

## Comparative analysis of Russian and foreign studies of procrastination: cultural context

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## ABSTRACT

The present study is dedicated to analyzing the scientific literature and research on the phenomenon of procrastination in Russian and English languages. The relevance of studying procrastination is due to its significant impact on various aspects of life and the underdeveloped nature of its cultural dimensions. The purpose of this work is to analyze literary sources and examine Russian and international approaches to studying procrastination in relation to cultural, cognitive, and emotional factors. The research methodology includes an analysis of theoretical and empirical studies in Russian and English, as well as the development of questions for a diagnostic questionnaire on procrastination. Research results. The study found that most empirical works focus on student samples and most often associate procrastination with characteristics such as perfectionism and motivation. However, emotional features and cultural aspects of procrastination remain insufficiently covered in scientific literature. An analysis of studies conducted in Arab, and Russian-speaking cultural contexts revealed that the perception and research direction of procrastination vary. For example, Arab studies are associated with examining social dynamics, potentially influenced by collectivist cultural contexts. Russian-language studies, in contrast, emphasize individualism and personal responsibility. This underscores the importance of considering cultural specifics when studying procrastination. The analysis of the studies led to the formulation of questions for a Russian-language procrastination questionnaire that helps account for cognitive, emotional, and cultural aspects. These questions make the new questionnaire adaptable to various contexts. Discussion and conclusions. The results emphasize the need for further investigation into the cultural aspects of procrastination. This approach may lead to the development of more effective strategies for overcoming procrastination across different cultures and societies. Ultimately, it may contribute to a deeper understanding of the nature of procrastination and its impact on individuals and society.

## Introduction

Procrastination is evolving in the modern world just as actively as digital technologies, exerting a significant influence on various spheres of human life. This phenomenon attracts considerable attention from researchers and remains a relevant topic in the field of psychology. Although procrastination is studied from different angles globally, the cultural context is rarely examined. In Russia, research often relies on theoretical and practical developments by foreign authors. While this creates a foundation for understanding the phenomenon, it limits the adoption of new approaches. Some international studies emphasize the creation of their own methodologies. One of the most frequently cited studies worldwide is that of P. Steel (2007), who was among the first to conduct a meta-analysis of existing research on procrastination. Notably, P. Steel acknowledged limitations in his conclusions because most empirical data used in the analysis came from samples of students at European and American universities (Steel, 2007). As such, differences in age, culture, and other variables were not considered during the research or in the interpretation of results.

An analysis of existing studies reveals that most research focuses on student samples and covers topics linking procrastination to various psychological traits and academic situations (Hen and Goroshit, 2020). Some researchers examine avoidance behaviors in homework, planning educational activities, and preparing for exams (Schraw et al., 2007), while others assess the prevalence of procrastination depending on the subject, showing that it is especially common in mathematics and other subjects perceived as difficult by students (Akinsola et al., 2007; Asri et al., 2017).

Several psychological phenomena are considered most extensively studied in connection with procrastination, as revealed by our bibliometric analysis. For instance, researchers have paid particular attention to confirming the relationship between procrastination and perfectionism, which appears in about 28% of related studies (Garanian, 2012; Klingsieck, 2013; Tibbett and Ferrari, 2019). In both Russian- and English-language fields, one of the most developed areas (25%) is the study of procrastination and various aspects of motivation—such as goal orientation, motivation for success, and avoidance of failure (Steel, 2007; Howell and Watson, 2007; Karlovskaya and Baranova, 2008; Rudnova, 2018). The highest number of studies on the motivational side of procrastination was found in English-language sources during 2000–2010 and in Russian-language sources during 2008–2016. English-language researchers also commonly study impulsivity as a predictor of procrastination

(Wypych et al., 2018), accounting for approximately 15% of studies. Additionally, procrastination is actively examined in connection with the Big Five personality traits (15%) and with temperament and character (4%). These studies are evenly distributed between 1995 and 2020. New research confirms earlier findings about how conscientiousness helps reduce procrastination (Schouwenburg and Lay, 1995; Rudnova et al., 2018) and how a stable temperament profile correlates with active procrastination (Zohar et al., 2019). Some emotional aspects of procrastination are also attracting attention, with about 5% of English-language studies addressing emotion regulation (Pychyl and Sirois, 2016; Wypych et al., 2018); however, such studies are absent in Russian literature.

