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The Relationship Between Fear of Failure and Procrastination Among Islamic Psychology Students at UIN Imam Bonjol Padang

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ABSTRACT

The background of this study is the high academic demands faced by students, which have the potential to create evaluative pressure and trigger fear of failure, a factor associated with academic procrastination. This study aims to examine the relationship between fear of failure and academic procrastination among students of the Islamic Psychology Study Program at UIN Imam Bonjol Padang. A quantitative correlational design was employed, with a sample of 266 students selected using stratified random sampling. Data were collected using the Performance Failure Appraisal Inventory (PFAI) and the Tuckman Procrastination Scale, both of which were adapted and tested for validity and reliability. Data analysis was performed using Pearson Product Moment correlation. The results indicate a significant positive relationship between fear of failure and academic procrastination ($r = 0.597$; $p < 0.001$), suggesting that higher fear of failure is associated with a greater tendency to delay academic tasks. Most respondents were categorized in the medium range for both variables. The findings highlight that fear of failure is an important emotional factor contributing to academic procrastination, emphasizing the need for interventions focused on emotion regulation, self-efficacy enhancement, and student learning behavior management.

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1. Introduction

Students are in the early adulthood developmental stage, characterized by increased independence, personal responsibility, and the demand to manage various aspects of life autonomously, including in the context of higher education [1]. During this stage, students are expected to manage academic obligations, adapt to complex social environments, and begin planning for the future. However, the complexity of these demands also renders students vulnerable to various psychological and behavioral challenges that can affect their effectiveness as learners [2] [3].

In practice, students face intense academic demands, such as completing written assignments, delivering presentations, and preparing scholarly papers, all within outcome-based evaluation systems. Such evaluative academic environments can generate psychological pressure, particularly when tasks are perceived as challenging or threatening to self-assessment. Some students respond with emotional tension, difficulty managing self-expectations, and a tendency to avoid academic tasks. Rahimi & Hall, [4]reported that approximately 55% of students experience difficulties managing self-expectations when confronted with academically challenging tasks, often resulting in procrastination or avoidance during the initial stages of task engagement.

Higher education learning systems that emphasize autonomous learning and academic achievement as primary indicators of success further exacerbate evaluative pressure experienced by students. Under these conditions, students often show decreased engagement, a tendency to delay task initiation or completion, and reluctance to engage in academic activities perceived as potentially leading to failure or negative self-assessment. Research indicates that high evaluative pressure is associated with increased emotional tension and the use of avoidance strategies for academic demands, especially for challenging tasks subject to public evaluation [5] [2]. These findings suggest that perceptions of failure risk play a significant role in shaping students' academic responses.

Correspondingly, perceptions of potential failure in academic contexts can develop into a relatively stable fear that influences students' behavior when facing tasks. When academic tasks are viewed as indicators of ability and sources of self-evaluation, concerns about unsatisfactory outcomes tend to motivate task postponement as a psychological avoidance strategy. While this delay may temporarily alleviate emotional tension, it simultaneously maintains individuals in a pressuring situation. Thus, procrastination behavior is not solely related to technical aspects or time management but also reflects an emotional response to perceived failure risks and threats to self-esteem within an evaluative academic environment [6] [7].

In academic contexts, such delay behavior is referred to as academic procrastination. Tuckman [8] defines procrastination as the tendency of individuals to deliberately postpone initiating or completing tasks that are important, despite being aware that such delay may have negative consequences. Procrastination involves not only time management but also self-regulation, behavioral control, and emotional responses to task demands. Therefore, among students, procrastination can be understood as a behavioral pattern emerging from the interaction between academic pressure, perceptions of failure risk, and avoidance tendencies toward tasks perceived as challenging.

One emotional factor strongly associated with academic procrastination is fear of failure. Conroy [6]defines fear of failure as an individual's tendency to respond to achievement situations with excessive worry about the possibility of experiencing negative consequences from failure, such as shame, negative judgment from others, or decreased self-esteem. Among students, fear of failure can intensify avoidance tendencies toward academically challenging tasks, making task postponement a strategy to mitigate the emotional stress associated with potential failure.

