



Parenting Styles and Active Procrastination

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ABSTRACT - Active procrastination has already been defined and proven to exist as a positive type of procrastinator. In this present study, we explore the relationship between parenting style and types of procrastination. Participants were given 3 questionnaires to evaluate their procrastination level, active procrastination level, and the type of parental authority they grew up with. Across the study, permissive parenting was shown to be correlated with greater active procrastination. These findings expand the current knowledge on active procrastination to discover the root cause.

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I. Introduction

The notion of “work better under pressure” has long been a defense for procrastination. Procrastination has been defined as the “voluntary delay of an intended course of action despite expecting to be worse off for the delay” (Steel, 2007, p.66). In the past, this has often been an excuse for poor time management, supported by chronic procrastinators showing poor results when under time restraints (Ferrari and Tibbett, 2020). In recent years, the idea of working better under pressure has gained validity in studies such as the one by Chu and Choi (2005), who coined the term “active procrastinator”. Active procrastinators are defined as a positive type of procrastinator who prefers to work under pressure and make deliberate decisions to procrastinate in order to use the pressure as motivation (Chu and Choi, 2005).

Existing research regarding the five big personality traits (extraversion, agreeableness, openness, conscientiousness, neuroticism) have specified distinct relationships between three of the five traits and active and passive procrastination respectively. A study of university students in China has indicated that active procrastination was related to higher levels of extraversion along with lower levels of agreeableness and emotional instability (Zhou, 2019). Shaw and Choi (2022) extended research of the relationship between the five big personality traits and active procrastination from an academic setting to the workplace. Employing both self reports and supervisor reports, they confirmed that emotional stability and extraversion indicate active procrastination. Further, higher levels of neuroticism have also been found to be related to academic procrastination (Swaraswati et al., 2017).

The relationship between parenting and the five big personality traits in their children have been thoroughly researched with a focus on the four main parenting styles (authoritarian, authoritative, permissive, uninvolved). Both authoritarian and authoritative parents are known to exert high levels of control, however they applied in different styles. Authoritarian parents set strict and occasionally arbitrary rules. They expect their children to follow these rules without question out of fear of punishment (Bassett et al., 2013). Expectations set by authoritative parents are more developmentally appropriate and focus on the rationale and reasoning behind the rules. The goal of which is to get children to internalize positive behaviors rather than adhere due to fear (Bassett et al., 2013). Permissive parents are less strict and attempt to affirm and accept their children's impulses, desires, and actions (Baumrind, 1971). Children are allowed to regulate their own behavior as much as possible in order to avoid exercising control (Baumrind, 1971). This can be seen in lack of demand for household responsibility and orderly behavior (Baumrind, 1971).

There is substantial research showing that the authoritative and flexible parenting style is optimal (Bornstein and Bornstein, 2007). It is generally agreed upon that authoritative parenting is the most supportive for children and is correlated to more positive outcomes (Sanvictores and Mendez, 2022). Authoritative parenting is related to low neuroticism, high extraversion, openness to experience, agreeability and high conscientiousness (Kilonzo, 2017). Authoritarian parenting has a positive association with neuroticism, dependency on others, and ineffective coping mechanisms (Odenweller, 2014). Similarly, children with permissive parents lack self-control and tend to be less agreeable (Joseph and John, 2008). Uninvolved parenting is the most harmful style of parenting

(Joseph and John, 2008). Children with these types of parents are often more resilient, but will likely struggle emotionally, academically, and socially (Sanvictores and Mendez, 2022).

The types of parenting have also been researched as the possible cause for procrastination. Paternal authoritarian parenting in fathers is significantly correlated to procrastination in children, while maternal authoritative parenting is negatively associated with procrastination (Pychyl et al., 2002). It's suggested that children with over critical, high expecting, and demanding parents grow to avoid tasks rather than face the risk of failure (Rothblum, Solomon, and Murakami, 1986).

The established relationship between emotional stability and extraversion and active procrastination along with the link between authoritative parenting and high extraversion and low neuroticism implies that authoritative parenting may result in active procrastinators. Authoritative parenting creates children with personalities that closely resemble that of active procrastinators. Out of the lesser amount of procrastinators produced from authoritative parenting compared to authoritarian parenting, there should be a positive correlation between authoritative parenting and active procrastination.

