University of Hormozgan

Iranian Journal of Educational Research

Print ISSN: 1735 - 563X Online ISSN: 2980 - 874X

Homepage: http://ijer.hormozgan.ac.ir

Educational and Behavioral Research Center

Investigating the Role of Feelings of Failure in Predicting Academic Procrastination among High School Students

Masumeh Ghanbaridochahi[1], Gholamreza Azizi[2]✉

1. M.A. in Educational Psychology, Islamic Azad University, Science and Research Branch, Tehran, Iran

2. Department of Educational Management, Faculty of Humanities, Islamic Azad University, Saveh, Iran, azizigh@iau.ac.ir

Article Info

Article type:

Research Article

Article history:

Received 14 Jul. 2025

Received in revised form 11 Aug. 2025

Accepted 10 Sep. 2025

Published online 01 Dec. 2025

Keywords:

Academic procrastination,

Feelings of failure

Female students,

High school

ABSTRACT

Objective: This study aimed to examine the role of feelings of failure in predicting academic procrastination among first-year high school students (lower secondary level).

Methods: The present research is descriptive-correlational. The statistical population consisted of all female students in the first year of high school during the academic year 1405–1404. From this population, a sample of 380 students was selected using multistage cluster sampling. To collect data, the Academic Procrastination Questionnaire (Solomon & Rothblum, 1984) and the Feelings of Failure Scale (Gilbert & Allan, 1998) were used. Data were analyzed using multiple Pearson correlation coefficients.

Results: The regression analysis revealed that the variable of feelings of failure can significantly predict a portion of the variance in academic procrastination.

Conclusions: Based on the findings, it can be concluded that reducing negative environmental experiences that lead to feelings of failure plays a key role in reducing students' academic procrastination. It is suggested that school counselors develop educational packages based on enhancing resilience and managing unsuccessful (frustrating) emotions to help students improve their academic performance.

Cite this article: Ghanbaridochahi, M. & Azizi, Gh. (2025). Investigating the role of feelings of failure in predicting academic procrastination among high school students. *Iranian Journal of Educational Research*, 4 (4), 1-11.

. DOI: https://doi.org/10.22034/4.4.1

© The Author(s).

Publisher: University of Hormozgan.

DOI: https://doi.org/10.22034/4.4.1

[Downloaded from ijer.hormozgan.ac.ir on 2026-11-20]

[DOI: 10.22034/ijer.4.4.17]

Introduction

The educational system, as the most vital institution in shaping personality and guiding the talents of the younger generation, has always faced challenges that affect students' performance and mental health (Narimani et al., 2022). Among different educational stages, the lower secondary level is of particular importance because it coincides with the sensitive period of puberty and the transition from childhood to adolescence. During this stage, students not only experience fundamental physiological and emotional changes but also encounter more complex academic expectations and more intense competition (Soleimannejad, 2019). One of the most common behavioral problems that emerges during this period and may divert adolescents' future academic and professional development is academic procrastination (Solomon & Rothblum, 1984; Steel, 2007).

Academic procrastination is more than simple negligence in completing assignments; it is widely considered a failure in self-regulation and emotional management (Senécal et al., 1995). This behavior, defined as the intentional delay of academic tasks despite awareness of their negative consequences, often functions as an ineffective coping mechanism for dealing with evaluation-related anxiety (Schouwenburg, 2004). Students who procrastinate tend to become trapped in a cycle of stress, guilt, and anxiety that not only reduces their academic performance but also contributes to psychological exhaustion and decreased self-esteem (Jokar & Delavarpour, 2007). Therefore, identifying psychological predictors that contribute to the emergence or modification of such behaviors is an essential necessity for modern educational systems (Ricks & Dunn, 2010). Among the psychological variables associated with maladaptive academic behaviors, feelings of failure have attracted increasing attention. Feelings of failure represent a destructive and psychologically exhausting state that may predispose individuals to passive and avoidant behaviors such as procrastination (Gilbert, 2000). This construct does not merely refer to failing to achieve a desired grade; rather, it reflects a deeper perception of defeat, stagnation, and entrapment in the face of environmental expectations (Taylor et al., 2009). When students perceive themselves as unsuccessful in comparison with their peers and believe they have little opportunity to compensate for their shortcomings, a sense of learned helplessness may develop (Seligman, 1972). Under such conditions, procrastination can function as a self-handicapping strategy, allowing individuals to

[Downloaded from ijer.hormozgan.ac.ir on 2026-11-20]

[DOI: 10.22034/ijer.4.4.17]

attribute potential failures to a lack of effort rather than a lack of ability (Covington, 1992; Akbari et al., 2023).