Several previous studies have examined the relationship between fear of failure and academic procrastination. Farisi et al,[9] found that fear of failure is related to procrastination tendencies among students aged 18–25. Another study by Putri [10] indicated that fear of failure contributes 25% to academic procrastination among students. Additionally, Ananda & Alwi, [11] reported a significant positive relationship between fear of failure and academic procrastination among vocational high school students at SMK Negeri 3 Bone. These findings underscore the relevance of fear of failure as a psychological factor explaining academic procrastination behavior.

Nonetheless, previous studies have primarily focused on the direct relationship or the magnitude of the contribution of fear of failure to procrastination, without thoroughly situating

students as early adults within evaluatively pressurized academic environments. Moreover, prior research has paid limited attention to fear of failure as an emotional response to evaluative demands that prompts procrastination as a psychological avoidance strategy. This gap highlights the need for a more comprehensive understanding of the psychological dynamics between fear of failure and academic procrastination among students.

Given these conditions, this study aims to investigate the relationship between fear of failure and academic procrastination among university students. A deeper understanding of this relationship is expected to provide theoretical contributions to the field of educational psychology and serve as an empirical basis for designing targeted prevention and intervention strategies that support students' academic success and psychological well-being.

2. Method

This study employed a quantitative approach with a correlational design to examine the relationship between fear of failure and academic procrastination among students of the Islamic Psychology Study Program at UIN Imam Bonjol Padang. A correlational design was chosen because the study aimed to determine the direction and strength of relationships between variables without manipulating them [12]. Data were collected via an online survey using Google Forms, distributed through social media and instant messaging applications. The questionnaire included instructions, respondents' demographic data, and the research instruments.

The population consisted of all students of the Islamic Psychology Study Program at UIN Imam Bonjol Padang from the 2022 to 2025 cohorts, totaling 794 students. The sample comprised 266 students, determined using a stratified random sampling technique based on cohort. The sample size was calculated using Slovin's formula with a 5% margin of error [13], aiming to ensure representation of each cohort in the study sample.

The variable fear of failure was measured using the Performance Failure Appraisal Inventory (PFAI) developed by Conroy et al [14]. This instrument consists of 23 items encompassing five dimensions: fear of experiencing shame and embarrassment, fear of self-deprecation, fear of an uncertain future, fear of losing social influence, and fear of disappointing significant others. The variable academic procrastination was measured using the Tuckman [8] Procrastination Scale, which includes 25 items across three dimensions: the tendency to delay task initiation and completion, difficulty and avoidance of disliked tasks, and the tendency to blame others for delayed task completion.

All research instruments were modified and adapted to the context and characteristics of the participants. A 4-point Likert scale was used for all instruments (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree, 4 = strongly agree). Content validity was assessed through expert judgment by two professional evaluators and analyzed using Aiken's V coefficient. The validity results indicated values of 0.91 for the fear of failure scale and 0.89 for the academic procrastination scale, demonstrating excellent content validity. Reliability testing was conducted using Cronbach's Alpha, yielding values of 0.892 for the fear of failure scale and 0.926 for the academic procrastination scale, indicating very good internal consistency [15].

Data analysis was performed using SPSS version 20.0. Descriptive analyses were conducted to describe the characteristics of the respondents and the distribution of the study variables. Inferential analyses were then used to test the research hypotheses. Prior to hypothesis testing, statistical assumptions were evaluated, including the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test for normality and a linearity test. Hypothesis testing was conducted using Pearson Product-Moment correlation at a significance level of 0.05 to determine the relationship between fear of failure and academic procrastination among the students.

3. Result

This section presents the results of the data analysis, including descriptive statistics of the variables, testing of statistical assumptions, and hypothesis testing regarding the relationship between fear of failure and academic procrastination among students. The results are first presented through descriptive analysis to illustrate data tendencies, followed by assumption testing and correlational analysis.

