

# The Relationship between Learned Helplessness and Procrastination and Self-Defeating Behavior in Kuala Lumpur and Selangor

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## Abstract

Procrastination is defined as the voluntary delay of an intended action despite awareness that such postponement may lead to negative consequences. Learned helplessness can contribute to diminished self-esteem, fostering pessimistic associations within social environments, reducing self-motivation, and ultimately hindering individual progress. This study aimed to examine the relationship between learned helplessness, procrastination, and self-defeating behavior among individuals in Kuala Lumpur (KL) and Selangor. A total of 126 respondents aged 18 years and above were selected using convenience sampling to complete the study questionnaire. The measurement instruments employed included the Learned Helplessness Scale (LHS), Rotter Locus of Control Scale (LOC), Pure Procrastination Scale (PPS), and Self-Defeating Interpersonal Style Scale (SELF-DISS). Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27. The findings revealed that all measured variables exhibited moderate to high levels. Additionally, a positive correlation was identified between learned helplessness, procrastination, and self-defeating behavior. Individuals with a higher external locus of control demonstrated elevated levels of procrastination and self-defeating behavior, particularly when experiencing learned helplessness. Overall, these findings provide valuable insights into psychological well-being and suggest the importance of developing flexible coping strategies to enhance success in task performance. The study's contributions may be beneficial for interventions aimed at improving individual resilience and self-regulation.

**Keywords:** Learned Helplessness, Procrastination, Self-Defeating Behavior

## Introduction

The phenomenon of procrastination is characterized by an intention-action gap, wherein individuals delay tasks despite their initial intention to act. For instance, an individual may commit to beginning a task but repeatedly fail to do so due to fear of failure. Beyond the influence of low achievement motivation, Kaftan and Freund (2019) suggest that

procrastination frequently occurs when individuals lack clearly defined goals or fail to comprehend the objectives they need to achieve. Consequently, examining the discrepancy between intention and action is crucial in addressing procrastination and enhancing the likelihood of successfully meeting predetermined goals.

Procrastination, learned helplessness, and self-defeating behavior are significant concerns within the Malaysian context, as they are closely linked to various aspects of life, including academic performance, mental health, productivity, and overall quality of life (Mohanty et al., 2015; Ozge, 2012; Vendola, 2023). The prevalence of procrastination is evident across multiple domains, such as education, career progression, and the completion of daily responsibilities. Given that individuals are consistently required to fulfill various obligations whether self-imposed or externally assigned procrastination is widely perceived as an unproductive and inefficient behavior that hampers goal attainment.

The persistent nature of procrastination negatively affects individual performance, leading to difficulties in maintaining direction, achieving success, and managing personal responsibilities. The cumulative impact of these behaviors may contribute to long-term setbacks, emphasizing the necessity for targeted interventions to mitigate procrastination and promote self-regulation strategies for personal and professional development.

In the educational context, students who have yet to establish clear life goals and are navigating the phase of self-exploration often experience profound feelings of helplessness. As they transition from structured education to self-directed learning, this sense of helplessness becomes increasingly pronounced. Over time, individuals who frequently procrastinate and postpone tasks may develop frustration toward their own inefficiencies and lack of productivity.

At this stage, the absence of sufficient social and technical support can lead to further deterioration, gradually diminishing an individual's motivation and capacity to take control of their own life. Consequently, such individuals may engage in both conscious and subconscious self-sabotaging behaviors, including self-imposed moral pressure, excessive eating, chronic procrastination, and a diminished sense of self-worth in interpersonal relationships. These patterns contribute to strained social interactions and elevate the risk of developing mental health issues.

Given these concerns, this study was undertaken to examine the relationship between procrastination, learned helplessness, self-defeating behaviors, and locus of control among residents of Kuala Lumpur and Selangor.

### **Literatur Review**

Procrastination is an irrational delay in which individuals voluntarily postpone a task despite expecting negative consequences (Steel, 2007). Procrastination refers to inaction or postponement, delay, postponement of a decision, in line with the Latin origin of the term "pro-," meaning forward, forward or supporting and "-crastinus," meaning "tomorrow" (Klein, 1971). Based on Knaus (2000), procrastination is defined as a behavioral tendency to postpone tasks and a lack or absence of self-control performance. According to the views of a pioneering researcher in procrastination, Piers Steel (2010), procrastination is defined as

voluntarily postponing an action that one wants to take even though one can expect the situation to become worse as a result of the delay.

