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UNINTENTIONAL PROCRASTINATION AND ANXIETY AMONG LECTURERS AT A PRIVATE UNIVERSITY IN SELANGOR

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ABSTRACT

Unintentional procrastination and anxiety can negatively affect lecturers' performance and the quality of education. This study examines the relationship between unintentional procrastination and anxiety among lecturers at a faculty member of a private university in Selangor. Data were collected from 61 lecturers using validated scales, including the Unintentional Procrastination Scale (UPS) and the Anxiety Assessment Scale (AAS). The data were analysed using descriptive and inferential analyses with Spearman's correlation. The findings revealed a significant positive relationship between unintentional procrastination and anxiety, indicating that higher levels of procrastination are associated with increased anxiety. Practical recommendations include implementing self-regulation strategies, providing stress management training, and fostering a supportive work environment to help lecturers manage their tasks effectively and reduce anxiety. These interventions are critical for enhancing lecturers' productivity, job satisfaction, and the overall quality of education.

Keywords: *Higher education, lecturers, mental health, productivity, psychology, well-being*

INTRODUCTION

The evaluation of academics has evolved tremendously, resulting in changes in technology, globalisation, and human mobility, which have increased the expectations in the educational system (Dzelzkalēja & Kapenieks, 2018). The expectations that were put on the educators have been affecting the lecturers, and educational pressure on them will increase. They are expected to prepare and deliver interactive and efficient lectures. However, that was not the only requirement lecturers had to fulfil. To succeed, lecturers have other duties such as managing documentation, grading assessments, supervising students, conducting research, publishing papers, etc. They are also expected to provide an effective and engaging classroom that can produce successful graduates.

Procrastination is a worldwide problem experienced by everyone, regardless of their age range or wealth. Procrastination is the urge to needlessly delay things we must prioritise, such as work or tasks (Steel, 2007). According to Oram and Rogers (2022), the cause of procrastination must be identified from the initial cause that discourages us from starting the task. The study also found that acknowledging basic psychological needs, satisfaction, and frustration could help avoid direct and indirect procrastination predictors. There are various causes of discouragement when starting tasks, such as laziness, stress, anxiety, etc. These factors may lead to a bigger impact on their life. Procrastination can lead to a negative or positive outcome based on the individual. However, most procrastinators experience negative impacts, making it difficult to lead a productive life.

Anxiety is a persistent feeling that is difficult to shake off and avoid by anyone. According to Good and Merkel (1973), anxiety is defined as feelings of apprehension, tension, or uneasiness led by fear, dread, or uncertainty from the unknown or unrecognised source that consists of generalised emotional reactions and persistent apprehension of the future. An individual will have difficulty controlling anxiety because it is an emotional response, and emotions are not easily controlled. Anxiety is usually identified as a negative effect as it creates a negative impact on one's life.

6 PJMH vol 7(2) 2024.indd 55 2/12/2025 10:17:12 AM

However, understanding the relationship between unintentional procrastination and anxiety is crucial in the context of lecturers. Unintentional procrastination refers to the uncontrollable and inadvertent delay of tasks despite good intentions, which can impair performance (Bennett & Bacon, 2019). Lecturers who experience anxiety may be more prone to unintentional procrastination, as anxiety can interfere with their ability to manage their workload and classroom responsibilities effectively.

The combination of procrastination and anxiety can be particularly harmful to the educator, creating an endless and cruel vicious cycle. Once one has started the cycle, much courage and motivation are needed to end it. This is due to the connection between them and their influence over one another (Gautam et al., 2023; Petwal et al., 2021). For example, one procrastinates due to anxiety about a task, leading to further anxiety or fear of not being able to complete it, which results in more procrastination, creating an endless cycle.