Understanding the relationship between these variables can help counselors and educators explain why some students demonstrate resilience in the face of academic difficulties, while others fall into patterns of avoidance and delay (Chu & Choi, 2005; Pychyl & Flett, 2012). Accordingly, examining the predictive role of feelings of failure in academic procrastination may provide valuable insights into the psychological processes underlying students' academic behaviors.

Despite increasing research on academic procrastination, relatively little attention has been paid to the emotional experiences that may trigger or maintain such behaviors among adolescents, particularly during the early years of secondary education. The transitional nature of this developmental stage exposes students to academic pressures, social comparison, and heightened sensitivity to failure. These experiences may intensify feelings of inadequacy and defeat, which in turn can lead to avoidance behaviors such as procrastination.

In educational contexts where academic achievement is highly emphasized, students who repeatedly perceive themselves as unsuccessful may internalize feelings of failure and gradually disengage from academic tasks. Such disengagement may manifest in the form of procrastination, reduced motivation, and diminished academic self-efficacy. Consequently, examining the role of feelings of failure in predicting academic procrastination among lower secondary school students is of particular importance.

Therefore, the present study seeks to investigate whether feelings of failure can significantly predict academic procrastination among female students in the first stage of secondary education. By clarifying this relationship, the findings may contribute to the development of preventive and intervention programs aimed at strengthening students' emotional resilience, improving their coping strategies, and ultimately reducing maladaptive academic behaviors.

Material and Methods

This study employed a descriptive–correlational design to examine the predictive role of feelings of failure in students' academic procrastination. The target population comprised all female students in the first stage of secondary education (lower secondary) in the academic year 2025. Using multistage cluster sampling, a total of 380 students were selected. Inclusion criteria were

[Downloaded from ijer.hormozgan.ac.ir on 2026-11-20]

[DOI: 10.22034/ijer.4.4.17]

active enrollment in the target grade level and informed consent from students and their guardians. Cases with incomplete questionnaires were excluded from analysis.

Measures

Academic Procrastination Questionnaire (Solomon & Rothblum, 1984): This instrument assesses the tendency to intentionally delay academic tasks despite awareness of potential negative consequences. Prior studies have reported acceptable psychometric properties for the Persian version. Specifically, the internal consistency has been reported with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.79, and criterion validity has been supported via a negative correlation with academic achievement.

Feelings of Failure Scale (FS; Gilbert & Allan, 1998): Developed to assess individuals' perceptions of failure in goal attainment and social comparison. The scale consists of 20 items measuring experiences of failure across different life domains. Items are rated on a five-point Likert scale from 0 (not at all like me) to 4 (very much like me). Total scores range from 0 to 80, with higher scores indicating deeper feelings of failure. In Iran, Niknam et al. (2015) reported excellent internal consistency for the Persian version (Cronbach's alpha = 0.91). Construct validity has been supported through correlations with measures of depression and learned helplessness.

Procedure

After obtaining the necessary permissions from the relevant educational authorities and school administrations, researchers coordinated with school counselors to schedule data collection sessions. The instruments were administered in classroom settings during school hours by trained research assistants. Students received standardized instructions, and completion time was approximately 15–20 minutes. To minimize common method bias, item order followed the original validated formats, and students were assured of confidentiality and that there were no right or wrong answers. Data screening involved checking for missing values, outliers, and normality assumptions. Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations) were calculated for all variables. Pearson correlation coefficients were used to examine bivariate associations. To test the predictive role of feelings of failure in academic procrastination, regression analysis was conducted. Statistical significance was set at $p < .05$.