3.1. Variable Categorization

Following Azwar [15] variables were categorized into three levels: low, medium, and high, using the formulas:

$$\text{Maximum Score} = \text{Number of Items} \times \text{Highest Score}$$
$$\text{Minimum Score} = \text{Number of Items} \times \text{Lowest Score}$$

$$\mu = \frac{\text{Maximum Score} + \text{Minimum Score}}{2}, \sigma = \frac{\text{Maximum Score} - \text{Minimum Score}}{6}$$

Table 1. Categorization Formula for Variables

Category	Formula
Low	$X < \mu - 1\sigma$
Medium	$\mu - 1\sigma \leq X < \mu + 1\sigma$
High	$X \geq \mu + 1\sigma$

3.1. Fear of Failure Categorization

The fear of failure variable consists of 23 items on a 1–5 Likert scale.

$$\textit{Maximum Score} = 23 \times 5 = 115, \textit{Minimum Score} = 23 \times 1 = 23$$
$$\mu = \frac{115 + 23}{2} = 69, \sigma = \frac{115 - 23}{6} = 15.3$$

Table 2, Descriptive Statistics and Categorization of Fear of Failure

N	Xmax	Xmin	Range	Mean	SD
266	115	23	92	69	15.3

Categories:

- Low: $X < 53.7$
- Medium: $53.7 \leq X < 84.3$
- High: $X \geq 84.3$

Table 3. Categorization of Fear of Failure

Category	Subjects	Percentage
Low	17	6.40%
Medium	156	58.60%
High	93	35.00%
Total	266	100%

3.2. Academic Procrastination Categorization

The academic procrastination variable consists of 25 items on a 1–5 Likert scale.

$$\textit{Maximum Score} = 25 \times 5 = 125, \textit{Minimum Score} = 25 \times 1 = 25$$
$$\mu = \frac{125 + 25}{2} = 75, \sigma = \frac{125 - 25}{6} = 16.6$$

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics of Academic Procrastination

N	Xmax	Xmin	Range	Mean	SD
266	125	25	100	75	16.6

Categories:

- Low: $X < 58.4$
- Medium: $58.4 \leq X < 91.6$
- High: $X \geq 91.6$

Table 5. Categorization of Academic Procrastination

Category	Subjects	Percentage
Low	3	1.10%
Medium	185	69.50%
High	78	29.40%
Total	266	100%

3.3. Data Assumption Testing

A normality test was conducted to determine whether the data for the fear of failure and academic procrastination variables were normally distributed, which is a prerequisite for parametric correlation analysis. The results of the Kolmogorov–Smirnov normality test for both variables are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Normality Test (Kolmogorov–Smirnov)

Variable	K–S	Sig.	Interpretation
Fear of Failure	0.961	0.314	Normal
Procrastination	0.637	0.811	Normal

A linearity test was performed to ensure that there is a linear relationship between fear of failure and academic procrastination. Meeting the linearity assumption is necessary for the proper application of the Pearson correlation analysis. The results of the linearity test between the two variables are shown in Table 7.

Table 7. Linearity Test (ANOVA)

Variable	F	Sig.	Interpretation
Fear of Failure × Procrastination	172.176	0	Linear

3.4. Hypothesis Testing

Pearson correlation was used to examine the relationship between fear of failure and academic procrastination. To test the research hypothesis, a Pearson correlation analysis was conducted between fear of failure and academic procrastination, as presented in Table 8.

Table 8. Pearson Correlation Between Fear of Failure and Academic Procrastination

Variable	N	r	Sig.
Fear of Failure × Procrastination	266	0.597	0

Interpretation: There is a significant positive relationship between fear of failure and academic procrastination ($p < 0.05$).

4. Discussion

The results of this study indicate a significant positive relationship between fear of failure and academic procrastination ($r = 0.597$; $p < 0.001$). This finding suggests that students with higher levels of fear of failure tend to delay the completion of academic tasks more frequently. This outcome aligns with previous research, which has established fear of failure as a key predictor of academic procrastination among students, both nationally and internationally [16] [17] [9]. Therefore, procrastination should not be understood merely as

laziness, but rather as a psychological phenomenon grounded in strong emotional and cognitive factors.