Nonetheless, procrastination remains insufficiently studied in various contexts, including emotional and cognitive features and their relationship to cultural aspects. Understanding these components is vital for a comprehensive analysis of the phenomenon and for discerning their influence on individuals and society at large (Emirati Russian Dictionary).

Given the above, further exploration of procrastination with a focus on cultural differences is a timely and important direction in psychology. It will allow for a deeper understanding of its nature and the development of effective coping strategies.

Procrastination is a complex, multidimensional phenomenon that resists being reduced to simple cause-and-effect relationships. However, researchers strive to identify common elements that make up the shared experience of procrastination, including negative emotions, rumination, and characteristics of procrastination-inducing tasks (Guidry, 2012; Oflazian and Borders, 2022). Modern research emphasizes the social and cognitive nature of procrastination. It is increasingly seen as a deliberate delay in task execution due to self-regulation failure and a gap between intention and action (Tice and Baumeister, 1997; Steel, 2007; Pychyl and Flett, 2012). This gap may stem from different causes. Some studies suggest that short-term external incentives can enhance productivity, but relying on them in the long run—without developing intrinsic motivation—may increase procrastination (Mohamad M. Assker, 2023). Researchers stress that procrastination is not merely a result of low motivation, but rather a complex interaction of various traits, including emotional ones (Guidry, 2012).

Thus, procrastination encompasses not only cognitive delays but also emotional factors. For example, negative emotions influence thoughts about the task, creating a so-called "spiral," where reflecting on procrastination leads to even more procrastination (Oflazian and Borders, 2022). These

findings need further testing across different samples, but they support T. Pychyl's idea that the emotional side of procrastination creates obstacles and delays in task completion (Pychyl et al., 2016).

The situation in Russian-language research on procrastination is less robust. There is a lack of empirical work addressing the specific characteristics of Russian samples. Russian studies do not fully cover the range of features explored internationally. For example, emotional aspects of procrastination are virtually absent in Russian-language research (Vindeker O.S. and Lubina D.S., 2024).

Therefore, not only is the expansion of empirical data necessary, but also critical reflection on international research. This reflection helps identify the limitations of applying empirical findings across cultural samples. This study focuses on how unique cultural characteristics — such as traditions, values, and interaction styles — may influence how procrastination is perceived and manifested, which is what we mean by cultural context (Usova, 2014). In different societies, a given psychological trait, emotion, or thought may be expressed differently. It is worth noting that Arab researchers on procrastination also base their work on globally accepted studies (Mariam Hejab Al Shaibani, 2020). This research attempts to interpret findings from various studies with an emphasis on specific cultural contexts and experiences.

The aim of the study is to analyze literary sources and compare Russian and international experiences in studying procrastination in connection with cultural, cognitive, and emotional features. The study evaluates existing empirical data and develops questions for a diagnostic tool to assess procrastination that can potentially reflect cultural particularities and the unique characteristics of different samples.

The research draws on works by leading Russian and international scholars on the subject. The following methods were used: comparative analysis, systematization, and conceptualization of scientific ideas.

### Methodology

The central logical premise of this study is the assumption that procrastination can be triggered not only by internal cognitive and emotional factors, but also by external ones—namely, cultural factors. A critical analysis of existing data and literature forms an essential part of the research logic, laying the groundwork for a comprehensive examination of studies in different languages.

In international scholarships, some researchers view procrastination through the lens of cultural and

national traits, which makes it possible to understand how different societies perceive and respond to this phenomenon. For instance, in 2013, P. Steel and J. Ferrari depicted a “typical procrastinator” based on variables such as gender, age, marital status, country of residence, and other indicators. As a result, they presented the typical procrastinator as a young, single man living in a country with a relatively low level of self-discipline (Steel & Ferrari, 2013). The researchers identified Russia and Austria among such countries (Steel & Ferrari, 2013).

Globally, there is no unified approach to studying procrastination. Researchers from different countries perceive procrastination differently. For example, in countries such as China, certain European nations, and Arab countries, procrastination may be associated with emotional states such as anxiety or self-compassion, whereas in others it is seen as a routine part of daily life (Abdolshahi and Mehdi Reza, 2019). Our approach involves not only examining procrastinatory behavior per se, but also analyzing the cognitions and emotions involved in the decision-making process to delay action, as viewed through the perspectives of different researchers.