This paper addresses a gap by identifying the relationship between unintentional procrastination and anxiety, specifically among lecturers in the university. While procrastination and anxiety have been widely studied in general populations, limited research explores their unique impact on lecturers who face multifaceted pressures, including teaching responsibilities, administrative tasks, and research demands. Lecturers are particularly vulnerable due to the dual expectations of delivering high-quality education and contributing to academic scholarship. This study aims to fill this gap by shedding light on how these challenges interact, offering insights that can inform strategies to improve lecturers' productivity, job satisfaction, and the overall quality of education they provide.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative research approach to analyse survey data on unintentional procrastination and anxiety among lecturers at a faculty in a private university in Selangor. Correlation analysis was used to explore the relationship between unintentional procrastination and the dependent variable, anxiety. Data were collected through surveys distributed via Google Forms and physical handouts. Convenience sampling was used to select participants from the accessible population of 75 lecturers, as it was the total number of lecturers available during data collection. This method relies on participant availability, accessibility, and willingness to participate. Data collection involved distributing questionnaires in physical form to facilitate monitoring and ensure complete responses. Official approval was obtained from the faculty's Dean. The survey included instruments for measuring unintentional procrastination and anxiety, with responses taking approximately five to ten minutes. Data were analysed using SPSS to address the study's objectives.

The research instruments consisted of three sections: Demographics section, the Unintentional Procrastination Scale, and the Anxiety Assessment Scale: Questions on gender, ethnicity, age, and employment duration. The Demographics section gathered basic information about the respondents, including their gender, ethnicity, age, and duration of employment, to provide context for the analysis. The Unintentional Procrastination Scale, developed by Fernie et al. (2016), assessed the tendency to delay tasks unintentionally. It included six items scored on a 4-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree), allowing the researchers to measure varying levels of unintentional procrastination among lecturers. The instrument is specifically designed to assess unintentional procrastination, making it suitable for lecturers who may experience task delays despite intending to complete their duties.

The Anxiety Assessment Scale, created by Malakciouglu (2022), evaluated the presence and intensity of anxiety. Comprising seven items, the scale utilised a 5-point Likert format, with responses ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (almost always), providing insights into the participants' anxiety levels. This instrument is validated through previous research and have been shown to be effective in diverse populations, including academic professionals, making it highly appropriate for the lecturer population in this study.

A pilot study was conducted before collecting data to determine whether the instruments were suitable to be executed for the targeted sample. This preliminary step enabled researchers to identify the reliability results of the instruments. Thus, the pilot study involved 10 respondents.

VOLUME 7 NUMBER 2 2024 e-ISSN: 26369877 PLATFORM 56

6 PJMH vol 7(2) 2024.indd 56 2/12/2025 10:17:12 AM

Table 1 Reliability of instrument based on pilot study

Instrument	Cronbach Alpha	N of items
Unintentional Procrastination scale	0.936	6
Anxiety Assessment scale	0.861	7

Based on Table 1, the analysis shows that the Unintentional Procrastination Scale and the Anxiety Assessment Scale are highly reliable. This finding concluded that both instruments can be used as they are reliable for the current population. The data analysis aimed to identify patterns between procrastination and anxiety. Spearman's rank correlation was chosen to explore the relationship since the data was non-normal due to the scale and sampling method. The analysis was done using SPSS, with scores from the scales processed to calculate the correlation coefficient and draw conclusions.

RESULTS

Reliability Analysis

Table 2 indicates a comprehensive representation of the data found from the reliability analysis that was used to examine the overall consistency of the Unintentional Procrastination Scale (Fernie et al., 2016) and the Anxiety Assessment Scale (Malakciouglu, 2022). After examining the reliability of both scales, this analysis highlighted the reliability of the instruments used.

Table 2 Reliability statistics of the unintentional procrastination scale and anxiety assessment scale

Instrument	Cronbach Alpha	N of items
Unintentional Procrastination scale	0.906	6
Anxiety Assessment scale	0.852	7

Based on the table, the analysis displays a satisfactory internal consistency of both scales that assess both variables in this paper. The findings display a high level of reliability in the table above by a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.906 and 0.852, respectively. This suggests that the reliability of the instruments in measuring the construct of interest is good.

Descriptive Analysis

This chapter reports a data analysis result of the demographic data, consisting of frequencies of gender, ethnicity, and duration of employment for 61 lecturers at a private university in Selangor.

