

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

The Relation Between Academic Procrastination Behavior and Career Decision Regret with Subjective Well-Being: A Study on Young Adults

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Ethical Statement

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ABSTRACT

Academic procrastination and the regret that may follow career decisions are salient challenges during young adulthood and can be reflected in how individuals evaluate and experience their lives. This study examined the relationships between academic procrastination, career decision regret, and subjective well-being among young adults, and additionally tested whether academic procrastination and subjective well-being differed by gender. Using a correlational design, data were collected from 731 individuals aged 18–30 living in various provinces of Türkiye through convenience sampling (552 female, 179 male). Participants completed a demographic form, an academic procrastination measure, a career decision regret measure, and a subjective well-being measure assessing positive affect, negative affect, and life satisfaction. Pearson correlation coefficients were used to examine associations among the variables. The results indicated a consistent pattern: higher academic procrastination was associated with lower positive affect and life satisfaction, and with higher negative affect. Career decision regret was also linked to poorer subjective well-being, showing positive associations with negative affect and negative associations with positive affect and life satisfaction. In addition, academic procrastination was positively related to career decision regret, suggesting that difficulties in academic self-regulation may co-occur with dissatisfaction in career decision-making. Overall, the findings point to a close connection between academic and career-related difficulties and young adults' subjective well-being.

Keywords: Academic Procrastination, Career Decision Regret, Subjective Well-Being, Young Adult

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INTRODUCTION

Young adulthood is a critical developmental period during which individuals assume significant responsibilities related to their academic, vocational, and personal lives, and during which evaluations regarding identity, career, and life satisfaction become increasingly salient. In this period, individuals are expected not only to continue fulfilling their academic responsibilities but also to make career decisions that will shape their future trajectories. Following the decision-making process, individuals may evaluate the outcomes of their decisions and experience satisfaction, or they may develop feelings of regret regarding those decisions (Erdurcan & Kırdök, 2017). These life experiences can play a determining role in individuals' emotional functioning and levels of subjective well-being.

Subjective well-being is conceptualized as a multidimensional construct encompassing individuals' cognitive and affective evaluations of their lives. Diener (1984) defined subjective well-being through the components of life satisfaction, positive affect, and negative affect. Life satisfaction refers to a cognitive judgment based on an individual's overall evaluation of their life, whereas positive and negative affect reflect the emotional experiences individuals encounter in their daily lives. When considered together, these components provide a comprehensive assessment of the extent to which individuals are satisfied with their lives and emotionally balanced (Diener et al., 1985; Diener et al., 2009).

One of the important variables affecting subjective well-being during young adulthood is academic procrastination behavior. Academic procrastination is defined as an irrational tendency whereby individuals deliberately delay academic tasks or fail to initiate them altogether (Senécal et al., 2003). This behavior has been reported to be prevalent among university students and young adults and to have detrimental effects on academic performance, stress levels, and psychological well-being (Steel, 2007; Özer, Demir, & Ferrari, 2009). Academic procrastination is often associated with postponing tasks to achieve short-term relief; however, in the long term, it may lead to increased feelings of guilt, anxiety, and negative affect (Sirois & Pychyl, 2013).

Another important variable related to subjective well-being is career decision regret. Career decision regret is defined as the experience of disappointment resulting from a career decision that fails to meet an individual's expectations (Brehaut et al., 2003). Career decisions made during young adulthood play a crucial role in shaping individuals' life satisfaction, emotional balance, and future expectations. Therefore, regret regarding career decisions is considered a significant risk factor that may undermine individuals' job satisfaction and overall life satisfaction (Erdurcan & Kırdök, 2017; Doğanülkü & Korkmaz, 2024).