In this study, we aim not only to construct a picture of procrastination at both intra- and cross-cultural levels, but also to identify specific features that warrant further investigation within our cultural sample. We then seek to determine whether these features are characteristic of many societies or unique to certain ones.

### The distinctive features of our approach include:

**1. Critical analysis of scholarly literature in Russian and English.** We aim to highlight the universality of procrastination, emphasizing the shared nature of this phenomenon across societies, while also identifying cultural-specific procrastination traits that reflect contextual nuances.

**2. Cross-cultural orientation of the study.** By utilizing data from research conducted in diverse cultures, we aim to determine whether different values and ways of life influence how procrastination is perceived and practiced.

**3. Development of a new diagnostic tool—a procrastination questionnaire** that reflects both the cognitive and emotional dimensions of procrastination and accounts for cultural nuances and contemporary challenges. The questionnaire will be developed in Russian and tested in Russian-speaking contexts, allowing the cultural dimension to be adequately represented.

**4. Universality and adaptability.** Our methodology is based on an approach that can be adapted for use

in other cultures and languages due to the universal features of procrastination and its manifestations.

This approach can benefit various cultures and countries by offering a practical framework for understanding procrastination in different cultural contexts. Researchers and practitioners can use the findings to develop support and intervention programs that are sensitive to specific cultural features. It also facilitates the creation of culturally adapted diagnostic tools and psychological interventions that can be applied in different countries and communities for both theoretical and applied research purposes.

### Research Result

As part of this study, we conducted an analysis of scientific sources. A large-scale bibliometric investigation on procrastination revealed that since the first studies emerged in the 1980s, the directions of procrastination research have significantly expanded and diversified. However, a systematic perspective on the phenomenon is still lacking (Yan and Zhang, 2022). We share this view: the meta-analytical English-language studies reviewed primarily focus on specific topics and relationships (Steel, 2007; Sirois et al., 2017).

A notable increase in the number of studies on procrastination worldwide has been observed since 2011 (Yan and Zhang, 2022). The early 2010s marked a substantial rise in interest in procrastination among both Russian and Arab researchers. However, the dynamics of this interest differ across cultural contexts. Russian-language research expanded rapidly during the first half of the 2010s and continues to grow steadily today. This may be attributed to an increased interest in psychology as a whole, as well as in human productivity and self-realization. There was also a surge in educational research during this period. In contrast, the most active growth in procrastination research in Arabic, and by Arab authors, has occurred since 2018. Today, the study of procrastination in Arab countries such as the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Egypt, and Morocco reflects societal demands for greater efficiency and self-regulation. This, in turn, may strengthen the academic base and contribute to solving applied psychological issues (Muhammad Hisyam Syafii et al., 2024; Mariam Hejab Al Shaibani, 2020).

Overall, procrastination remains a trending research topic in the global academic community, underlining the enduring relevance of the problem. However, foundational literature on procrastination that continues to be widely cited dates to the late 1980s and 1990s.

Another notable limitation of existing research is its reliance on student samples. While this is appropriate for examining academic procrastination, general procrastination also affects individuals outside academic settings. People differ in the intensity and consequences of procrastination, and cross-cultural studies have shown that a significant portion of adults—around 15–30%—struggle with procrastination in their daily lives (Steel, 2007). Global research lacks sufficient data from diverse age groups, professions, and life contexts.

Considering this, it is currently necessary to develop new tools for assessing procrastination, as well as to study how social and cultural factors influence the causes and characteristics of procrastination.

This study is aimed at accounting for the cultural characteristics of the procrastination phenomenon. Cultural context plays a significant role in shaping perceptions and manifestations of procrastination and thus requires systematic and detailed analysis. These dimensions not only broaden our understanding of procrastination but also help distinguish it from other similar psychological constructs. Given that Russian-language research has placed limited emphasis on the cultural aspects of procrastination, it is essential to incorporate cultural characteristics to gain deeper insights into the causes and consequences of this phenomenon in specific contexts.