Several sources of literature have explored the various dimensions of procrastination, providing insights into its causes, effects and potential interventions. Hen and Goroshit's (2018) study discussed the effects of procrastination in decision-making and academic procrastination on students' feelings about academic procrastination by emphasizing the relationship between procrastination in decision-making and academic procrastination habits. This study highlights the importance of understanding the various forms of procrastination and their effects on individual attitudes and behaviors. One study has highlighted the cognitive mechanisms and neural substrates underlying procrastination, emphasizing that although multiple factors may contribute to procrastination and a complete explanation is yet to be obtained. This situation suggests that procrastination is a complex behavior influenced by multiple cognitive processes (Zhang, Liu & Feng, 2019). According to Piers Steel (2012) emphasizes that procrastination is not simply a problem of laziness or poor time management but is instead a complex behavior rooted in the basic structure of the human brain. On the other hand, individuals who do not procrastinate have been associated with high efficiency, productivity, and as highly organized and motivated individuals (Yan & Selamat, 2025). Other findings explain that procrastination is a common motivational failure and involves putting off tasks despite knowing that delay will lead to negative consequences (Steel et al., 2018). Recent studies also show that procrastination is prevalent in a variety of environmental settings, including the workplace, and can have a significant impact on work performance (Steel et al., 2022).

Furthermore, a study on the understanding of procrastination in organizations challenges the notion that procrastination is always detrimental by suggesting that strategic procrastination can be beneficial in certain contexts (Chauhan et al., 2020). This perspective offers a deeper insight into procrastination as a behavior that may have specific purposes in an organizational setting. Steel's (2010) study also found different types of procrastinators, such as stimulus procrastinators, avoidant procrastinators, and decision procrastinators, each of which exhibits different characteristics and behaviors related to procrastination. In doing so, Steel studied various procrastination scales around the world and has contributed to a better understanding of the various aspects of procrastination and how it can be measured (Svartdal & Steel, 2017). Her findings shed light on the irrationality of procrastination and its impact on individuals in various contexts, providing the best steps to effectively address and manage procrastination. Ultimately, the negative effects that drive low performance can be avoided, contributing to productive behavior and planned self-development.

According to Atkinson (2017), self-defeating behavior refers to a pattern of behavior in which individuals engage in actions that ultimately hinder their own success or well-being. These behaviors are often counterproductive and can lead to negative outcomes or self-sabotage. Atkinson's research suggests that self-defeating behavior is driven by a variety of factors such as emotional inhibition, parental rejection, and life difficulties or can develop as a result of past experiences, emotional distress, or inappropriate coping mechanisms. Individuals may engage in behaviors that are known to lead to negative outcomes and create a cycle of self-defeating behavior. These behavioral patterns can be self-perpetuating and difficult to stop without intervention.

In the context of interpersonal style, Atkinson (2017) proposes three dimensions to explain self-defeating interpersonal styles, insecure attachment (anxious and fearful emotional experience of building and maintaining relationships), inauthentic self-image (depreciation of self-worth), and self-sacrificing (an interpersonal style that excessively sacrifices one's own needs and desires). Low self-esteem and high beliefs about negative consequences can cause individuals, especially those with attachment anxiety, to act to sacrifice their own needs or desires in order to create a sense of security in the relationship. Sometimes they may also tolerate and return to or feel entitled to accept the frustrating, annoying, punishing situation. Previous research has shown that self-defeating behavior may not be a failure of self-control but may be aimed at achieving alternative goals that are prioritized as more important to the individual than the often more reasonable goal (Steinberg & Belsky, 1996; Kopetz & Orehek, 2015). However, Atkinson also suggests that the definitional formula for what constitutes "defeating behavior" can be broadly classified as success or failure of self-control depending on how the term "success" is interpreted because self-defeating behavior patterns may be driven by several potential related factors. The importance of the individual's goals as well as the short-term and long-term effects of the behavior should be considered.