Ethical Considerations

Approval: The study protocol was reviewed and approved by the institutional ethics committee of Islamic Azad University.

[Downloaded from ijer.hormozgan.ac.ir on 2026-11-20]

[DOI: 10.22034/ijer.4.4.17]

Informed consent: Written informed consent was obtained from students' legal guardians, and assent was obtained from the students themselves. Participation was voluntary, with the right to withdraw at any time without penalty.

Confidentiality and anonymity: No identifying information was collected on the questionnaires. Data were coded and stored securely, accessible only to the research team, and used solely for research purposes.

Risk and benefit: The study involved minimal risk. Participants were provided with information about school counseling services. Feedback on general findings (non-identifiable) was shared with schools to inform support programs.

Compliance: The study adhered to the ethical principles of the Declaration of Helsinki and relevant national guidelines for research with minors.

Results

To examine the role of feelings of failure in predicting academic procrastination among lower secondary school students, multiple regression analysis was conducted following verification of standard assumptions (normality, linearity, independence of residuals, and multicollinearity). The results of correlation analysis, assumption checks, and the regression model are presented below.

Table 1. Correlation Matrix between Components of Feelings of Failure and Academic Procrastination

Variables	1	2	3	4
1. Sense of stagnation	1			
2. Sense of defeat	.498**	1		
3. Sense of dissatisfaction	.570**	.516**	1	
4. Academic procrastination	.442**	.456**	.476**	1

*Significant at 0.05 level; **Significant at 0.01 level*

As shown in Table 1, all Pearson correlation coefficients between the components of feelings of failure and academic procrastination were positive and significant at the 0.01 level ($p < .01$). This indicates a direct relationship between students' feelings of failure and their level of academic procrastination: the greater the perceived stagnation, defeat, and dissatisfaction, the higher the tendency to procrastinate.

[Downloaded from ijer.hormozgan.ac.ir on 2026-11-20]

[DOI: 10.22034/ijer.4.4.17]

Testing Regression Assumptions

1. Homoscedasticity of Residuals

Figure 1 displays the scatterplot of standardized predicted values and residuals. The remainder distribution formed an approximately rectangular shape, with most scores clustered around the zero axis, suggesting that the assumption of normal distribution of residuals was met.

2. Linearity Between Variables

Figure 2 (Normal Probability Plot) shows that the observed cumulative probabilities align closely with the expected diagonal line. The absence of visible skewness or kurtosis confirms that the relationship between predictors and the dependent variable is linear.

3. Normality of Error Terms

Figure 3 illustrates the histogram of residuals. The distribution appears approximately normal, with a mean near zero and a standard deviation close to one, therefore satisfying the assumption of normally distributed errors.

Table 2. Model Summary Statistics

Model	R	R^2	Standard Error of Estimate	Durbin–Watson
1	.554	.307	7.873	1.995

As shown in Table 2, the multiple correlation coefficient between the independent and dependent variables was R = .554, and the coefficient of determination (R^2) was .307, indicating that approximately 30.7% of the variance in students' academic procrastination is explained by feelings of failure. The Durbin–Watson statistic (1.995) lies within the acceptable range of 1.5–2.5, confirming the independence of residuals.

Table 3. ANOVA Summary for Regression Model

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	10,444.049	3	3,481.350	56.164	.001
Residual	23,554.576	380	61.986		
Total	33,998.625	383			

The ANOVA results (Table 3) indicate that the calculated F value (56.164) is significant at $p < .01$, confirming that the regression model is statistically valid and that feelings of failure significantly contribute to explaining variations in academic procrastination among students.

