

Motivation and Time Management among  
Students at Broward College's South Campus

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**Abstract:**

At Broward College's South Campus, student procrastination on assignments is a major problem. Students have poor time management skills and wait until shortly before assignments are due to work on them. This affects the quality of their work and their ultimate success in the class. Through the completion of student surveys, faculty will better understand the causes of student procrastination and recommendations will be made for reducing procrastination, which is essential to ensure academic success.

**Key Words:** Time management, procrastination, academic success

**Research Problem:**

At Broward College, there is a tendency of students to procrastinate, which is harmful to their academic success. Professors remind students of assignment due dates, but still students wait until the last minute to complete assignments and to study for exams. How can this behavior be changed? First, it is necessary to understand the causes of student procrastination. What factors affect student motivation to complete assigned projects in a timely manner? A central question that this study seeks to answer is whether students feel that they would be more successful if they had more or less time to complete assignments. Reducing procrastination is imperative in order to increase graduation rates and help the college to achieve its main goal of promoting student success. Administrators consistently challenge faculty to find ways to ensure that students "finish what they start" and that they remain committed to their course of study. Finding answers as to why students procrastinate can be achieved by asking them to complete surveys that allow faculty to gauge their behavior. By reducing student procrastination, students are more likely to graduate and have productive careers.

**Research Question:**

Why do students procrastinate on assignments given by faculty at Broward College's South Campus? This study will investigate if the length of time between when an essay is assigned and when it is due date plays a factor in the non-completion of assigned research essays? Would students be better served with longer deadlines or shorter deadlines in order to complete assignments? How would the creation of structured deadlines

**Hypothesis:**

Students who are given over a month to complete a research essay will procrastinate and will spend less time on an assignment than if they are given one month or less to complete an assignment.

**Literature Review:***Causes of Procrastination*

Procrastination is a serious issue that can affect academic success. Approximately 70% of students have admitted to procrastinating on academic assignments, such as studying for exams or preparing research papers (Grunschel, Patrzek, & Fries, 2013; Nadinloyi, Hajiloo, Garamaleki, & Sadeghi, 2013). Given the prevalence of this phenomenon, it is important to understand what causes it in order to improve student success. Procrastination involves choosing to complete a favorable task over another less pleasant one (Chu & Choi, 2005; Rozental, Forsell, Svensson, Andersson, & Carlbring, 2015; Van Eerde, 2003). There are many underlying reasons why students choose to procrastinate. One of those reasons stems from poor time management. Many students feel that they have everything under control, but they end up underestimating the amount of time needed to complete a task (Balkis, Duru, & Bulus, 2013). Balkis et al. (2013) elaborates that many students do not start earlier because they feel that they have to have a certain mind-set to work on an assignment. He points out that that procrastination does not manifest strictly stem from rational behavior, which is supported by empirical data. He attests that procrastination can be caused just as much by irrational behavior. According to Chu & Choi (2005), procrastination is also not solely caused by intrinsic factors, such as motivation, but may be caused by external factors, such as students being forced to complete assignments that they are not interested in. Lack of interest in the assignments may stem from low self-confidence over the possibility of doing poorly on an assignment (Balkis et al., 2013 Chu & Choi, 2005, Grunscel et al., 2013). Students who lack motivation can be easily distracted when faced with a task that they find as complex (Grunschel et al., 2013). Motivating students is one of the great challenges in academia, which may be improved by teaching time management skills.

Time management training will especially benefit students who become distracted or disinterested easily MacCann, Fogarty, & Roberts, 2011; Nadinloyi, Hajiloo, Garamaleki, & Sadeghi, 2013). MacCann, et al. (2011) contends that students who are focused on their studies tend to have better time management skills, which results in better grades. Chu & Choi (2005) argue that not all procrastinators are the same. They establish a distinction between active procrastinators and passive procrastinators. Passive procrastinators are the traditional procrastinators who become distracted and disinterested in a particular task in favor of another more favorable task. While positive procrastinators may resemble passive procrastinators in the fact that they delay working on an assignment; however, positive procrastinators have the same focus, dedication, motivation, and time management skills as non-procrastinators. Active procrastinators choose to delay working on a task because of intrinsic, irrational factors, such as believing that they will produce higher quality work under pressure. They maintain that active procrastinators are just as successful as non-procrastinators as they both have time management strategies to cope with stress. Häfner, Oberst, & Stock (2014) disagree with that assessment, seeing procrastination as a lack of self discipline. Rozental et al. (2015) posits the notion that

there may be an underlying psychological condition, such as depression, which is responsible for procrastination. Individuals may procrastinate in order to make themselves feel better.