Learned helplessness is seen as a result of students' perceptions of the expectations of the social environment of students. When negative feedback is frequently given to individuals with low self-efficacy, they develop negative evaluations of their own abilities and fall into irrational cognitions (Steel, 2010). Individuals are influenced by beliefs that they are unable to manage these negative evaluations, which ultimately leads to a perception of helplessness (Johnson et al., 2008). Learned helplessness in academics affects academic performance and mental health in various ways. The study by Hayes et al., (2021) has contributed a new perspective for counselors who deal with university students who experience learned helplessness. When students experience repeated failures, students begin to believe that they cannot change their life circumstances and lose motivation to find solutions and face these failures. This situation reinforces the feeling of loss of control in the individual's life (Hooker, 1976). Learning helplessness is often associated with various psychological problems such as sadness (Rubinstein, 2004), clinical depression (Bodiford et al., 1988; Wang et al., 2017) and post-traumatic stress (Bargai et al., 2007).

In addition, procrastination has also been shown to have a negative impact on one's willingness to achieve academic goals and significantly reduce one's academic performance (Bodiford et al., 1988; Firmin et al., 2004; Walling & Martinek, 1995). Previous studies have mostly focused on experiences that initiate or increase learned helplessness. These experiences include prolonged exposure to uncontrollability (Maier et al., 2000), negative feedback (Kamins & Dweck, 1999) and post-traumatic stress (Corell & Marcus, 2004). Furthermore, the amount of prolonged experience of helplessness has been found to directly increase the severity of one's own helplessness (Maier et al., 2000).

Julian (1954) introduced locus of control as a theoretical construct referring to an individual's beliefs about the underlying causes of life events. According to Rotter (1966), locus of control influences how people evaluate and respond to situations. These beliefs range from internal locus of control to external locus of control where individuals with an internal locus of control believe that they have control over their life outcomes and that their actions

and decisions directly influence the outcomes achieved. On the other hand, individuals with an external locus of control believe that external factors such as fate, destiny or superiors will determine outcomes and may feel less in control of their lives.

Locus of control is a dimension of self-evaluation that influences how individuals view life, alongside three other dimensions: neuroticism, self-efficacy and self-esteem (Judge et al., 1997). Locus of control is believed to be related to attributional style but differs in its specific usage. The justification is that individuals who are high in internal locus of control also depend on the perception of others' evaluation of themselves even though they believe that life events are still under their own control (Prihadi et al., 2012). Most studies take locus of control as a mediating factor in many studies to change negative influences. However, before that, the factors that influence locus of control need to be looked at carefully before identifying the factors that influence it.

Lachman and Weaver's study (1998) found that lower-income individuals have lower perceptions of mastery and higher perceived constraints as well as lower health status. A literature review found that individuals with internal locus of control tend to attribute success and achievement to themselves, thereby providing a sense of responsibility for actions and at the same time reducing procrastination behavior. (Procházka et al., 2014). However, no significant difference in academic procrastination between individuals with internal and external locus of control has been reported (Mishra & Munjal, 2015; Philips, 2012). In addition, other previous studies have also suggested that psychological distress may be associated with a person's belief in a lack of control over events and outcomes through several meta-analyses (Cheng et al., 2013). Therefore, this discussion clearly shows that procrastination can be associated with several variables that interact with each other. Empirical evidence shows the side effects that occur if individuals fail to avoid engaging in procrastination at work.

Previous research findings have shown that learned helplessness significantly predicts internal locus of control and external locus of control is an important predictor of academic procrastination (Prihadi et al., 2018a). In the same year, Prihadi et al., (2018b) also conducted a study that found that internal locus of control fully mediates the relationship between learned helplessness and academic procrastination. The results of the internal factors investigated in this study show that failure of self-regulation, self-determined motivation, self-esteem, self-efficacy, laziness, stress and motivation are perceived by students before leading to academic procrastination. Overall, learned helplessness is a predictor of procrastination and internal locus of control mediates the relationship between learned helplessness and academic procrastination. In other words, when students have sufficient internal locus of control, learned helplessness will not affect their academic punctuality.

