procrastination. Experiments have shown that students in the moderate anxiety group started their practice significantly earlier than those in the control group ($p<0.001$), and the total practice time was also longer ($p<0.001$) [5]. This kind of anxiety prompts individuals to start tasks promptly by enhancing their concentration of attention and the urgency of action. However, excessive state anxiety can trigger avoidance behavior, which in turn intensifies procrastination, as extreme tension can damage cognitive function, causing students to choose to postpone tasks due to their inability to cope with pressure.

## 4. Suggestions

Procrastination behavior is the result of the interaction of multiple factors. Each factor not only acts independently but also influences the other through complex mediating and regulatory mechanisms. Therefore, a thorough understanding of the causes of academic procrastination, especially the role that family education plays in it, is of great practical significance for improving students' learning behaviors, enhancing their self-management abilities and promoting their mental health development. Educators should strive to create a supportive growth environment, avoid demonstrating procrastination at the verbal or behavioral level, and at the same time, reasonably adjust the level of expectations, provide appropriate encouragement and tolerance for mistakes, thereby helping students build a positive sense of self-efficacy and reducing the occurrence of procrastination from the source.

To systematically improve procrastination behavior, it is necessary to establish a multi-dimensional and comprehensive intervention system. Specifically, the following aspects can be approached:

At the cognitive level, the misunderstanding of simply equating procrastination with "laziness" should be corrected first, and it should be made clear that its essence is a manifestation of the failure of the self-regulation mechanism. Guide individuals to let go of the obsession with perfectionism, establish a task cognition of "completing first and then improving", and shift the focus from the perfection of the result to process growth, to reduce action avoidance caused by the fear of failure.

At the level of emotional regulation, cognitive reevaluation can be used to endow tasks with positive meanings (such as regarding repetitive work as skill training and complex tasks as

breakthrough opportunities). Anxiety and task aversion can be alleviated through deep breathing, meditation, exercise and other methods, blocking the amplification of negative emotions by rumination thinking. Positive emotional motivation can be enhanced by imagining the satisfaction after completing the task.

At the level of goal and time management, a "break down the whole into parts" strategy should be implemented for complex tasks, breaking them down into actionable sub-goals to reduce the difficulty of execution. Formulate plans with flexible time and contingency plans to deal with sudden disruptions, and identify and control sources of time waste, such as the use of social software and addiction to short videos. Prioritize tasks based on their importance and urgency, and enhance time perception and a sense of urgency by using tools such as the Pomodoro Technique, to-do lists, or digital calendars.

At the level of supervision and incentive mechanisms, self-awareness can be enhanced by recording daily progress, regularly reviewing and analyzing the causes of procrastination. Establish an immediate reward and punishment mechanism (such as providing leisure rewards after completing tasks and bearing corresponding consequences when not completed), and external supervision can be introduced through mutual aid groups or professional guidance, and social support can be utilized to enhance the sense of responsibility for actions.

In addition, a structured intervention model system can also be adopted to drive behavioral change. For instance, the "Life Analysis Counseling Method" builds efficient habits through continuous reinforcement for more than 21 days through steps such as classifying task lists, planning implementation, and regular reflection. The online self-help intervention program oriented towards "solution-focused short-term therapy" can, within about 10 days, revolve around modules such as goal setting, successful experience mining, clarification of small goals, and strategy formulation. Relying on an online platform helps individuals focus on their own resources and solutions, enhancing their sense of self-efficacy and willingness to act.

In conclusion, the improvement of procrastination behavior requires coordinated intervention at multiple levels, including cognition, emotion, behavior, and the environment, to form a systematic and sustainable practical path.

## 5. Conclusion

In conclusion, academic procrastination is the result of the interaction of multiple factors such as cognition, emotion, behavior, and family environment. Procrastination is widespread among current student groups. Its essence is a complex psychological and behavioral response process, which is not only related to an individual's time management and self-regulation abilities, but also deeply influenced by family education methods. This article holds that authoritarian parenting, parents' psychological control, and procrastination behavior demonstration can easily lead to reduced self-efficacy, lack of motivation, and difficulty in emotional regulation in children, thereby exacerbating academic procrastination. Factors such as physical activity levels, mobile phone addiction and types of anxiety are also significantly associated with procrastination. To systematically improve procrastination behavior, it is necessary to construct an intervention system from multiple dimensions such as cognitive reconstruction, emotional regulation, behavioral management, and environmental support. Enhancing self-awareness, improving time management skills, establishing social support, and implementing structured plans, helps students form positive task cognition and action patterns, thereby enhancing learning efficiency and mental health levels.

The way of family education not only directly affects children's tendency to procrastinate, but also indirectly reinforces procrastinating behavior through mechanisms such as psychological control and behavioral imitation. Intervention strategies should go beyond a single dimension and integrate multiple methods such as cognitive behavioral adjustment, emotional management training, goal decomposition, and external supervision to form a systematic and multi-level support system. Future educational practices should place greater emphasis on the collaboration between families and

schools, reducing stressors while enhancing students' intrinsic motivation and self-efficacy, and providing them with psychological resources and behavioral tools for sustainable growth.

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