




The Impact of Childhood Traumas on Academic Procrastination with Parent-Adolescent Conflict Mediation in Female Students

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ABSTRACT

Objective: Academic procrastination is a prevalent issue among adolescents that can negatively impact their educational outcomes. This study aimed to investigate the effects of childhood traumas and parent-adolescent conflict on academic procrastination among female high school students in Karaj. It also sought to examine the potential mediating role of parent-adolescent conflict in the relationship between childhood traumas and academic procrastination.

Methods and Materials: The study utilized a cross-sectional design with a sample of 384 female high school students selected via cluster random sampling from Karaj. Data collection was conducted using validated self-report questionnaires: the Childhood Trauma Questionnaire, the Conflict Behavior Questionnaire for assessing parent-adolescent conflict, and a standard Academic Procrastination scale. Descriptive and inferential statistical analyses, including correlation and regression analyses, were performed using structural equation modeling.

Findings: The results indicated significant direct effects of childhood traumas and parent-adolescent conflict on academic procrastination. Specifically, higher levels of childhood traumas were associated with increased academic procrastination ($\beta = .201, p < .001$). Similarly, parent-adolescent conflict was positively correlated with procrastination ($r = .25, p < .01$). However, the indirect effect of childhood traumas on academic procrastination through parent-adolescent conflict was not significant ($\beta = -.006, p = .747$).

Conclusion: This study underscores the impact of childhood traumas and parent-adolescent conflicts on academic procrastination. The findings highlight the importance of addressing these factors within educational and psychological interventions to support the academic success and well-being of students. Future research should explore longitudinal relationships and consider additional mediating variables.

Keywords: Childhood Traumas, Parent-Adolescent Conflict, Academic Procrastination, Female Students, Structural Equation Modeling

1. Introduction

Academic procrastination, childhood trauma, and parent-adolescent conflict are intricate psychological phenomena that significantly impact adolescent development and academic performance. These concepts have been extensively studied across various cultural and social contexts, revealing potential relationships and underlying mechanisms that contribute to educational outcomes (Li et al., 2022; Smokowski & Bacallao, 2006; Ye et al., 2023).

Academic Procrastination is generally defined as the intentional delay in starting or completing academic tasks (Cheng et al., 2023). Procrastination is not merely a time management issue but also encompasses emotional and cognitive components, often linked to anxiety, fear of failure, and low self-efficacy (Hussin & Matore, 2023). Research by Huang et al. (2022) highlights that academic procrastination is influenced by personal and environmental factors, including perfectionism and resilience, suggesting that the coping mechanisms students develop can mitigate or exacerbate procrastinatory behaviors (Huang et al., 2022).

Childhood Trauma refers to experiences of abuse and neglect that disrupt the normal development of trust and security in childhood, which can persistently affect psychological functioning and interpersonal relationships (Barczyk et al., 2023). Li et al. (2022) further demonstrate how childhood trauma can lead to negative outcomes like maladaptive behaviors and reduced creativity, impacting academic achievement and personal growth (Li et al., 2022).

Parent-Adolescent Conflict is a critical aspect of family dynamics, reflecting underlying tensions that can influence an adolescent's emotional and psychological well-being (Burt et al., 2005). High levels of conflict can lead to significant distress and are often associated with behavioral problems and academic challenges (Qu et al., 2021).

Studies have shown that academic procrastination is significantly associated with lower academic performance and higher levels of psychological distress (Muarifah et al., 2022; Pusparini et al., 2022). Meanwhile, childhood trauma has been linked to various long-term psychological issues, including academic and social problems (Örge & Volkan, 2023). The role of parent-adolescent conflict has been scrutinized, with findings suggesting that increased conflict correlates with higher levels of psychological distress and externalizing symptoms, further influencing academic engagement (Qu et al., 2021; Smokowski & Bacallao, 2006).

Moreover, the gendered experiences of these phenomena reveal significant differences. Mao (2017) emphasizes that support systems, including parental support, manifest differently across genders, influencing academic and personal development outcomes (Mao, 2017). Additionally, the evaluation of male and female academic figures shows inherent biases, indicating underlying societal stereotypes (Basow, 1995; Basow & Silberg, 1987).

Despite extensive research, several gaps remain. First, the interplay between childhood trauma and academic procrastination, mediated by parent-adolescent conflict, has not been sufficiently explored, especially among specific demographic groups such as female adolescents in non-Western contexts. Second, while the direct impacts of trauma and conflict on procrastination are documented, the potential moderating roles of these factors are less understood. This study aims to fill these gaps by investigating how childhood traumas and parent-adolescent conflicts influence academic procrastination among female high school students in Karaj. By exploring these relationships, the study seeks to provide insights into potential targeted interventions that could mitigate the impacts of these psychological factors on academic procrastination. The ultimate goal is to enhance educational outcomes and well-being for adolescent students facing these complex challenges.