Table 3 Demographic details of respondents

Gender	Frequency (N)	Percent (%)
Male	17	27.9%
Female	44	72.1%
Total	61	100%
Malay	57	93.4%
Chinese	4	6.6%
Total	61	100%
Less than a year	10	16.4%
1 to 5 years	15	24.6%
6 to 10 years	9	14.8%
11 to 15 years	11	18%
16 to 20 years	4	6.6%
21 to 25 years	8	13.1%
26 to 30 years	3	4.9%
More than 30 years	1	1.6%
Total	61	100%

Table 3 shows the distribution of genders among the lecturers who participated in the study. The data shows that most participants are female, comprising 44 participants (72.1 %), while male participants consist of 17 participants (27.9%). It also presents the ethnic composition of lecturers who participated in this study. The predominant ethnic groups that participated were Malay and Chinese, with a total of 61 participants. The participants consist of four Chinese lecturers accounting for 6.6%, and 57 Malay lecturers accounting for 93.4% of the total respondents. The data presented show that Malay ethnicity exhibits the highest among respondents.

In terms of employment duration, the highest percentage, with 15 respondents representing 24.6%, falls within the 1 to 5 years category. The second highest percentage is 18%, with 11 respondents, for the duration of employment of 10 to 15 years. The third highest is the 16.4% percentage, accommodating 10 respondents with less than a year of employment. This is followed by nine respondents, who account for 14.8% of the duration of employment, which is 6 to 10 years.

6 PJMH vol 7(2) 2024.indd 57 2/12/2025 10:17:12 AM

Then, the duration of employment is 21 to 25 years, with eight respondents, which accounts for 13.1% of the total respondents. Next in line is the duration of employment of 16 to 20 years, with four respondents accounting for 6.6%. They were followed by the duration of employment of 26 to 30 years with three respondents of 4.9%. One participant which is 1.6% of the total respondents has an employment duration of more than 30 years. This finding indicates that most respondents have been working for 1 to 5 years.

Table 4 Levels of unintentional procrastination

Unintentional Procrastination Level	Frequency (N)	Percent (%)
Low	22	36.1%
Average	20	32.8%
High	19	31.1%
Total	61	100%

The findings of the descriptive analysis (Table 4) show the different levels of unintentional procrastination among lecturers. The result of this finding suggests that the highest percentage of lecturers have low unintentional procrastination, with a total of 36.1% (22 respondents). In contrast, the lowest percentage is 31.1%, with 19 respondents having a high level of unintentional procrastination. Meanwhile, 32.8% of 20 respondents scored low unintentional procrastination. A proportion of lecturers display a minor amount of unintentional procrastination, with only 3.3% differences between low and high levels of unintentional procrastination.

Table 5 Descriptive analysis of the mean and standard deviation of unintentional procrastination among lecturers

	Frequency (N)	Mean	SD
Unintentional Procrastination	61	12.7049	3.98892

Table 5 comprehensively displays the mean score and standard deviation found in the descriptive analysis. This is used to analyse the extent and range of unintentional procrastination among lecturers. The mean score is 12.71, indicating that the lecturer's average level of unintentional procrastination is moderate. However, there is widespread procrastination among lecturers due to the high standard deviation of 4 scores.

Based on the research question (RQ2), descriptive statistics have been used to identify the anxiety levels among respondents.

Table 6 Levels of anxiety among lecturers

Anxiety Level	Frequency (N)	Percent (%)
Low	33	54.1%
Average	13	21.3%
High	15	24.6%
Total	61	100%

Table 6 presents a comprehensive display of the outcomes of the descriptive analysis conducted to analyse the anxiety levels among lecturers. The findings show that a significant proportion of lecturers which is 54.1%, scored a low level of anxiety. Other than that, only 21.3% of the lecturers obtained an average level of anxiety, while the other 24.6% scored a high level of anxiety. The report shows a difference between low and average levels of anxiety of 29.5% differences.

Table 7 Descriptive analysis of the mean and standard deviation of anxiety among lecturers

	Frequency (N)	Mean	Standard Deviation
Anxiety	61	17.6393	4.42355

Table 7 reports the mean score and standard deviation found in the descriptive analysis to analyse the anxiety levels among lecturers. The mean score is 17.64, with a standard deviation of 4.42.