[Downloaded from ijer.hormozgan.ac.ir on 2026-11-20]

[DOI: 10.22034/ijer.4.4.17]

Table 4. Multiple Regression Results for Predicting Academic Procrastination

Predictor	B	Std. Error	Beta	T value	P	Tolerance	VIF
Constant	42.128	2.586		16.288	.001		
Sense of stagnation	0.529	0.159	0.181	3.333	.001	0.619	1.616
Sense of defeat	0.715	0.158	0.236	4.535	.001	0.672	1.487
Sense of dissatisfaction	10.071	0.234	0.251	4.572	.001	0.604	1.656

The results of the multiple regression analysis (Table 4) demonstrate that all subcomponents of feelings of failure significantly predict academic procrastination ($p < .01$). The tolerance values (> .10) and variance inflation factors (VIF < 10) indicate that there is no multicollinearity among predictors. Standardized regression coefficients (Beta) show that: Sense of stagnation ($\beta = .181$), Sense of defeat ($\beta = .236$) and Sense of dissatisfaction ($\beta = .251$). Each contribute positively and significantly to predicting students' academic procrastination. Thus, the findings confirm that feelings of failure are a significant and positive predictor of academic procrastination—as students experience greater frustration, defeat, and dissatisfaction, they are more likely to delay academic tasks.

Discussion

The analysis of the research hypothesis demonstrated that feelings of failure are one of the strongest predictors of academic procrastination among students, with a positive and significant beta coefficient ($\beta = .365$). This finding indicates that the more students perceive experiences of failure, stagnation, and defeat in their school and family environments, the more likely they are to delay or avoid completing their academic tasks. From a theoretical perspective, this phenomenon can be explained through Paul Gilbert's Social Rank Theory. According to this framework, when adolescents perceive themselves as having lost status in comparison with their peers or feel marginalized within the educational system, they may develop a psychological state of defeat or submission. This state reduces motivation and psychological energy. Within this context, procrastination should not be interpreted merely as laziness; rather, it functions as an avoidant defensive mechanism aimed at protecting the student's remaining self-esteem. A student who perceives themselves as a "loser" may postpone studying as a psychological escape strategy. In doing so, potential academic failure can be attributed to lack of time or insufficient effort rather than to perceived intellectual inadequacy.

[Downloaded from ijer.hormozgan.ac.ir on 2026-11-20]

[DOI: 10.22034/ijer.4.4.17]

A closer examination of the components of feelings of failure revealed that sense of dissatisfaction (β = .251) and sense of stagnation (β = .181) play important roles in intensifying academic procrastination. The sense of stagnation reflects a situation in which students, despite their efforts, perceive little or no progress in their academic performance and consequently feel trapped in an educational deadlock. This cognitive state resembles the phenomenon known in psychology as learned helplessness, in which individuals conclude that their actions have little effect on outcomes; consequently, procrastination emerges as a seemingly rational response to a discouraging situation. Furthermore, a sense of defeat may place students in a cycle of shame and anxiety. Such feelings of shame often discourage them from confronting academic tasks, because each encounter with schoolwork can remind them of previous failures and negative judgments from teachers or parents.

These findings are consistent with previous research. Studies by Akbari et al. (2023) and Shakeri (2020) also reported a direct relationship between failure schemas and procrastination behaviors. Similarly, international research by Pychyl (2021) and Choi (2020) suggests that perceived social defeat is among the strongest predictors of withdrawal and avoidance behaviors in educational contexts. However, some studies have reported somewhat different results. For example, Naderi (2017) suggested that in certain highly motivated students, early perceptions of failure may act as a motivational shock, prompting increased effort rather than avoidance. This discrepancy may be explained by differences in attribution styles. Students in the present study likely attributed failure to stable and internal factors (such as lack of ability), which tends to promote procrastination, whereas in other samples failure may have been attributed to temporary or external factors, which can motivate corrective effort. Overall, persistent feelings of failure during early adolescence—a developmental stage characterized by heightened emotional sensitivity—may gradually transform procrastination into a stable behavioral pattern, highlighting the need for targeted psychological and counseling interventions within schools.

One limitation of the present study is that the data were collected using self-report questionnaires, which may be influenced by response biases such as social desirability or inaccurate self-perception. In addition, the research sample consisted only of female students in the first stage of secondary education, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to male students or other

[Downloaded from ijer.hormozgan.ac.ir on 2026-11-20]

[DOI: 10.22034/ijer.4.4.17]

educational levels. The cross-sectional and correlational design of the study also prevents causal conclusions regarding the relationship between feelings of failure and academic procrastination. Future research is therefore encouraged to employ longitudinal or experimental designs to better examine causal pathways between these variables. Including diverse student populations, such as male students and different age groups, would also improve the generalizability of the findings. From a practical perspective, the results suggest the importance of implementing school-based counseling programs aimed at reducing feelings of failure among students. Interventions focusing on enhancing resilience, adaptive attribution styles, emotional regulation skills, and self-efficacy may help decrease academic procrastination and improve students' overall academic functioning.

