

The Relationship Between Procrastination and Technology in High Schoolers

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Introduction

The ability to stay on task and complete work quickly and with quality is a valuable trait in a professional environment, not to mention in an educational setting. Today, it can seem that procrastination, the irrational delay of a task with the intent to complete it, is more present than ever and becomes an increasingly detrimental behavior in our society. While procrastination does affect a large amount of people around the world, and there is still a wealth of literature on the subject to go along with it, though there is less available information on the behaviour than one may expect.

Gap

One of these areas where research is lacking is in the relationship between technology in procrastination. Despite the seemingly large part that technology plays in modern procrastination perceived by popular culture, there is little existing research and much of what does exist is outdated with the continued development of technology. Yet another one of the areas that is underrepresented is in American High Schools. Research pertaining to foreign high schools, or equivalent, exist however aren't entirely comparable. This is due to the difference in cultures and schooling systems present in those countries. Furthermore, there is research regarding procrastination in university settings within the United States. Although this research is closer to the target setting in location, the difference in age does not guarantee similar results despite not being far off.

Questions

What is the overall state of procrastination within High Schoolers and What levels of technology use do High School Students typically exhibit?

To what extent modern technology influences the level of procrastination present within High School aged teens?

Methods

Data was collected through a survey distributed to students in a suburban high school in Southern California. The survey was specifically given to students from AP classes in all grade levels offered at the school (9-12th). This was done to look for a possible development of maturity or self control as one ages through adolescent years, as well as to gather a rounded dataset that displays the "High School Student" group as a whole. Furthermore, students from AP classes were specifically surveyed to insure that those surveyed were affected by true procrastination.

The structure of the survey is in two parts. One part is to test the extent of one's academic procrastination through a procrastination measure developed by Mohsen Haghbin and Dr. Timothy Pychyl titled the Multifaceted Measure of Academic Procrastination. Specifically, a modified version of the "PBS" portion of the measure was used as it was geared specifically towards Academic Procrastination.

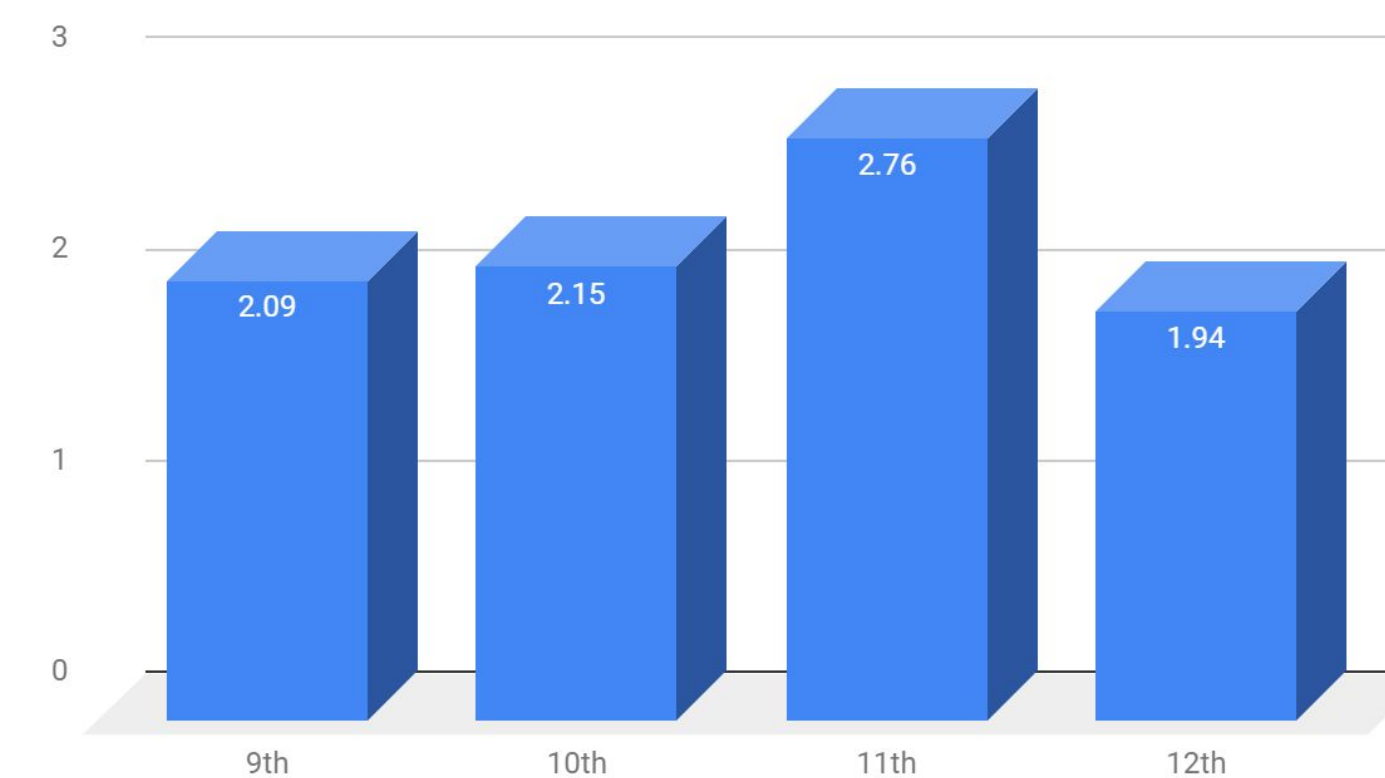
The second part of the survey was self designed in order to target electronic device use overall, but specified towards procrastinatory behavior. Although, the questions asked are by no means a measure for technology use where data from multiple questions may be combined.