Inferential Analysis

This inferential analysis aims to examine the research hypothesis—specifically, the hypothesis on the relationship between unintentional procrastination and anxiety among lecturers. The data was analysed using Spearman's correlation analysis.

Table 8 Spearman's rank correlation analysis between unintentional procrastination and anxiety among lecturers

		Unintentional Procrastination
Anxiety	Correlation Coefficient (r)	.301
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.019*
	N	61

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

6 PJMH vol 7(2) 2024.indd 58 2/12/2025 10:17:12 AM

Table 8 illustrates Spearman's correlation analysis result used to explore the association between unintentional procrastination and anxiety among lecturers. The result reveals a significant correlation between unintentional procrastination and anxiety with a result, $r(59) = .301$, $p = .019$. This means that there is a weak positive correlation between unintentional procrastination and anxiety. Other than that, the result is statistically significant because the p-value is less than 0.05. Therefore, this study successfully rejects the null hypothesis. This indication shows that lecturers who experience high unintentional procrastination tend to have high anxiety, too.

DISCUSSION

The primary focus of this paper was to examine the significance of unintentional procrastination and anxiety among lecturers. The Spearman's rank correlation analysis was used to explore and find the connection between both variables. The findings of this paper provide employees with information about how unintentional procrastination is associated with anxiety. Therefore, the present study provides evidence of a significant positive relationship between unintentional procrastination and anxiety among lecturers. This supports the alternative hypothesis, which states that there would be a positive relationship between the two variables investigated. These findings align with the previous research conducted by Šaplavska and Jerkunkova (2018), who also identified a positive correlation between procrastination and anxiety.

Unintentional Procrastination

The concept of unintentional procrastination means the behaviour of delaying tasks in a passive and unintentional avoidance of acting (Bennett & Bacon, 2019). Unintentional procrastination can be reduced among lecturers by addressing factors such as disinhibition, impulsivity, and negative affection through self-regulation techniques and stress management strategies that lecturers often experience. Based on the findings of this study, most lecturers demonstrate a low level of autonomy. However, a notable proportion of lecturers indicate high unintentional procrastination. Lecturers may possess a low degree of unintentional procrastination because of various circumstances. One is the frequency of employment duration, where the autonomy has increased. The nature of their employment allows them to exercise and control their time management over their workload. According to Laybourn et al. (2019), lecturers have a high level of responsibility in managing their work and time coherently with a high level of autonomy. This autonomy may discourage procrastination, serving as an intrinsic motivator to stay organised and avoid procrastination, resulting in a low level of unintentional procrastination within lecturers.

Furthermore, Umerenkova and Gil-Flores (2017) noted that lecturers are seasoned professionals who have likely cultivated efficient time management and organisational tactics. This means that the nature of lecturers is experienced in educating, which makes them experienced managing time and education tactics. Reflecting these findings, lecturers who have been teaching for several years have gained experience executing their tasks efficiently, contributing to their low levels of procrastination.

However, it is reasonable for average lecturers to experience a moderate degree of unintentional procrastination. This phenomenon may attributed to human nature, which sometimes experiences task aversiveness, lack of motivation and other factors. The lecturers' workload, which includes teaching, grading, preparing learning structures, and conducting research, may make them feel overwhelmed and stressed, making it difficult to keep up with their workload. Align with past research, Laybourn et al. (2019) discussed that educators tend to procrastinate on various professional tasks, such as administrative, organisational, and student tasks, because they feel unpleasant and lack motivation. These factors explain how lecturers may still unintentionally procrastinate and struggle to avoid it due to the nature and demands of their work.

Anxiety

The consequences of anxiety in educational settings cannot be taken lightly. The concept of anxiety pertains to an individual's psychological condition characterised as feelings of apprehension, tension, or uneasiness that are led by fear, dread, or uncertainty from the unknown or unrecognised source that consists of generalised emotional reactions and persistent apprehension of the future (Good & Merkel, 1973).