In addition, Badri Gargari et al., (2011) study has explained the concept of self-defeating behavior, especially in relation to academic procrastination. This study also highlights how behaviors such as procrastination can have a negative impact on academic performance and how factors such as self-esteem, self-forgiveness and anxiety can be influenced by an individual's self-defeating patterns in academic achievement. Overall, previous studies have shown that individuals with negative evaluations of themselves and life tend to postpone actions and act in a way that is detrimental to themselves. Procrastination

is often used as a strategy to protect self-worth from failure, while learned helplessness leads to the belief that one is not capable of completing a task properly but still tries to overcome it. Previous studies on the path analytic model of procrastination and how behavioral theories suggest that people are born with a tendency to self-defeat (Uzun Özer, 2010). This finding is in line with the concept of self-defeating behavior and its relationship with procrastination and locus of control.

From another perspective, locus of control may not be sufficient to influence the relationship between learned helplessness, procrastination, and self-defeating behavior. This is because although locus of control is related to learned helplessness, helplessness involves more specific beliefs about control that may not be fully captured by traditional measures of locus of control. Although procrastination has a variety of negative long-term effects on individuals in terms of time control, it can be a way for individuals to overcome feelings of helplessness or anxiety by providing temporary relief from prolonged negative emotions in performing tasks. Some individuals believe that they will perform more effectively and creatively under pressure when they wait until the last minute to act (Zarick & Stonebraker, 2009). Therefore, procrastination behavior can be avoided and reduced with early intervention and action so that the implementation of work results is better and can have a positive impact on many parties.

## **Research Methodology**

### *Research Design*

To conduct this empirical study, a rigorous research methodology was employed to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the findings. A quantitative research design was adopted, utilizing structured questionnaires to collect data on demographic characteristics, learned helplessness, procrastination, self-defeating behavior, and locus of control among residents of Kuala Lumpur and Selangor.

Statistical analysis was performed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) version 27.0, enabling the examination of descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive analysis was used to determine and compare the overall mean and standard deviation of procrastination, learned helplessness, locus of control, and self-defeating behavior across different demographic groups. Inferential analysis was applied to assess the correlation between these variables, providing insights into their interrelationships.

Participants were selected using a simple random sampling method, with responses collected via Google Forms from individuals aged 18 years and above residing in Kuala Lumpur and Selangor. These locations were chosen due to their high Human Development Index (HDI) in Malaysia, offering a valuable context for investigating the influence of learned helplessness and procrastination on self-defeating behavior, with locus of control as a mediating factor.

The questionnaire comprised a demographic information section with five key questions covering age, gender, employment status, highest level of education, and estimated monthly household income. Additionally, four main sections were dedicated to measuring study variables. Confidentiality and privacy were strictly maintained, ensuring that all respondent data were securely handled and exclusively used for research purposes.

The measurement of self-defeating behavior was conducted using the Self-Defeating Interpersonal Style Scale (SELF-DISS), which evaluates three distinct dimensions. The SELF-DISS scale comprises 35 items designed to assess self-defeating tendencies within a broad population. Each item is rated on a 10-point linear numerical scale, ranging from 0 (Strongly Disagree), 5 (Neutral), to 10 (Strongly Agree).

This scale categorizes self-defeating behavior in interpersonal interactions into three subscales: insecure attachment, negative self-image, and self-sacrificing traits. Furthermore, the reliability of the scale has been empirically supported, with Cronbach's alpha values exceeding 0.8 across all dimensions, indicating robust internal consistency. The SELF-DISS scale has been validated as a reliable measurement instrument for assessing self-defeating interpersonal styles within a Turkish sample (Akyüz Yılmaz, 2020).

Table 1

*Comprehensive Measurement Framework for the Study*

Part	Varibale Scale	Num. Items	Total Items	Scoring scale	Cronbach Alpha	Sources
A	<b>Self-Defeating Behavior Style Scale (SELF-DISS)</b>		35	10-point linear numerical scale 0 (Strongly disagree) 5 (Neutral) 10 (Very agree)	.97	Atkinson (2017)
	Insecure attachment	14			.97	
	Inappropriate self-image	12			.92	
	Zero self-sacrifice	9			.87	
B	<b>Pure Procrastination Scale (PPS)</b>		12	Likert Scale 5 point 1 (Very rarely, or not true about me) 2 (Rarely true about me) 3 (Sometimes true about me) 4 Always true about me) 5 (Always true, or true about me)	.92	Piers Steel (2010)
C	<b>Learned Helplessness Scale (LHS)</b>		20	Likert Scale 4 point 1 (Strongly agree) 2 (Agree) 3 (Disagree) 4 (Strongly disagree)	.85	Quinless & Nelson (1988)
D	<b>Rotter's Internal-External Locus of Control Scale (LCS)</b> Internal locus of control External locus of control		29	Dikotomi Scale A or B	.60 - .80	Rotter (1966)

