# PROCRASTINATION AND WORK SATISFACTION

## C.-M. TUDOSE[1]    M. PAVALACHE - ILIE[2]

**Abstract:** *The article presents the relation between procrastination, considering the soldiering and cyberslacking dimensions and work satisfaction. Differences in procrastination are identified based on socio-demographic variables such as gender, age, and work seniority of the employees. The levels of procrastination of the employees do not differ based on the type of organisation (public or private sector).*

**Key words:** *procrastination, soldiering, cyberslacking, work satisfaction.*

## 1. Introduction

Our whole society is centred on various organisations, which function based on material and financial resources, as well as on the human resources needed to manage them. The human resources are a particularly important component of the organisational system, and in most cases the overall success or failure of the system depends on them. Consequently, the main purpose of the organisations becomes that of recruiting personnel who is as specialised, motivated, and productive as possible. Nonetheless, it so happens that, more than once, the employees find themselves engaged in activities with no other purpose than stalling. In other words, they are procrastinating.

## 2. Procrastination

Procrastination is largely defined as intentionally and voluntarily postponing the start or completion of a work task (Abbasi & Alghamdi, 2015). This postponement can extend indefinitely, even though the work task could have been completed in due time. The term was also defined as delaying in making a decision, or in putting the decision into practice, and it is often referred to as a self-regulatory failure (Fernie et al., 2017) from the socio-cognitive approach (Van Eerde & Klingsieck, 2018).

Van Eerde (2003) considers procrastination to be a trait, a behavioural disposition to postpone the completion of a task or decision. Harris and Sutton (1983) do not share this view. To them, procrastination is a mean of manifestation regarding a specific task. It is manifested via actions or behaviours which negatively affect the individuals'

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[1] *Transilvania* University of Braşov,
[2] *Transilvania* University of Braşov, mariela.pavalache@unitbv.ro, corresponding author.

productivity.

The manifestations of procrastination can be classified into various categories, such as: intentional/unintentional and active/passive. Unintentional procrastination is considered to be more problematic than the intentional one, because of its involuntary feature. Active procrastination appears when the employee prefers to work under pressure and consequently postpones the work task until nearing the deadline. Studies correlate this type of procrastination with emotional stability, the feeling of time control and life satisfaction overall. Passive procrastination, also called maladaptive procrastination, is often associated with the lack of autonomy, tense relationships and an unclear life ideal. Passive procrastination predicts postponement as behaviour, whereas active procrastination does not (Wessel et al., 2019).

In an organisational context, procrastination means drifting apart from the work-related tasks and engaging in activities which are in no way related to your job (Metin, Taris & Peeters, 2016). It is considered to be an undesirable behaviour, as it leads to an increase of investment costs on behalf of the employer, as a result of low effectiveness of the workforce and implicitly, low organisational productivity (Abbasi & Alghamdi, 2015).

## 3. Soldiering and Cyberslacking

In the organisational environment, the behaviours associated to procrastination can be divided into two large categories. The first one refers to the behavioural or cognitive engagement of the individuals in non-professional activities during working hours (van den Berg & Roosen, 2018). Taylor (1911) named this type of procrastination as soldiering behaviour. A few examples of soldiering are revelry, gossiping or chit-chatting with co-workers, long coffee breaks or even cleaning the workspace. In other words, any activity which seems more appealing than work at that given moment.

According to Palusen's theory (2015), the postponement of work tasks appears in the case of employees who display a lower degree of ethical sense when it comes to their job and in situations when the employees consider the tasks to be stressful, reported to their level of performance. This type of behaviour is largely associated with negative results. Steel (2007) believes that soldiering lowers self-effectiveness, leading to a vicious cycle of weak performances.

The second category of procrastination behaviours is connected to the large-scale use of technology, especially mobile technology. Procrastination in the online environment is tagged as cyberslacking. This is a recent, widely spread concept, which refers to any use of the internet or mobile technology for personal purposes during working hours (van den Berg & Roosen, 2018). On the one hand, the internet does enable employees to complete their tasks faster and safer than before. On the other hand, it facilitates the wrong use of time, on tasks that are not connected to the job requirements (Metin et al., 2019).