II. Method

Participants. Participants were 285 adults recruited through Amazon's mechanical turk. Participants were between the ages of 20-75 (42.3% female). The mean age of the sample was 40.3 years ($SD = 11.5$). The distribution of participants' racial background was as follows: 6.0% Asian or Pacific Islander, 10.1% Black/African American, 7.3% Hispanic, 74.5% White/Caucasian, and 1.7% other. Random participants were paid to take part in this survey through Amazon surveys. The highest level of education completed of the participants was as follows: 8.0% associate degree, 42.0% bachelor's degree, 1.4% doctorate degree, 11.9% high school diploma, 15.0% master's or professional degree, 19.9% some college, 2.4% other.

Measure. Participants completed a survey consisting of: 1) Procrastination Tendency Questionnaire, 2) Passive to Active Procrastination scale, and 3) Parental Authority Questionnaire.

Procedure. This research was conducted in the summer 2022. Participation was entirely voluntary, and the participants completed the questionnaire for payment on Amazon's mechanical turk. The questionnaires for this article were interspersed with questions for a separate paper.

Pure Procrastination Scale (PPS). In order to measure the level of procrastination, a 12 item questionnaire was administered using a 7 point Likert scale anchored at 1 (Not at All True) and 7 (Very True). Questions measured the tendency to procrastinate in general daily activities rather (e.g., "I generally delay before starting on work I have to do", "I waste a lot of time on trivial matters before getting to the final decisions."). The Pure Procrastination Scale has been used frequently in research on procrastination (Steel, 2010; Svartdal and Steel, 2017).

Passive to Active Procrastination scale. Active and passive procrastinators were determined using the 12 item questionnaire created by (Chu and Choi, 2005). This questionnaire used a 7-point Likert scale as a response format, and was generated based on 4 factors that define an active procrastinator. A composite measure of all 12 questions was used to assess the participants overall tendency to active procrastination.

Parental Authority Questionnaire. The Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ; Buri, 1991) was used to evaluate the parenting style that the participants grew up with. Buri (1991) The PAQ requires respondents to go through 30 statements and rate from 1 {strongly disagree} to 5 {strongly agree}. The 30 questions equally reflect a permissive, authoritarian, and authoritative/flexible parenting style. Separate scores are calculated by adding up the scores of each style. Participants' mother's and father's scores were separated, and whichever score from each parent, respectively, was greatest was used to classify the participant.

III. Results

Participants were grouped into parenting styles based on which subsection of the PAQ they had the highest score in for each parent. For mother's parenting styles: 130 (45.6%) participants were authoritarian, 103 (36.1%) were authoritative, 39 (13.7%) were permissive, and 13 were a combination(4.6%). For their father's parenting style 127 (44.6%) were authoritarian, 79 (27.7%) were authoritative, 41 (14.4%) were permissive, and 38 (13.3%) were combination. Mean score on the PPS was 3.21 ($SD = 1.80$) and mean score for the active procrastination scale was 3.80 ($SD = 0.69$).

Table 1 presents the mean of the inverted scores of both the procrastination and active procrastination questionnaires across different parenting styles for both the mother and father. Of the 3 main parenting styles, overall procrastination was lowest for both those with Mothers and Fathers with permissive parenting styles, We performed an ANOVA to test for group difference and indeed found level of procrastination was linked to parenting style for both the mother's parenting style ($F(3, 281) = 6.93, p < 0.001$) and father's ($F(3, 281) = 3.28, p = 0.02$). Post hoc Tukey test found that for the mother's parenting style there were significant group differences between permissive and both authoritarian ($p < 0.001$) and authoritative ($p < 0.001$) parenting styles. However,

the same group differences were not found to be significant for father’s parenting style (Authoritarian: $p = 0.46$; Authoritative: $p = 0.10$), however there was still a significant main effect. Overall, we found evidence that parenting style had an effect on procrastination with permissive parenting in general leading to greater levels of procrastination.