### *Consequences of Procrastination*

Procrastination is not an action to be taken lightly; it can have dire consequences, including academic failure and may result in serious health problems. For instance, individuals may neglect getting medical check-ups because they prefer to do something more desirable (Rozenal et al., 2015). This is not just disappointing, but is alarming as those with poor time management habits also feel more stressed than non-procrastinators, causing them to suffer from illness more than non-procrastinators (Glick & Orsillo, 2015). Student procrastinators who wait until the last minute to complete assignments often fail to complete them or do a poor job in completing them. In either event, their academic grades suffer (Glick & Orsillo, 2015; Grunschel et al., 2013; MacCann, et al., 2011; Nadinloyi et al., 2013). Chu & Choi (2005) argue that while procrastination has a negative stigma, active procrastination should not be frowned upon as sometimes procrastination is necessary when facing a multitude of responsibilities. For that very reason, MacCann et al., (2011) asserts that time management is especially important for part-time students since they have a more diversified life. Many students do not perceive the lower grades that they receive for procrastinating as harmful because they still receive passing grades in their classes; however, empirical evidence reflects that procrastination has resulted in students failing a course and even dropping out of college because of the failure (Grunschel et al., 2013). Those who receive time management, however, tend to improve their performance in future classes (Nadinloyi et al, 2013).

### *Corrective Action*

The first step in improving procrastination is to make students aware that they are procrastinating. Time management training is important, maintains Van Eerde (2003), but it is not time management training itself that empowers individuals. She asserts that it is the control gained from having a more structured life that leads to greater success. By establishing clearly defined deadlines for students to follow, instructors can help students to plan their time better. Students may also improve their confidence by asking peers to review their work before it is submitted to the instructor. If students have trouble finding a setting to do their work that is free from distractions, instructors and universities can make suggestions for students to follow (Grunschel et al, 2013). Colleges and universities should also establish time management workshops that teach students on how to balance their activities (Van Eerde, 2003). Counseling should also be made available to students to help them overcome motivational hurdles (Balkis et al., 2013). Self-esteem issues, argue Glick & Orsillo (2015) are at the heart of procrastination; consequently, they may be difficult to overcome simply by teaching time management strategies. However, promoting goal setting as part of time management strategies can help students to balance their work/school responsibilities and to have a greater chance of achieving success (Hafner et al., 2014; Nadinloyi et al., 2013). Nadinloyi et al. (2013) adds that utilizing a planner

to remember all of the tasks that need to be completed may be a useful way for students to plan accordingly. Just as these planners can serve to remind students of their work requirements, instructors can likewise remind students periodically of assignments that need to be completed over the course of a semester

There is a common theme among all of these previous studies: how to get students to change their habits and improve their time management skills! Instructors can make suggestions to students and time management workshops can be offered, but not enough focus has been placed on how instructors can help students to achieve success. By having assignment deadlines that fall within less than a month of the date that the assignment was given, it is hypothesized that students are less likely to procrastinate. By conducting student surveys, it will help to shed further light on how students operate and exactly why they choose to procrastinate on assignments given by faculty Broward College's South Campus.

### **Research Method:**

Utilizing a quantitative method, surveys will be completed by students in 20 social science classes at Broward College's South Campus during the fall 2016 semester. This includes the disciplines of history, philosophy, sociology, psychology, and political science. Surveys will be given to four different instructors in each discipline. Each professor will distribute the surveys to one of their classes of about 25 students. The specific class that will receive the survey will be chosen by the survey administrator, at random. By distributing the surveys to different instructors, it attempts to establish a random sample, as some students may sign-up for one professor over another. However, all students have an equal chance to sign-up for the class of their choice. The classes chosen for the study will be those offered between the hours of 8 am and 12 pm in order to create a controlled environment that focuses on daytime students. A separate study can be conducted on nighttime students (6pm to 10 pm) at a later, using the same variables as the daytime study. The daytime study will produce a sample of about five hundred student responses that can be utilized to gauge the causes of student procrastination on essay assignments.

### **Analyzing Results:**

Student responses will be statistically analyzed in order to better understand student behavior. Based on a statistical analysis, recommendations will be made to facilitate student motivation. One major question that this study seeks to answer is whether students feel that they would perform better if they had more or less time to complete assignments. These statistics and recommendations will be shared at a department meeting during the spring 2017 semester. At this time, faculty will be better prepared to discuss how to improve student success within their classes. This survey may be repeated every five years to ensure consistency. The notice of consent and student survey appears on the next two pages.