Academic procrastination behavior and career decision regret are closely related to individuals' self-regulation and decision-making processes and often co-occur. It has been suggested that individuals who experience dissatisfaction with their career decisions may show decreased academic motivation, which in turn may increase tendencies toward academic procrastination (Doğanülkü & Şeker, 2023). Similarly, academic failures and procrastination behaviors may trigger negative evaluations of the career decision-making process. This reciprocal interaction affects young adults' subjective well-being in a multidimensional manner.

Although previous studies have examined the pairwise relationships among academic procrastination, career decision regret, and subjective well-being, research addressing these three variables simultaneously remains limited. Particularly during young adulthood, there is a need for studies that adopt a holistic perspective to examine the

relationship between academic and career-related processes and subjective well-being. In this context, the aim of the present study is to examine the relationships between academic procrastination behavior, career decision regret, and subjective well-being among young adults, thereby contributing to the existing literature.

METHOD

In this section, the research design, sample, data collection instruments, and data collection procedures are described.

Research Design

This study is quantitative research conducted using a correlational research design to examine the relationships among academic procrastination tendencies, career decision regret, and subjective well-being levels of young adults. The correlational research design aims to identify the degree and direction of co-variation between two or more variables without making causal inferences (Karasar, 2023).

Participants

The study sample consisted of a total of 731 young adults living in various provinces of Türkiye, who were selected using a convenience sampling method. Of the participants, 552 were female (75.5%) and 179 were male (24.5%), with ages ranging from 18 to 30 years. Participation in the study was voluntary. During the data collection process, responses were reviewed, and incomplete or inconsistently completed forms were excluded from the analysis. All statistical analyses were conducted using the valid dataset.

Data Collection Instruments

Data were collected using a Personal Information Form, the Aitken Procrastination Inventory, the Subjective Well-Being Scale: Positive and Negative Experiences, and the Career Decision Regret Scale.

Personal Information Form

The Personal Information Form was developed by the researcher to obtain demographic and background information from participants, including gender, age, income level, parental education levels, cumulative grade point average, and future expectations.

Subjective Well-Being Measures

Subjective well-being was assessed based on Diener's (1984) theoretical model, which conceptualizes subjective well-being as comprising both affective and cognitive components. In this study, the Scale of Positive and Negative Experience (SPANE) and the Flourishing Scale, both developed by Diener et al. (2009), were used. The Turkish adaptation, validity, and reliability studies of these scales were conducted by Türkmen on university students (2013).

The SPANE consists of 12 items assessing positive and negative emotions experienced by individuals during the past month. Items are rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (very rarely or never) to 5 (very often or

always). The Flourishing Scale consists of 8 items assessing individuals' evaluations of their life satisfaction and psychological functioning and is rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The Turkish versions of both scales have been reported to demonstrate satisfactory validity and reliability (Türkmen, 2013).

Career Decision Regret Scale

Career decision regret was measured using the Career Decision Regret Scale, which is based on the Decision Regret Scale developed by Brehaut et al. (2003). The Turkish adaptation, validity, and reliability studies of the scale were conducted by Erdurcan and Kirdök (2017).

The scale is unidimensional and consists of five items rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Items 1, 3, and 5 are reverse-coded. Higher total scores indicate higher levels of regret regarding career decisions. The scale has been reported to be a valid and reliable instrument for use with university students (Erdurcan & Kirdök, 2017).

Aitken Procrastination Inventory

Academic procrastination tendencies were assessed using the Aitken Procrastination Inventory, originally developed by Aitken (1982). The Turkish adaptation of the scale was conducted by Balkis (2006). The scale has a unidimensional structure and consists of 16 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (completely false) to 5 (completely true). Higher scores indicate higher levels of academic procrastination. The scale has been reported to demonstrate adequate validity and reliability in measuring academic procrastination behavior (Balkis, 2006).

Data Collection Procedure

The instruments included in the study were administered to young adults who voluntarily agreed to participate, either through face-to-face administration or via online platforms after ethical committee permission. Participants were informed in detail about the purpose and procedures of the study prior to data collection. After the data collection process was completed, raw data were reviewed, and only responses that met the research criteria were included in the analyses. Necessary permissions for the use of all measurement instruments were obtained from the original developers and/or the researchers who conducted the Turkish adaptation studies.