As opposed to soldiering, cyberslacking is more difficult to observe or measure, because the employees seem to be working, whilst actually doing anything but working. The studies conducted by Garrett and Danziger (2008) associate frequent cyberslacking

behaviour with high-ranking employees, whose jobs allow a high level of autonomy, being positively correlated with high income rates and education. The results are unclear as far as productivity is concerned. There was no relationship found between the use of internet for personal purposes and contextual or task performance. Nonetheless, there are correlations between unproductive behaviour and cyberslacking (Metin, Taris & Peeters, 2016).

## 4. Procrastination versus Satisfaction

One of the frequently researched organisational factors is the employees' need for satisfaction and self-realisation through qualified and autonomous work (Warr, Cook & Wall, 1979). Another important category of factors is represented by the factors which motivate work, such as: the variety of tasks required, the autonomy, the importance of the task or the feedback. The studies positively associate their present with the general workplace satisfaction. (Warr, Cook & Wall, 1979).The interest for this subject has arisen primarily due to the belief that work satisfaction affects the employees' productivity, their absence rate, the business turnover and organisational effectiveness overall. Secondly, there is the conviction that work satisfaction has direct consequences on the individual's physical and mental health and on general life satisfaction. Despite the fact that the term is extremely popular, there is no unique and universally agreed upon definition for it. The way in which the concept is defined depends on the theoretical background of the researchers (Mottaz, 1985).

Workplace satisfaction can be divided into two categories: intrinsic satisfaction and extrinsic satisfaction. Intrinsic satisfaction derives from the individual's internal motivation. It shows in the degree to which the person wants to get involved in tasks and work to his best (Warr, Cook & Wall, 1979).

It derives from the content of the task and from other factors such as interesting and challenging work, autonomy and responsibility, variety, creativity, the opportunities in which the individual can use his skills and the feedback given on his effectiveness. Extrinsic satisfaction derives both from the interaction with co-workers and from the tangible rewards provided by the organisation (money, extra-incentives, security) (Mottaz, 1985).

Some of the studies on the employees work satisfaction have identified a negative correlation between procrastination and work satisfaction and a positive correlation between a delay in effort recognition and satisfaction. Procrastination and the delay in effort recognition are considered to be important predictors of work-related stress, and the latter is considered to be a significant predictor of work satisfaction. When procrastination and work-related stress overlap, workplace satisfaction is lower (Mohsin & Ayub, 2014).

## 5. Objectives and Research Methodology

The research objective was to identify the connection between employees work satisfaction and their procrastination behaviours, as far as soldiering and cyberslacking are concerned.

### 5.1. Hypotheses

H1: There is a negative association between employee satisfaction and procrastination at the workplace.

H2: There are significant differences concerning procrastination at work, between the employees of the public sector and those of the private sector.

H3. There are significant differences concerning procrastination depending on the age of the employees.

H4. There are gender differences concerning procrastination and its subscales.

The **sample** consisted of 109 participants, aged between 18 and 65 (M = 33.58, SD = 7.56), 71 of which were women. Most of the subjects graduated from university, and the rest of them from high-school. Work seniority varied between 0 and over 30 years of activity. Forty—nine subjects worked in the public sector and sixty subjects worked in the private sector. The participants were randomly selected, following an internet advertisement.

### 5.2. Instruments

The workplace satisfaction scale (Warr, Cook & Wall, 1979) comprises 15 items scored on a seven-point Likert scale. The scale has two dimensions: intrinsic and extrinsic satisfaction. The subscales demonstrate good internal consistency. In the initial research, the Cronbach alpha coefficient obtained for intrinsic satisfaction was .85 and the one for extrinsic satisfaction was .78. The Cronbach alfa obtained in the present research is .87 for intrinsic satisfaction, .86 for extrinsic satisfaction and .93 for overall satisfaction of the employees.

The workplace procrastination scale (Metin, Taris & Peeters, 2016) comprises 12 items scored on a seven-point Likert scale. The scale allows the calculation of a score for soldiering and a score for cyberslacking. The Cronbach alpha obtained in the initial research was .84 for soldiering and .69 for cyberslacking. In the current research there is a Cronbach alpha of .88 for soldiering, .88 for cyberslacking and .90 for overall procrastination of the employees.

### 5.3. Procedure

Data collection was conducted in Braşov city, Romania, and took approximately one month. The instruments were applied in the online environment.

### 6. Results

Table 1 shows the values of the central tendency indicators for the two psycho-organisational variables and their respective subscales. It is observable that the data are normally distributed.