In Russian-language research, the cultural context of procrastination remains underdeveloped. One of the most common directions in the Russian literature involves distinguishing procrastination from laziness. This research trend emerged from the need to define the essence and attributes of procrastination, setting it apart from other phenomena with similar connotations in Russian-speaking contexts (Varvaricheva, 2010; Kurdenko, 2019; Ilyin, 2011). Some Russian scholars describe procrastination as a behavioral pattern (Kovylin, 2013), while others define it as a personality disposition (Rudnova et al., 2018). Although no unified approach has been established, there is a consensus in contemporary Russian science that procrastination is a negative psychological phenomenon (Koroleva et al., 2017).

Despite the limited focus on cultural aspects in Russian-language studies, we hypothesize that the causes, correlates, and manifestations of procrastination are indeed linked to cultural context.

Procrastination studies in Arab countries are more commonly centered on academic settings, focusing on adolescents and university students. The primary goals of these studies include measuring the level of procrastination and identifying correlates. However, methodological approaches may differ due to cultural and social norms. For example, in Arab

countries, research often emphasizes group dynamics and educational systems, whereas other regions may prioritize more individualized approaches.

The primary distinction between Arab and Russian studies lies in their treatment of cultural context. Arab research is often rooted in collectivist cultural frameworks, where social bonds, family relationships, and educational expectations are of paramount importance. In contrast, Russian studies tend to adopt more individualistic approaches, emphasizing personal achievement and internal experiences.

Nonetheless, Arab researchers also examine intrapersonal aspects of procrastination. Some studies indicate that procrastination among students in Arab countries is directly related to cognitive flexibility and need for closure. Young individuals with a strong desire for quick satisfaction are more prone to procrastinate, which researchers associate with the link between high need for closure and increased procrastination (Khan Itbar et al., 2021). This may be partially explained by the fact that educational systems in the region often impose strict requirements and expectations, leading to elevated stress levels and, consequently, greater procrastination (Emirati-Russian Dictionary). When a person experiences stress or anxiety, their ability to concentrate diminishes, increasing the likelihood of postponing important tasks (Dott. Massimo Dagnino, 2024).

Another study demonstrates that maladaptive emotion regulation strategies contribute to higher anxiety levels, which in turn exacerbate procrastination among students (Rezaei and Zebardast, 2021). Emotional reactions to stress significantly affect neural patterns, forming the belief that completing a task is beyond one's capabilities, which intensifies procrastination (Dott. Massimo Dagnino, 2024). In this regard, self-compassion may play a crucial role in reducing stress and anxiety levels, thus mitigating procrastination (Abdolshahi and Mehdi Reza, 2019). However, expressing self-compassion can be challenging in collectivist cultures, where shame and guilt are often dominant emotions. In such contexts, feelings of shame may exacerbate procrastination, as individuals may avoid tasks due to fear of not meeting social or familial expectations (Abdolshahi and Mehdi Reza, 2019).

Overall, the analysis reveals that although there has been a recent rise in procrastination research in Arab countries, it still lags other regions. This may be due to the current focus of psychological science in the region on more general issues such as well-being and academic success. Nonetheless, research in this area is evolving, and it is important to consider

unique cultural features when analyzing the mechanisms of procrastination in Arab populations.

A particularly noteworthy aspect of this comparative analysis lies in the study of procrastination in several Asian countries, such as China and Japan. These nations show strong interest in procrastination research, which may be linked to their cultural emphasis on education and career achievement. Several studies have demonstrated that procrastination manifests differently in Japan and China depending on cultural context (Zhang et al., 2021; Kashiwakura and Hiraki, 2024). In Japan, procrastination is often viewed as socially unacceptable behavior due to the strong collective identity and emphasis on group harmony. One study even revealed a positive correlation between active procrastination and coping with stress, suggesting that task delay may serve as a defense mechanism to reduce pressure stemming from social expectations (Zhang et al., 2021). In China, individuals tend to prioritize personal interests over group expectations and use active procrastination as a strategic response to stress, which helps reduce anxiety and depression (Zhang et al., 2021). Questionnaires used in these countries often aim to assess stress-related factors. Japanese researchers focus more on the social aspects of procrastination, while Chinese researchers are more likely to investigate individual traits.