**Limitations:**

There are two major limitations to this study. One limitation is the potential for students not to take the survey seriously and to just circle any answer in order to complete the survey as quickly as possible. Surveys will be randomly inspected to account for that possibility and those surveys believed to be “tainted” will be analyzed in a separate set of statistics. One set of numbers will include all completed surveys, while a second statistical number will exclude surveys, where it appears that a student did not take the survey seriously. This will be determined by contradictory answers given to survey questions 7 and 8 about how long students wait to start an assignment after it is assigned. Another limitation of this project includes the likelihood that some students in each of the randomly selected classes will be absent on the day that the survey is given out. That is an unfortunate likelihood, but the survey will be viewed as successfully implemented if it is completed by 80% of the students in all of the randomly selected classes. That 80% completion rate amounts to 400/500 students.

**Requirements**

This investigation of student motivation and time management will be completed by Professor David Glauber, with the assistance of Social Science faculty who will proctor surveys to their students. It is estimated that printing 500 surveys with the survey and notice of consent will cost \$30 for printing costs and \$5 for envelopes. This money will come out of the department's operating budget. Final results will be discussed with Social Science faculty at Broward College South Campus at a faculty meeting during the spring 2017.

Notice of Consent

Dear Student:

The survey that you are asked to complete is intended to better understand student motivations for success and how students manage their time in order to meet their educational objectives. This study is intended for students taking social science classes at Broward College who are at least 18 years old. If you are under 18, please do not complete this survey.

This study is led by history instructor David Glauber at Broward College. Completing the following survey is voluntary. You may skip any question that you choose. However, please note that the surveys will be anonymous. Students are asked NOT to write their name on this form. This research will be utilized to improve facilitation at Broward College and to make suggestions to instructors at the college on how they can best help students achieve success. Among the priorities of this study will be to help instructors determine the correct amount of time to allot for assignments. Is providing more than one month for an assignment beneficial or detrimental to student success? Additionally, are students more or less likely to procrastinate based upon the length of time given for an assignment, and how is that linked to student performance on an assignment?

By completing this survey, you are granting Broward College, its associate, staff, and any applicable third parties permission to utilize, store, and disseminate information obtained from the completion of these surveys. Recommendations will be shared with social science faculty at a faculty meeting during the spring 2017 semester. Information obtained may also be utilized for a forthcoming article on ensuring student success.

Thank you for your participation

David Glauber  
History Instructor  
Broward College

### Student Survey of Curriculum

**Directions:** Please circle the answer choice that correlates with your sentiments on essay assignments given in social science classes at Broward College's South Campus.

1. **When a research essay is assigned, what is your initial reaction?**
  - a. Worried
  - b. Indifferent
  - c. Motivated
  - d. Planning Not to Complete It
  
2. **When a research essay is assigned, which of the following describes how soon you intend to begin work on your assignment?**
  - a. Immediately
  - b. Within 1 or 2 Weeks
  - c. Shortly Before Due Date
  - d. Planning Not to Complete It
  
3. **How likely are you to turn in your assignment on time?**
  - a. 25 %
  - b. 50 %
  - c. 75%
  - d. 100%
  
4. **Which of the following factors would most likely cause you to submit an assignment late or not at all?**
  - a. Work Responsibilities
  - b. Family Responsibilities
  - c. Social Engagements
  - d. Would Not Submit Assignment Late
  
5. **Which of the following factors is most influential in your success?**
  - a. Friends
  - b. Family
  - c. Self-Motivated
  - d. Economic Motivation
  
6. **Which of the following factors negatively affects your motivation to complete an assignment?**
  - a. Unsure of Directions
  - b. Disinterest in Class
  - c. Dislike of Assigned Topic
  - d. Length of Time to Complete
  
7. **If you have an entire semester to complete an assignment, you are more likely to do which of the following?**
  - a. Start Right Away and Finish Early
  - b. Start Right Away and Finish Late
  - c. Divide Workload Based on Time
  - d. Begin Project Shortly Before Due Date
  
8. **If you have less than one month to complete an assignment, you are more likely to do which of the following?**
  - a. Start Right Away and Finish Early
  - b. Start Right Away and Finish Late
  - c. Divide Workload Based on Time
  - d. Begin Project Shortly Before Due Date
  
9. **How familiar are you with finding research materials through electronic databases (not Google)?**
  - a. Very Familiar
  - b. Somewhat Familiar
  - c. Not Familiar at All
  - d. Not Familiar at All – Not Interested



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