*Descriptive statistics* Table 1

| Variables | Mean | SD | Skewness | Kurtosis |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Procrastination | 22.61 | 14.468 | .446 | -.741 |
| Soldiering | 13.33 | 9.411 | .527 | -.643 |
| Cyberslacking | 9.28 | 6.974 | .455 | -1.050 |
| Intrinsic satisfaction | 27.56 | 7.857 | -.543 | -.250 |
| Extrinsic satisfaction | 32.57 | 9.103 | -.464 | -.529 |
| Total work satisfaction | 70.45 | 18.118 | -.483 | -.432 |

**Hypotheses testing**

H1: There is a negative association between employee satisfaction and procrastination at the workplace.

The values of the Pearson correlation coefficients are outlined in table 2. The results do not sustain the hypothesis.

*Correlation coefficients between satisfaction and procrastination* Table 2

| Variables | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 Procrastination | - | | | | | |
| 2 Soldiering | .91** | - | | | | |
| 3 Cyberslacking | .83** | .54** | - | | | |
| 4 Total satisfaction | -.10 | -.19 | -.04 | - | | |
| 5 Intrinsic satisfaction | -.15 | -.13 | -.05 | .95** | - | |
| 6 Extrinsic satisfaction | -.63 | -.07 | -.03 | .96** | .86** | - |

N = 109 , ** p < .01.

H2: There are significant differences concerning procrastination at work between the employees of the public sector and those of the private sector.

The results on the comparison of procrastination levels between private and public sector organisations are outlined in table 3.

*t-test results comparing private and public organizations on procrastination* Table 3

| Variables | Type of organisation | Mean | SD | t | df | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Procrastination | Private | 22.92 | 13.71 | .24 | 10 | .81 |
| | Public | 22.24 | 15.47 | | | |
| Cyberslacking | Private | 10.00 | 6.74 | 1.18 | .61 | .23 |
| | Public | 8.41 | 7.22 | | | |
| Soldiering | Private | 12.92 | 9.25 | -.50 | 107 | .61 |
| | Public | 13.84 | 9.67 | | | |

The results do not confirm the hypothesis, the levels of procrastination being similar in the two types of organisations.

H3: There are significant differences concerning procrastination depending on the age of the employees.

In order to test the hypothesis, the participants were divided into five age groups (18-25 years old, 26-35 years old, 36-45 years old, 46-55 years old and over 55 years old).

Using ANOVA, a significant difference between the age groups was found regarding total procrastination ($F_{(4,104)}$ = 2.91, p = .02) and cyberslacking ($F_{(4,104)}$ = 3.68, p = .01). The post-hoc Turkey test demonstrated that the youngest employees (*M* = 26.03, *SD* = 15.70) score significantly higher in procrastination than the 46-55 year-old age group (*M* = 14.13, *SD* = 9.35). The same holds true for cyberslacking. The youngest employees score significantly higher (*M* = 11.06, *SD* = 6.92) than the 46-55 age group (*M* = 4.31, *SD* = 3.96).

H4. There are gender differences concerning procrastination and its subscales.

The t Test for independent samples has shown that the cyberslacking phenomenon is more intense with male participants (*M* = 11.06, *SD* = 7.54) as compared to the female participants (*M* = 8.23, *SD* = 6.45), $t(_{107})$ = 2.20, *p* = .03.

## 7. Discussion and Conclusions

The research has provided a few empirical results for the procrastination behaviour in the work environment. As opposed to previous studies (Mohsin & Ayub, 2014), in the current research no relation between work satisfaction and procrastination was identified.

The anticipation of a connection between the age and the gender of the employees and the tendency towards procrastination was partially sustained by the results. The youngest employees procrastinate more, both if we consider the total score and if we consider the cyberslacking, as compared to the employees aged 46-55. One possible explanation can be the insufficient organisational socialisation of the very young employees, followed by an incomplete understanding of the organisational role, which entails involvement and the use of time in order to complete work tasks. In contrast, the employees aged 46-55 have reached complete professional maturity and involvement in exercising their professional role, being dedicated to their job inside the organisation.

A future research direction could investigate the causes which generate procrastination and the factors which encourage it, in order to provide effective solutions to discourage this time-consuming phenomenon, which is a source of productivity decrease and low work performance. Effective strategies could also be developed to combat or reduce procrastination.

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