[Downloaded from ijer.hormozgan.ac.ir on 2026-11-20]

[DOI: 10.22034/ijer.4.4.17]

Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

Ethics statement

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by the ethics committee of Farhangian University. The patients/participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

Author contributions

All authors contributed to the study conception and design, material preparation, data collection, and analysis. All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

Funding

The authors did (not) receive support from any organization for the submitted work.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

References

Akbari, M., Sayyadi, A., & Khormaee, F. (2023). Examining the relationship between self-handicapping and academic procrastination in adolescents: The mediating role of fear of failure. *School and Educational Psychology Quarterly, 12*(3).

Chua, C., & Choi, N. (2005). Self-efficacy and academic procrastination: A structural equation model. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 97*(2), 245–256.

Covington, M. V. (1992). *Making the grade: A self-worth perspective on motivation and school reform*. Cambridge University Press.

Dweck, C. S. (2006). *Mindset: The new psychology of success*. Random House.

Gilbert, P. (2000). The relationship of shame, social anxiety, and depression: The role of the evaluation of self-identity. *Clinical Psychology & Psychotherapy, 7*(3), 174–189.

Jokar, B., & Delavarpour, M. A. (2007). The relationship between academic procrastination and achievement goals. *Journal of Social and Human Sciences, Shiraz University, 24*(4), 81–94.

Mansourabadi, A. (2022). The role of psychological hardiness and self-efficacy in predicting passive behaviors and academic achievement among students. *Journal of Psychological Studies, 18*(2).

[Downloaded from ijer.hormozgan.ac.ir on 2026-11-20]

[DOI: 10.22034/ijer.4.4.17]

Narimani, M., Porzour, P., & Atadokht, A. (2022). *Mental health challenges and academic performance in the modern educational system*. Ardabil: University of Mohaghegh Ardabili Press.

Pychyl, T. A., & Flett, G. L. (2012). Procrastination and self-regulatory failure: An introduction to the special issue. *Journal of Rational-Emotive & Cognitive-Behavior Therapy*, *30*(4), 203–212.

Rakes, G. C., & Dunn, K. E. (2010). The impact of online graduate students' motivation and self-regulation on academic procrastination. *Journal of Interactive Online Learning, 9*(1), 78–93.

Schouwenburg, H. C. (2004). Procrastination in academic settings: General introduction. In H. C. Schouwenburg, C. H. Lay, T. A. Pychyl, & J. R. Ferrari (Eds.), *Counseling the procrastinator in academic settings* (pp. 3–17). American Psychological Association.

Seligman, M. E. P. (1972). Learned helplessness. *Annual Review of Medicine, 23*(1), 407–412.

Senécal, C., Koestner, R., & Vallerand, R. J. (1995). Self-regulation and academic procrastination. *The Journal of Social Psychology, 135*(5), 607–619.

Soleimannejad, A. (2019). *Developmental psychology: Examining psychological characteristics and needs of adolescents in the first stage of secondary school*. Tehran: Roshd Publications.

Solomon, L. J., & Rothblum, E. D. (1984). Academic procrastination: Frequency and cognitive-behavioral correlates. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 31*(4), 503–509.

Steel, P. (2007). The nature of procrastination: A meta-analytic and theoretical review of quintessential self-regulatory failure. *Psychological Bulletin, 133*(1), 65–94.

Taylor, P. J., Gooding, P., Wood, A. M., & Tarrier, N. (2009). The role of defeat and entrapment in depression, anxiety, and suicide. *Psychological Bulletin, 135*(4), 563–594.

[Downloaded from ijer.hormozgan.ac.ir on 2026-11-20]

[DOI: 10.22034/ijer.4.4.17]