Data Analysis

The data obtained in this study were analyzed using SPSS 21 Statistical Software. A significance level of $p < .05$ was adopted for all analyses. Initially, the total scores obtained from the Aitken Procrastination Inventory, the subscales of the Subjective Well-Being Scale (positive affect, negative affect, and life satisfaction), and the Career Decision Regret Scale were examined to determine whether they met the assumptions required for parametric statistical analyses.

Table 1 Skewness and Kurtosis Values

Variables	n	r	m	Skewness	Kurtosis
Academic Procrastination	731	9.60	39.22	.309	-.131
Positive Affect	731	4.46	20.10	-.128	.086
Negative Affect	731	4.56	17.14	.243	.055
Life Satisfaction	731	11.96	38.37	-.556	-.539
Career Decision Regret	731	24.91	35.23	.510	-.317

To assess the normality of the data, skewness and kurtosis values, histogram plots, and Normal Q–Q and P–P plots were examined. The findings indicated that the skewness and kurtosis coefficients for all variables were within the range of ± 1.96 , suggesting that the distributions met the assumption of normality (Can, 2014). In addition, the histogram curves exhibited patterns similar to the normal distribution curve, and the data points observed in the Q–Q and P–P plots were clustered around the diagonal line (Büyüköztürk et al., 2021).

The Kolmogorov–Smirnov test was also conducted to evaluate normality. Although the test results were statistically significant, considering the views in the literature indicating that this test alone is not sufficient for assessing normality in large samples (Can, 2014), the data were deemed appropriate for parametric analyses when evaluated together with other indicators of normality. Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationships among young adults’ academic procrastination tendencies, career decision regret, and subjective well-being levels.

FINDINGS

Pearson Correlation Analysis Results Showing the Relationships Among Academic Procrastination, Positive Affect, Negative Affect, Life Satisfaction, and Career Decision Regret

The relationships among academic procrastination, positive affect, negative affect, life satisfaction, and career decision regret were examined using Pearson correlation analysis. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 Pearson Correlation Matrix

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
1. Academic Procrastination	1	-.296**	.296**	-.259**	.263**
2. Positive Affect		1	-.585**	.153**	-.261**
3. Negative Affect			1	-.225**	.272**
4. Life Satisfaction				1	-.160**
5. Career Decision Regret					1

**p<0.01

Note, Pearson correlation coefficients (r) are reported. p < .01

According to the results of the analyses:

- There was a negative and weak significant relationship between academic procrastination and positive affect ($r = -.296, p < .01$).
- A positive and weak significant relationship was found between academic procrastination and negative affect ($r = .296, p < .01$).
- In addition, a negative and weak significant relationship was observed between academic procrastination and life satisfaction ($r = -.259, p < .01$).
- A Finally, academic procrastination was found to have a positive and weak significant relationship with career decision regret ($r = .263, p < .01$).

When the relationships among the subdimensions of subjective well-being were examined:

- A negative and strong significant relationship was found between positive affect and negative affect ($r = -.585, p < .01$).
- Life satisfaction showed a positive and weak significant relationship with positive affect ($r = .153, p < .01$) and a negative and weak significant relationship with negative affect ($r = -.225, p < .01$).

With respect to career decision regret:

- A positive and weak significant relationship was observed with negative affect ($r = .272, p < .01$).
- A negative and weak significant relationship was found with positive affect ($r = -.261, p < .01$).
- A negative and weak significant relationship was also identified with life satisfaction ($r = -.160, p < .01$).

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

In this section, the results obtained from the data analyses are discussed, and the findings are presented in an integrated manner. In line with the purpose of the study, several implications are offered to support young adults in terms of subjective well-being, academic procrastination, and career decision regret, as well as to provide guidance for future academic research.