To gather data to answer the question, the results from both parts of these surveys will be compared. For instance, those that score high procrastination behavior will have their technology use compared to those with low procrastination behavior. By comparing data, it will be possible to find whether or not technology greatly influences procrastination or not. To explain, if it is found that there is support that students with high technology use are high procrastinators and that those with low technology use are low procrastinators, it would confirm that technology does play a role in causing procrastination itself. Whereas if there was no correlation between procrastination and technology, it might suggest that procrastination might not be a consequence of technology, but that technology is a consequence of procrastination, stemming from one's ability of self control.

Results

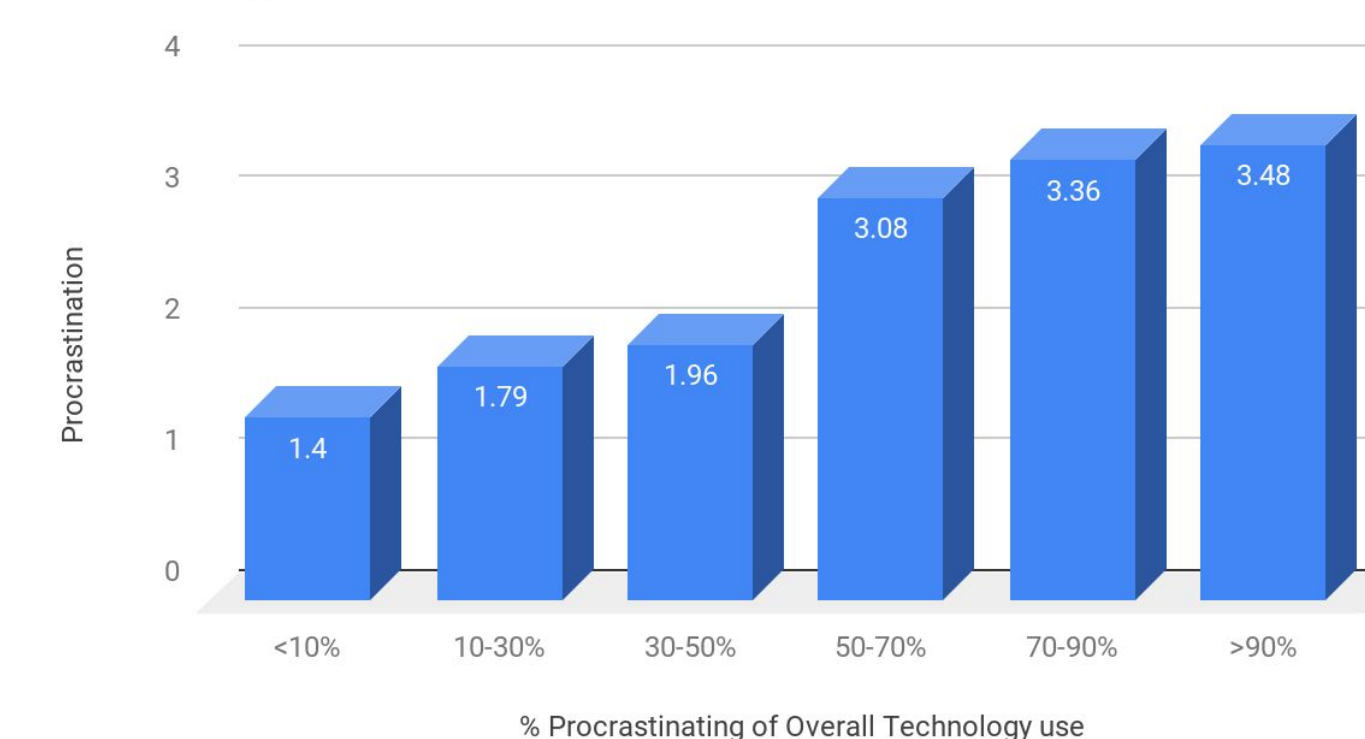
Questions made to measure procrastination were designed with answers "Never, Almost Never, Occasionally, Often, Very Often, and Always." For the purpose of analysis, these scores will receive a number 0-5. In an overall view of all 103 students surveyed, the average score for all questions related to procrastination was 2.65.

Average Across Grade Levels



Using this data by comparing it to the a question from the technology use section of the survey, we are able to find out whether the "Technological Procrastination" of students lined up with the measure of Academic Procrastination. Expectedly, as the % of time a student is procrastinating of the total time using a device increases, so does the procrastination scores.

Technological Procrastination and Overall Procrastination



Conclusions

As shown by the scores, there is little difference between the grade levels, although there is the outlier of those in 11th grade. If taken at face value, this would suggest that there is a circumstance present within the 11th grade that causes a decrease in one's self control. This could possibly be a decrease in amount of priority placed on education, however this is unlikely due to student's concern with college applications and keeping up one's grade point average. Ultimately, this disproves the idea that growing maturity with age increases one's self control when looking at the age range of about 14-18. Therefore, external factors are likely in play which trigger a student's self control. Then, in terms of technology use, increased technology is positively correlated with procrastination, which parallels Shuai-lei Lian's findings. Therefore, my findings suggest that procrastination studies done on college students, even in other countries, are still applicable towards US High School Students.

In comparing procrastination with technology use, instead of a gradual slope of increasing procrastination, there is a jump of 1.2 in the average procrastination score between 30-50% and 50-70%. This jump suggests that the frequency that technology is used for procrastination influenced by some other factor, that being a person's self control. This result stands in line with Pychyl and Flett's study that argues procrastination is a product of the failure of regulating one's actions, or deficient self control. Ultimately, this was unable to prove my hypothesis that technology is not a cause of procrastination since correlation is not the same as causation. However, I was able to prove that self control is a major variable in determining what level of procrastination and the amount of technology use they exhibit.

References

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