As a result of this analysis, a Russian-language diagnostic questionnaire on procrastination was developed. The questionnaire considers both cognitive and emotional aspects of procrastination. For example, the item "I delay completing tasks without a clear reason, even when I know they are important" reflects awareness and decision-making, representing the cognitive component. Another item, "I feel that I deserve to be treated fairly by others," captures emotional experiences that may contribute to procrastination.

Because the questionnaire was developed in Russian, it inherently incorporates the local cultural context. Items such as "I am confident that one must work without rest" reflect traditional Russian values related to labor and work ethic. The questionnaire also includes universal features of procrastination. For instance, statements like "If a task seems too difficult, I'm sure I can put it off until later" and "I keep scrolling through social media instead of working on important tasks" represent common experiences that may apply across different cultures and modern contexts. These items can be used in procrastination studies conducted in other countries, which confirms the adaptability of the questionnaire's methodology to diverse conditions.

Thus, the questionnaire is comprehensive, culturally sensitive, and reflective of universal procrastination characteristics.

## Discussion

In general terms, procrastination represents a voluntary delay of action despite awareness of its negative consequences and is often associated with self-regulation failures. Our study revealed that approaches to understanding procrastination differ significantly across societies. The distinction between Arab and Russian-language research lies not only in the language but also in how cultural context shapes interpretations of procrastination.

Russian-language studies tend to emphasize individualism and personal responsibility, focusing on internal mechanisms and individual differences. In contrast, Arab studies are rooted in collectivist values, often highlighting social pressures and external circumstances that may contribute to procrastination. Arab researchers emphasize the role of shame and social expectations in individual behavior, which contrasts with the more self-directed interpretations common in Russian literature.

One key factor contributing to procrastination among students in Arab countries is high anxiety and stress, often caused by the educational system and societal expectations from parents and community. This state of overload is perceived as an insurmountable obstacle, making procrastination more attractive as a coping mechanism. In Asian studies—especially those from countries like China and Japan—there is often an emphasis on the interplay between collective and individual factors within competitive and high-stress environments.

In line with our analysis, the development of a Russian-language diagnostic tool for procrastination aimed to reflect a comprehensive view that includes cognitive, emotional, and culturally specific aspects of the phenomenon. Designed for Russian-speaking contexts, the tool incorporates cultural values that may influence procrastination behavior. Furthermore, the questionnaire highlights universal features of procrastination, allowing researchers to adapt the methodology for use in various cultural settings.

Ultimately, the tool serves as a comprehensive instrument for diagnosing procrastination across a wide range of conditions, considering both cultural nuances and global patterns. It can also be adapted to fit different societies and cultures. This adaptability implies the possibility of tailoring the tool to specific cultural norms and meanings relevant to respondent groups, while preserving the universal traits of procrastination.

Such an approach may provide deeper insight into the roots of procrastination and support the development of targeted interventions and programs for reducing it, taking into consideration new and culturally specific features.

## Conclusion

This study presents an approach to examining the psychological phenomenon of procrastination that can be applied across different countries and cultures. Such an approach may aid in the development of specialized programs for addressing procrastination, tailored to the unique and universal characteristics identified in various contexts.

In conclusion, the analysis of procrastination research shows that although most scholars associate procrastination with self-regulatory failures, the perception of procrastination and the factors contributing to its emergence may vary depending on cultural context. This underscores the importance of considering cultural characteristics in the study of this phenomenon.

The analysis of Arab, Russian-language, and Asian studies revealed the unique perspectives that each culture brings to the understanding of procrastination. In particular, Arab research emphasizes social dynamics and the influence of collectivism; Russian-language studies focus more on individualism and personal responsibility; and Asian studies often highlight the interaction between individual and collective factors, especially in competitive, high-pressure environments. These findings suggest the need for comprehensive approaches that reflect the specificity of each culture.

As a result of the analysis, a Russian-language diagnostic questionnaire on procrastination was developed that accounts for the combined influence of cognitive, emotional, and cultural factors. The questionnaire reflects not only cultural specificity but also universal traits of procrastination, making the methodology adaptable to different contexts. Therefore, this tool represents an important step toward the diagnosis and understanding of procrastination, facilitating a deeper exploration of the phenomenon in diverse cultural settings.

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