The Relationship between Post-decision Dissonance and Procrastination

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Abstract

Procrastination is a growing problem in recent years and many researchers have attempted to examine procrastination in order to find efficient treatments. The current study attempted to examine if another psychological factor, post-decision dissonance, is associated with increased procrastination. Previous studies have found that procrastination has positive correlations with anxiety (Chabaud, Ferrand, & Maury, 2010) and impulsiveness (Dewittel & Schouwenburg, 2002). Post-purchase dissonance is positively correlated with anxiety (Menasco & Hawkins, 1978) and post-decision dissonance is one product of impulsive buying (Rook & Fisher, 2014). Therefore, this study hypothesized that there would be a positive correlation between procrastination and post-decision dissonance. 87 students (18 males, 69 females, M_{age} = 19.8, SD = 1.35) enrolled at Austin College participated by completing four self-report questionnaires about procrastination, post-decision dissonance, anxiety, and impulsiveness. Bivariate correlation tests and linear regression were computed to analyze data. The results showed that post-decision dissonance is positively associated with procrastination. Further, it is a stronger predictor of procrastination than impulsiveness and anxiety.

Introduction

Procrastination is defined as an intentional and irrational delay of the beginning of the completion of a course of action with the acknowledgement that the delay has the possibility to cause negative consequences (Steel, 2007). Procrastination is a severe and prevalent problem which negatively influences many individuals. Approximately 80-95% of college students demonstrate procrastination problems (Ellis & Knaus, 1977).

Plentiful studies have investigated the correlational and causational relationships between many psychological factors and procrastination.

For instance, procrastination has positive correlations with anxiety (Chabaud, Ferrand, & Maury, 2010) and impulsiveness (Dewittel & Schouwenburg, 2002). Also, Steel (2007) found that procrastinators usually act against their original intentions. This finding leads to the possibility of another psychological variable, post-decision dissonance, which might have possible correlations with procrastination.

Post-decision dissonance is one type of cognitive dissonance (Menasco & Hawkins, 1978). After making a choice, some individuals start to prefer the alternative choice and regret their already decided choice (Menasco & Hawkins, 1978). Menasco and Hawkins (1978) found that post-purchase dissonance, the regret and preference of alternative choices generated after the purchase, is positively associated with state anxiety. Additionally, Xiao and Nicholson (2012) performed a meta-analysis of impulsive buying over the past 60 years and revealed that post-decision dissonance is one consequence of impulsive buying.

Since impulsiveness and state anxiety both have positive associations with procrastination and post-decision dissonance, the present study attempted to associate post-dissonance and procrastinationIn summary, we hypothesized that post-decision dissonance and procrastination would have positive correlation.

Method

Eighty-seven participants (18 males, 69 females, M_{age} = 19.8, SD = 1.35)，who were students currently enrolled in psychology courses at Austin College completed the study.

Participants were first asked to fill out a demographic survey including age and gender. Then participants were asked to complete four questionnaires: a created post-decision dissonance questionnaire, the Barratt Impulsiveness Scale (Patton, Stanford, & Barratt, 1995), the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory for Adults (Spielberger, 1983), and the General Procrastination Scale (Lay, 1986) on SurveyMonkey. The order of the four questionnaire was randomly presented to participants. Correlational tests and regression were used to analyze the data.

Table 1

Bivariate Correlations for Study Variables

	Procrastination	Dissonance	Anxiety	Impulsiveness
Procrastination	1.00			
Dissonance	.60**	1.00		
Anxiety	.45**	.55**	1.00	
Impulsiveness	.47**	.54**	.22*	1.00

Results

The results showed that all 4 factors were positively (and significantly) correlated with each other. Table 1 shows the bivariate correlations among the four factors. Consistent with the hypothesis, procrastination was positively correlated with dissonance, $r(85) = .60$, $p < .01$. Consistent with prior findings, dissonance was positively correlated with anxiety, $r(85) = .55$, $p < .01$, and impulsiveness, $r(85) = .54$, $p < .01$. Procrastination was positively correlated with anxiety, $r(85) = .45$, $p < .01$ and impulsiveness, $r(85) = .47$, $p < .01$. Moreover, impulsiveness was positively correlated with anxiety, $r(85) = .22$, $p = .04$.

A multiple linear regression was also performed with procrastination as the outcome variable, and dissonance, anxiety, and impulsiveness as predictor variables. The results demonstrated that the overall model was significant, $F(3, 83) = 19.97$, $p < .01$, $R^2 = .42$. Dissonance and impulsiveness were significant predictors of procrastination. Dissonance, $\beta = .38$, $t(85) = 3.20$, $p < .01$, was a stronger predictor than impulsiveness, $\beta = .22$, $t(85) = 2.23$, $p = .03$. Anxiety was a marginally significant predictor, $\beta = .20$, $t(85) = 1.95$, $p = .06$.

Conclusions

- Post-decision dissonance, procrastination, anxiety, and impulsiveness were all positively correlated.
- Post-decision dissonance predicted procrastination even when accounting for both anxiety and impulsiveness

Future Directions

Future studies could investigate if a causal relationship exists between post-decision dissonance and procrastination. Also, further studies could test the correlational and causal relationships between post-decision dissonance and other psychological factors that correlate with procrastination, such as consciousness (Beck, Koons, & Milgrim, 2000) and perfectionism (Chabaud, Ferrand, & Maury, 2010).

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