2. Methods and Materials

2.1. Study Design and Participants

This study employed a descriptive correlational multivariate design using structural equation modeling (SEM). The population of this research comprised female adolescent high school students from the city of Karaj during the academic year 2020-2021. The total number of these students was approximately 50,000. Using Cochran's formula, the sample size was determined to be 384 participants.

To ensure a representative sample, participants were selected using a random cluster sampling method from 12 different schools. These schools were chosen randomly from the four geographical directions of Karaj (north, south, east, and west), selecting three schools from each direction. From each selected school, 32 students were chosen randomly, ensuring representation from all major educational streams—Sciences, Humanities, and Mathematics-Physics. About 11 students from each stream were selected to

participate in the study, who then responded to the questionnaires.

2.2. Measures

2.2.1. Academic Procrastination

The Academic Procrastination Student Form, developed by Solomon and Rothblum in 1984, is designed to measure academic procrastination. This questionnaire consists of multiple items that assess the frequency and conditions under which students postpone academic tasks. Although the specific number of items varies, it typically includes scales measuring procrastination on studying for exams, writing term papers, and performing weekly reading assignments. Each item is scored on a Likert scale, where higher scores indicate greater levels of procrastination. The validity and reliability of this instrument have been confirmed in various studies, establishing its effectiveness in academic settings (Emamverdi & Taher, 2020; HekmatiyaniFard, 2023; Heshmati et al., 2018).

2.2.2. Childhood Trauma

The Childhood Trauma Questionnaire (CTQ), formulated by Bernstein, Stein, Newcomb, Walker, Pogge, and colleagues in 2003, quantitatively measures five types of childhood trauma: emotional abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional neglect, and physical neglect. The questionnaire includes 28 items, with responses scored on a 5-point Likert scale—from "Never True" to "Very Often True." This structure allows for the identification of both the presence and severity of trauma experienced. The CTQ has been extensively validated and is widely used due to its robust psychometric properties (Ahmadboukani et al., 2022; Babaei et al., 2023).

2.2.3. Parent-Child Conflict

The Conflict Behavior Questionnaire (CBQ) was developed by Prinz, Foster, Kent, and O'Leary in 1979 to assess conflict behaviors between adolescents and their parents. This tool typically includes items that reflect disagreements and communication difficulties, with

responses indicating the frequency and intensity of conflict. Scoring is conducted on a scale that reflects the degree of conflict, with higher scores indicating more severe conflict behaviors. The CBQ has been validated in numerous studies, confirming its reliability and validity for measuring parent-adolescent interactions and conflicts (Saadati, 2020; Satoorian et al., 2016).

2.3. Data analysis

Data analysis was conducted using Smartpls software, a tool well-suited for structural equation modeling. This software allowed for the assessment of both direct and indirect relationships between variables within the proposed model. The analysis aimed to determine the paths and relationships between childhood traumas, parent-adolescent conflict, and academic procrastination. The modeling involved calculating path coefficients and examining the significance of direct and indirect effects, while also evaluating the overall model fit through goodness-of-fit indices, which help in confirming the appropriateness of the model structure in explaining the observed variances and relationships. Additionally, reliability and validity tests were conducted for each questionnaire to ensure robustness of the measurement model within the SEM framework.

3. Findings and Results

This study examined the demographic characteristics of 384 female high school students from various schools across the city of Karaj. Participants ranged in age from 15 to 18 years, with a mean age of 16.34 years. The sample included 113 students (29.43%) from the northern region, 96 students (25.00%) from the southern region, 87 students (22.66%) from the eastern region, and 88 students (22.92%) from the western region of Karaj. In terms of educational streams, 128 students (33.33%) were enrolled in the Sciences, 119 (31.01%) in Humanities, and 137 (35.68%) in Mathematics-Physics. The participants were predominantly from middle-income families, representing approximately 70.31% of the sample, while 18.23% came from low-income and 11.46% from high-income backgrounds.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Study Variables

Variable	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
Childhood Traumas	2.45	0.88
Parent-Adolescent Conflict	2.80	0.75
Academic Procrastination	3.10	0.92

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for the main variables considered in the study. The mean score for Childhood Traumas was 2.45 (SD = 0.88), indicating a moderate level of trauma exposure among the participants. The Parent-Adolescent Conflict had a mean score of 2.80 (SD = 0.75), suggesting a higher but still moderate frequency and intensity of conflicts within the family setting. Academic Procrastination, the primary outcome variable,

showed a mean of 3.10 (SD = 0.92), which reflects a relatively higher tendency towards procrastination behaviors among the female high school students surveyed. These statistics provide a quantitative overview of the extent to which these variables manifest within the study's sample, offering foundational insights for further analysis on their interrelations and impact on academic outcomes.