This study examined the relationships between young adults' academic procrastination tendencies, career decision regret, and subjective well-being. The findings indicate that academic and career-related decision-making processes during young adulthood play a significant role in individuals' emotional experiences and life satisfaction.

The results revealed that academic procrastination was significantly associated with the core components of subjective well-being. As academic procrastination increased, levels of positive affect and life satisfaction decreased, whereas negative affect increased. These findings suggest that procrastination behavior is not limited to academic performance alone but also adversely affects individuals' overall psychological functioning and emotional experiences.

Consistent with previous research indicating that academic procrastination is associated with higher stress, anxiety, and lower subjective well-being (Steel, 2007; Sirois & Pychyl, 2013), the findings of the present study align with the existing literature.

Regarding career decision regret, the findings demonstrated that as regret levels increased, individuals' life satisfaction and positive affect decreased, while negative affect increased. This result underscores the influential role of career decisions made during young adulthood on individuals' psychological well-being. Regret related to career decisions may negatively affect individuals' self-evaluations and future perceptions, thereby weakening subjective well-being. Previous studies have similarly reported negative associations between career decision regret, psychological well-being, and life satisfaction (Köse, 2019; Doğanülkü & Korkmaz, 2024).

In addition, a significant positive relationship was found between academic procrastination and career decision regret. This finding suggests that individuals who tend to postpone academic responsibilities may also experience greater uncertainty and dissatisfaction in their career decision-making processes. Procrastination behaviors in academic life may weaken individuals' perceptions of self-efficacy, which may subsequently be reflected in their career-related decisions.

The results related to future expectations indicated notable differences across subjective well-being, academic procrastination, and career decision regret. Participants with positive future expectations reported higher levels of positive affect and life satisfaction, as well as lower levels of academic procrastination and career decision regret. Conversely, individuals with negative future expectations demonstrated the opposite pattern.

Examining the relationships among variables further revealed that academic procrastination was negatively associated with positive affect and life satisfaction, and positively associated with negative affect. Similarly, career decision regret was significantly related to all dimensions of subjective well-being: as regret increased, life satisfaction and positive affect decreased, while negative affect increased. A positive relationship was also found between academic procrastination and career decision regret. These findings suggest that difficulties experienced in academic and career-related processes may adversely affect young adults' subjective well-being.

Implications and Recommendations

Based on the findings, it is recommended that psychological counseling and guidance services for university students incorporate intervention programs specifically targeting academic procrastination and career decision-making processes. The finding that higher academic achievement is associated with lower career decision regret highlights the importance of strengthening academic support mechanisms within universities. In this context, expanding individual counseling services, peer support programs, and learning-skills-based interventions aimed at enhancing students' academic competencies is recommended.

The prominent role of future expectations in subjective well-being emphasizes the need for psychological support programs that foster hope, career planning, and future orientation among young adults. University counseling centers should be strengthened not only in terms of accessibility but also in their capacity to deliver structured psychoeducational programs.

The decrease in life satisfaction and increase in negative affect among individuals aged 27-30 indicate a heightened need for psychological support during transitional phases of young adulthood. Preventive interventions focusing on stress management, enhancement of life satisfaction, and coping with career uncertainty may be particularly beneficial for this age group.

Limitations and Future Research

This study was conducted using a cross-sectional design and was limited to young adults aged 18-30. Future longitudinal studies may provide a more comprehensive understanding of changes in academic procrastination, career decision regret, and subjective well-being over time.

The exclusive use of quantitative methods limits the depth of interpretation of the findings. Future studies employing qualitative or mixed-methods designs may offer more comprehensive insights into individuals' subjective experiences related to academic and career processes.

Additionally, research conducted with more diverse samples across different socioeconomic and cultural contexts, including disadvantaged groups, may yield more generalizable findings regarding the effects of academic procrastination and career decision regret on subjective well-being.

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