Psychologically, fear of failure triggers evaluative anxiety, leading individuals to avoid situations that may result in failure or negative evaluation. Students experiencing fear of failure are more likely to use procrastination as a self-protective strategy, delaying tasks to avoid direct confrontation with potential failure [18] [19]. In this context, procrastination functions as a short-term adaptive coping mechanism against academic stress, although it may have maladaptive consequences in the long term.

Theoretically, these findings are supported by the Self-Worth Theory of Motivation, which posits that individuals strive to maintain self-esteem by avoiding situations that could expose incompetence or failure [20]. Furthermore, the Temporal Motivation Theory (TMT) explains that the emotional discomfort caused by fear of failure encourages individuals to postpone tasks as a way to reduce short-term emotional pressure, making procrastination a rational choice from the perspective of emotion regulation [21] [19]. Thus, the higher the fear of failure, the greater the tendency of students to engage in academic procrastination.

The categorization of variables showed that the majority of students fell into the medium category for both fear of failure (58.6%) and academic procrastination (69.5%). This indicates that task delay is a common phenomenon among students of the Islamic Psychology Study Program at UIN Imam Bonjol Padang and is not limited to individuals experiencing extreme levels of these variables. Students in the medium category generally have adequate academic awareness but remain vulnerable to emotional influences, particularly anxiety and evaluative stress. This finding aligns with, Fernando and Rahman [22] and Sirois [23], who emphasized the importance of preventive interventions targeting the majority group to prevent procrastination from developing into more serious academic problems.

Moreover, the results of this study are consistent with research across faculties and educational contexts, demonstrating a positive relationship between fear of failure and academic procrastination. However, some studies highlight that the strength of this relationship may be influenced by task context, evaluation type, and students' prior academic experiences [24] [25]. This indicates that the relationship between fear of failure and procrastination is context-dependent, and academic interventions should be tailored to individual characteristics and the academic demands faced by students.

These findings have important practical implications for developing interventions aimed at reducing academic procrastination. Recommended interventions include enhancing emotion regulation skills to help students manage anxiety and evaluative stress [26], increasing self-efficacy through learning strategies that build confidence in academic abilities Bandura [27], and implementing behavioral management strategies such as time management, goal-setting, and task chunking to reduce the tendency to delay tasks among students with high fear of failure [28],[19]. Consequently, integrated and combinatory interventions are considered more effective in minimizing the impact of fear of failure on academic procrastination.

Nevertheless, this study has several limitations, including the use of a correlational design, which does not allow causal conclusions; a sample limited to students of the Islamic Psychology program, which restricts generalizability; and the absence of potential moderator variables such as motivation, perfectionism, and self-regulation that may influence the relationship between fear of failure and procrastination [29]. Future research is therefore recommended to employ longitudinal or experimental designs and to include moderator variables to better understand the dynamics between these variables and to guide the development of more targeted academic interventions.

5. Conclusion

The findings of this study indicate a significant positive relationship between fear of failure and academic procrastination among students of the Islamic Psychology Study Program at UIN Imam Bonjol Padang, suggesting that students with higher levels of fear of failure are more likely to delay academic tasks. Most students were categorized in the medium range for both fear of failure and procrastination, indicating that task delay is a common phenomenon rather than being limited to those experiencing extreme levels of these variables. Fear of failure appears to function as an emotional and cognitive factor that triggers evaluative anxiety, leading students to use procrastination as a self-protective coping strategy. These results underscore the importance of implementing interventions that integrate emotion regulation, self-efficacy enhancement, and behavioral management strategies such as time management, goal-setting, and task chunking to reduce academic procrastination, particularly among students with high fear of failure. However, the study's limitations, including its correlational design, focus on a specific student population, and exclusion of potential moderator variables such as motivation, perfectionism, and self-regulation, suggest that future research should employ longitudinal or experimental designs and incorporate moderator variables to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between fear of failure and academic procrastination.

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