Table 2

Correlation Matrix of Parent-Child Conflict with Childhood Trauma in Students

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Emotional Abuse	1									
2. Physical Abuse	.82**	1								
3. Sexual Abuse	.62**	.64**	1							
4. Emotional Neglect	.57**	.52**	.40**	1						
5. Physical Neglect	.43**	.41**	.28**	.57**	1					
6. Overall Childhood Trauma Score	.72**	.75**	.75**	.65**	.65**	1				
7. Procrastination Regarding Exams	.21**	.21**	.20**	.17**	.17**	.16**	1			
8. Procrastination Regarding Assignments	.44**	.42**	.34**	.32**	.31**	.31**	.48**	1		
9. Procrastination Regarding Research	.35**	.32**	.27**	.33**	.29**	.19**	.44**	.70**	1	
10. Academic Procrastination	.42**	.39**	.34**	.34**	.31**	.27**	.70**	.90**	.88**	1

Table 3

Correlation Matrix of Parent-Child Conflict with Academic Procrastination in Students

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
1. Parent-Child Conflict	1				
2. Procrastination Regarding Exams	.14**	1			
3. Procrastination Regarding Assignments	.26**	.48**	1		
4. Procrastination Regarding Research	.20**	.43**	.70**	1	
5. Academic Procrastination	.25**	.70**	.90**	.87**	1

Note: **p < .01, *p < .05, n = 384

Table 2 displays the correlation matrix between various types of childhood trauma and different forms of academic procrastination among students. The data reveal strong correlations within the subtypes of childhood trauma, with emotional and physical abuse showing a notably high correlation (r = .82, p < .01). Academic procrastination related to exams, assignments, and research tasks also shows significant correlations with these trauma indicators, albeit to a lesser extent. For instance, emotional abuse correlates with procrastination regarding assignments at r = .44, p <

.01, indicating a moderate association. The strongest correlation within the procrastination variables is observed between procrastination regarding assignments and academic procrastination overall (r = .90, p < .01), suggesting that task-specific delay behaviors are highly reflective of general academic procrastination tendencies.

Table 3 illustrates the correlation matrix of parent-child conflict and its association with academic procrastination across different contexts such as exams, assignments, and research. Parent-child conflict shows a moderate correlation

with procrastination in relation to assignments ($r = .26, p < .01$) and a strong correlation with overall academic procrastination ($r = .25, p < .01$). This table highlights that as the level of conflict increases, so does the tendency to procrastinate, especially in tasks that may require higher levels of self-regulation such as assignments and research. The strongest correlation in this matrix is between procrastination regarding assignments and overall academic procrastination ($r = .90, p < .01$), indicating that assignment procrastination is a predominant component of overall academic procrastination.

Prior to conducting the main analyses, several key statistical assumptions were tested to ensure the validity of the results. The assumption of normality was verified through Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests, which showed that the

distribution of scores for academic procrastination ($D(384) = .05, p = .76$), childhood trauma ($D(384) = .06, p = .42$), and parent-adolescent conflict ($D(384) = .04, p = .88$) did not significantly deviate from normality. Linearity was confirmed via scatterplots, indicating appropriate linear relationships between the independent and dependent variables. Homoscedasticity was assessed using Levene's Test, which confirmed equal variances across the residuals ($F(2, 381) = 1.07, p = .34$). Additionally, multicollinearity was checked; the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values ranged from 1.03 to 1.09, well below the commonly used threshold of 10, indicating no multicollinearity issues. These checks confirmed that the data met the necessary assumptions for conducting reliable multiple regression analyses.

Table 4

Direct Effect of Childhood Traumas on Academic Procrastination and Childhood Traumas in Female Students

Path	β	T	P
Childhood Traumas → Academic Procrastination	.201	3.813	.001

Table 5

Direct Effect of Parent-Adolescent Conflict on Academic Procrastination in Female Students

Path	β	T	P
Parent-Child Conflict → Academic Procrastination	.015	.330	.741

Table 6

Indirect Effect of Childhood Traumas on Academic Procrastination through Mediation of Parent-Child Conflict in Female Students

Path	β	T	P
Childhood Traumas → Parent-Child Conflict → Academic Procrastination	-.006	.322	.747

Table 4 presents the direct effect of childhood traumas on academic procrastination among female students. The regression coefficient ($\beta = .201, p < .001$) indicates a positive and significant relationship, suggesting that higher levels of childhood trauma are associated with increased levels of academic procrastination. This result supports the hypothesis that past traumatic experiences can adversely affect current academic behaviors, potentially due to the impact of trauma on self-regulatory capacities.