Table 1: Mean Procrastination and Active Procrastination Scores Across Parenting Styles

Decision Task	Permissive	Authoritarian	Authoritative	Combination
Mother’s Parenting Style				
Procrastination	3.64 (1.79)	4.95 (1.73)	5.04 (1.72)	4.44 (2.04)
Active	4.18 (.61)	3.69 (.72)	3.75 (.66)	4.12 (.35)
Father’s Parenting Style				
Procrastination	4.44 (1.92)	4.83 (1.80)	5.13 (1.57)	4.25 (1.97)
Active	4.01 (.62)	3.73 (.74)	3.73 (0.66)	3.92 (.61)

The main goal of our study was to investigate whether active procrastination differed across parenting styles. We did indeed find group differences in level of active procrastination. For both mother and father parenting style, those who had permissive parenting showed the greatest level of active procrastination. These differences in active vs. passive procrastination were significant for the mother’s parenting style ($F(3, 281) = 6.61$, $p < 0.001$) and somewhat significant for the father’s parenting style ($F(3, 281) = 4.38$, $p = 0.05$). Post hoc Tukey tests found procrastination to be more active for those with a permissive parent over authoritarian or authoritative parent for both the mother’s parenting style (Authoritarian: $p = 0.001$; Authoritative: $p = 0.003$). These results contradicted our original hypothesis that authoritative parenting would be related to more active procrastination. Table 2 presents the mean of the inverted scores of both the procrastination and active procrastination questionnaires of only those who were classified as procrastinators ($PPS > 4$) across different parenting styles for both the mother and father.

Table 2: Mean Procrastination and Active Procrastination Scores Across Parenting Styles of Only Procrastinators

Decision Task	Permissive	Authoritarian	Authoritative	Combination
Mother’s Parenting Style				
Procrastination	5.52 (.83)	5.86 (.88)	5.96 (.84)	5.88 (.63)
Active	4.01 (.72)	3.56 (.69)	3.64 (.67)	4.02 (.42)
Father’s Parenting Style				
Procrastination	5.81 (.85)	5.83 (.93)	5.96 (.75)	5.90 (.84)
Active	3.83 (.69)	3.61 (.76)	3.61 (0.62)	3.65 (.56)

When looking at only those with a score above 4 on the procrastination measure we observe a similar trend but do not find significant results (Mother’s Parenting Style: $F(3, 88) = 1.12$, $p = 0.35$;) Father’s Parenting Style: $F(3, 88) = 1.32$, $p = 0.27$). With a larger sample or more procrastinators in the sample we believe we may have found stronger results.

IV. Discussion

The goal of this study was to find whether or not parenting styles have an effect on how people procrastinate. Significant differences in the levels of procrastination were seen in the mother’s parenting style. Permissive, authoritarian, and authoritative parenting displayed differences in levels of procrastination in our participants, though this was only somewhat significant in the father’s parenting style. This result corroborates previous research suggesting that paternal authoritarian parenting is significantly correlated to procrastination in children (Pychyl, Coplan, and Reid, 2002).

Participants with permissive parenting—from both the mother and father—tended to be more active when procrastinating, compared to authoritarian and authoritative parents. This finding is different from our initial hypothesis, which suggested that authoritarian parenting had negative correlation with active procrastination while authoritative parenting had a positive correlation with active procrastination. A possible explanation behind this unusual finding could be that both authoritarian and authoritative parents are more controlling than permissive

parents. Both parenting styles are demanding and create an environment with high expectations (Neumeister, 2004). This parenting may cause kids to grow to avoid tasks rather than face the risk of failure (Rothblum, Solomon, and Murakami, 1986). Comparatively, permissive parenting is far less restrictive, and allows the child to regulate their own activities most of the time. These fewer restrictions possibly let children figure out on their own what work schedule best worked for themselves.

When only looking at the active and passive scores of participants who were deemed procrastinators based on the given scale, both the mother and father's parenting resulted in no significant difference. The decrease in mean of active procrastinators when all non-procrastinators are taken out imply that non-procrastinators and active procrastinators may be more similar to each other than to passive procrastinators. However, this lack of an effect may be due to a low volume of procrastinators in our sample. More research is likely needed on this topic.

The main limitation on this study that should be addressed in later research is the small sample size. Furthermore, there were only 93 participants classified as procrastinators. We used a sample of adult participants from Amazon's mechanical Turk. Had we used a college student population like other studies on procrastination (Choi and Moran, 2009) we may have found greater procrastination tendencies. Further our study is based upon self-reported measures of procrastination. It would be interesting to investigate whether the results would be found in a study that observed real-world behavior.

Information in this study presents preliminary research into the specifics between parenting and active procrastination. Further research could explore parenting and active procrastination in regards to the five big personality traits. Other studies could focus on teachers rather than parents or even other significant figures in participants' life.

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