6 PJMH vol 7(2) 2024.indd 59 2/12/2025 10:17:12 AM

The findings of this study reveal an astounding amount of 54.1% low degree of anxiety. This is remarkable as it was more than half of the population. However, the data analysis unequivocally finds a comparable amount of 24.6% of lecturers indicate a high level of anxiety, and the other 21.3% show an average level. Several reasons are contributing to the low degree of anxiety, such as experience. In this study, most of the respondents have been working for more than one year, where they can manifest on gaining experience, building confidence and managing their stress. According to Faisal et al. (2020), early career lecturers experience more symptoms of anxiety due to work-related stress, job demands, and lack of social support. This research aligns with the findings, where the more time lecturers work, the more experience they gain that will eventually help them to cope and reduce anxiety.

In addition, the result found that a low anxiety level can also be the result of educational knowledge in technologies. Lecturers knowledgeable in technology will be able to increase their sense of control over their teaching environment and reduce their anxiety in the classroom. Align with past research, Kayhan (2022) stated that educators with fewer skills in educational technologies will gain more anxiety in classroom management. This indicates that lecturers with skills in educational technologies are less likely to develop anxieties in their teaching. This is because the technologies aid in effectively managing classrooms by providing tools and resources such as e-learning.

Unintentional Procrastination and Anxiety

The result of this study highlighted evidence and support for the hypothesis, showing the presence of unintentional procrastination in association with anxiety. Moreover, Šaplavska and Jerkunkova (2018) identified a positive correlation between procrastination and anxiety. Based on the Procrastination-Anxiety Cycle, it has been seen that procrastination negatively impacts anxiety and educators who experience this eventually develop negative behaviour and mental health problems (Sirois & Pychyl, 2013).

Aligned with the past research, the findings of this study show a positive correlation between unintentional procrastination and anxiety. The correlation indicates that people who experience unintentional procrastination are slightly more likely also to experience anxiety. Onuegbu (2020) highlighted that the presence of anxious procrastination causation is self-efficacy and task aversion. This also aligns with previous studies (Gautam et al., 2023; Petwal et al., 2021). When individuals experience anxiety, they tend to exhibit a greater inclination to evade tasks they consider challenging or unpleasant, which eventually leads to procrastination. Anxiety makes it difficult for an individual to focus and concentrate on tasks, leading to procrastination, as they feel overwhelmed or anxious about them.

In addition, the findings also revealed that there is a weak positive correlation between unintentional procrastination and anxiety. It means that there is only a slight tendency for individuals who procrastinate unintentionally to experience higher levels of anxiety compared to those who procrastinate less frequently. This indicates that the relationship between these two variables is inconsistent and may be influenced by other factors. These factors can be based on internal factors such as self-regulation, resilience, and mindfulness (Gautam et al., 2023; Ragusa et al., 2023) and external factors such as media use (Przepiorka et al., 2023). The results suggest that the two experiences are related but not directly causal, and other factors, such as personality traits, coping mechanisms, and environmental stressors, may also play a role.

CONCLUSION

In summary, this study investigated the relationship between unintentional procrastination and anxiety among lecturers, addressing a significant problem in the educational context. Furthermore, lecturers often face challenges related to productivity and work quality. This study examined how unintentional procrastination and anxiety impact lecturers' involvement in their work. The findings support previous studies, highlighting that these factors significantly affect lecturers' quality and productivity. Engaged and positive educators demonstrate positive remarks toward enhancing their professional growth in fostering a conducive learning environment that enhances student achievement and institutional efficacy. Acknowledging the significance of a healthy work-life balance and fostering a productive work environment is essential for reducing unintentional procrastination and anxiety among lecturers. This study emphasises the need

6 PJMH vol 7(2) 2024.indd 60 2/12/2025 10:17:12 AM

for interventions such as professional development programs on time management, self-regulation (Geng et al., 2021), and stress management, alongside access to mental health resources. These strategies can enhance lecturers' productivity, job satisfaction, and the quality of education. Further research is needed to explore the experiences of educators, identify challenges contributing to procrastination and anxiety, and examine other factors that might hinder this relationship. By addressing these issues, universities can create a positive and productive environment, benefiting lecturers and students and enhancing the overall educational experience.

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6 PJMH vol 7(2) 2024.indd 62 2/12/2025 10:17:12 AM