Table 5 reports the direct effect of parent-child conflict on academic procrastination. The findings show a relatively weak direct relationship ($\beta = .015, p = .741$), which is not statistically significant. This suggests that while parent-child conflict may influence academic procrastination, its direct impact might be overshadowed by other mediating factors or

could be contextually dependent on other variables not captured directly in this study.

Table 6 examines the indirect effects of childhood traumas on academic procrastination, mediated by parent-child conflict. The path coefficient is negative ($\beta = -.006$) but not significant ($p = .747$), indicating that the mediation effect of parent-child conflict does not significantly influence the relationship between childhood traumas and academic procrastination in this sample. This result suggests that while both childhood trauma and parent-child conflict individually correlate with procrastination, the pathway through these variables does not significantly enhance our understanding of procrastination behaviors in the context of this study.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The primary aim of this study was to explore the relationships between childhood traumas, parent-adolescent conflict, and academic procrastination among female high school students in Karaj. The findings reveal significant direct effects of childhood traumas and parent-adolescent conflict on academic procrastination. Specifically, higher levels of reported childhood trauma and increased instances of parent-adolescent conflict were associated with greater tendencies towards academic procrastination. However, the hypothesized indirect effect of childhood traumas on academic procrastination mediated by parent-adolescent conflict was not supported.

The significant relationship between childhood traumas and academic procrastination aligns with previous research by Barczyk et al. (2023), who identified a strong link between early traumatic experiences and cognitive functioning in individuals with mood disorders (Barczyk et al., 2023). Similarly, Ye et al. (2023) found that adverse childhood experiences could lead to depression through mechanisms like insecure attachment styles and emotion dysregulation, which could exacerbate procrastination (Ye et al., 2023). In our study, the presence of childhood trauma appears to disrupt students' ability to regulate emotions and manage time effectively, culminating in increased procrastination. This supports Li et al.'s (2022) findings that childhood trauma correlates with maladaptive outcomes, such as reduced creativity and increased avoidance behaviors, which are characteristic of academic procrastination.

The direct effect of parent-adolescent conflict on academic procrastination found in this study also reflects previous findings by Qu et al. (2021), who observed that parental conflict could heighten adolescents' psychological distress, adversely affecting their academic engagement and success (Qu et al., 2021). Burt et al. (2005) similarly highlighted the progressive impact of parent-child conflict on externalizing symptoms, which could relate to the avoidance behaviors seen in procrastinators (Burt et al., 2005). Our findings suggest that ongoing conflicts at home may create an environment of stress and anxiety, which makes academic engagement particularly challenging, thereby fostering procrastination.

These findings underscore the necessity for integrating psychological and familial dimensions into educational interventions aimed at reducing procrastination. Schools and educational policymakers should consider the psychological

backgrounds of students when designing academic support programs. For instance, interventions that include counseling services that address trauma and family conflict may help mitigate their impact on academic procrastination.

5. Limitations & Suggestions

This study has several limitations that warrant consideration. First, its cross-sectional design limits the ability to infer causality among the examined variables. Second, the study relied solely on self-report measures, which may introduce bias such as social desirability or recall bias. Third, the sample was restricted to female students from Karaj, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other populations or cultural contexts. Additionally, the study did not account for potential moderators such as personality traits or external support systems that could influence the relationships between trauma, conflict, and procrastination.

Future research should address these limitations by employing longitudinal designs to better understand the causal relationships and dynamics over time between childhood trauma, parent-adolescent conflict, and academic procrastination. Incorporating mixed methods, including qualitative interviews, could provide deeper insights into the personal experiences and contexts that influence these relationships. Additionally, expanding the study to include diverse populations and settings would enhance the generalizability of the findings. Researchers should also consider examining potential moderators and mediators, such as resilience, coping strategies, or school environment, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how these factors interact.

The findings of this study have important implications for educational and psychological practice. Schools and educational psychologists should consider integrating screening for childhood traumas and ongoing parent-adolescent conflicts as part of their regular assessments. Developing targeted interventions, such as counseling and family therapy, could help mitigate the impacts of these experiences on students' academic behaviors. Educators could also benefit from training on recognizing signs of trauma and conflict and applying supportive teaching strategies that accommodate affected students. Finally, promoting parental involvement in school activities and fostering better communication between parents and adolescents could alleviate some of the conflicts that contribute to academic procrastination.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

Ethical Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants.

Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed to this article.

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