Meanwhile, to measure the level of procrastination in daily life, the Pure Procrastination Scale (PPS) is used, which consists of 12 items and requires respondents to rate each item based on their personal situation with a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1

(Very rarely or not true about me) to 5 (Very often true or true about me). A higher score indicates a higher level of procrastination. The PSS is composed of the Adult Procrastination Inventory (AIP), the General Procrastination Scale (GPS) and the Decision Procrastination Questionnaire (DPQ). Cronbach's Alpha values for the procrastination scale used in the research show that the PSS scale has good internal consistency with other procrastination scales. The alpha values for other procrastination scales are as follows: AIP ( $\alpha = 0.83$ ), GPS ( $\alpha = 0.84$ ), DPQ ( $\alpha = 0.79$ ), PASS ( $\alpha = 0.80$ ) and TPS ( $\alpha = 0.89$ ). Therefore, it is suitable for use in measuring procrastination variables because this scale is suitable for use in various populations, including students, workers and the general population to assess procrastination tendencies across different tasks and situations in life.

The Learned Helplessness Scale (LHS) is used to measure the level of learned helplessness. The LHS scale was designed by Quinless and Nelson (1988) to assess the extent to which a person experiences learned helplessness. This scale consists of 10 items that are stated positively and 10 items that are stated negatively to minimize response set bias.

Next to measure locus of control or the perception of individual control over events that occur within oneself is through Rotter's Internal-External Locus of Control Scale (LCS). This scale is built based on Rotter's own social learning theory and the concept of locus of control, which refers to the extent to which individuals believe that they can control events that affect them. This scale is the most widely used measure and is known as the Locus of Control (LCS) scale. It has been widely used in research and clinical settings to assess the role of locus of control in various outcomes such as academic achievement, health behaviors, and psychological well-being. The Cronbach's alpha value for the LCS scale varies depending on the version and specific sample used, but it has generally been found to have good internal consistency, exceeding .70 across studies.

All instruments used will be reviewed and improved to ensure that respondents can easily understand each sentence or item given. This is to ensure that the data obtained will be more authentic and measure what is actually intended to be measured (relevant study variables). The review process for each item is done with the supervisor and an overall review is done before the questionnaire is distributed.

## **Findings and Discussion**

### *Respondent Demographics*

A total of 126 questionnaires were received and it was found that all sets of questionnaires received were complete and proceeded with further data entry and analysis. Overall demographic information of respondents will be discussed including matters such as age, gender, employment status and estimated monthly household income.

Table 2

*Demographic Profile of Study Participant*

Demographic	Categories	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Age	20	4	3.2
	21	16	12.7
	22	58	46.0
	23	25	19.8
	24	10	7.9
	25	5	4.0
	26	4	3.2
	27	2	1.6
Gender	Men	28	22.2
	Women	98	77.8
Employment status	Students	110	87.3
	Part time	8	6.3
	Full time	8	6.3
	Unemployed	0	0
	Retired	0	0
Estimated monthly household income (RM)	B40 (<RM5,250)	81	64.3
	M40 (RM5,250-RM11,819)	32	25.4
	T20 (>RM11,820)	13	10.3

Based on Table 2, this study involved 126 respondents consisting of 28 males (22.2%) and 98 females (77.8%). The majority of respondents were aged 22 years, with a frequency of 58 people (46.0%) and a total of 25 respondents (19.8%) were aged 23 years, 16 people (12.7%) were aged 21 years, 10 people (7.9%) were aged 24 years, 5 people (4.0%) were aged 25 years, 4 people (3.2%) were aged 20 years and 26 years respectively, and 2 people (1.6%) were aged 27 years and 54 years respectively. Looking at employment status, the vast majority of the respondent group were students with a frequency of 110 people (87.3%), followed by 8 people (6.3%) who worked part-time and full-time respectively. For information on estimated monthly household income, the majority of respondents were from B40 families, with 81 people (64.3%) having a household income of less than RM5,250 per month. In the overall group of respondents, there were also 32 people (25.4%) with a middle socioeconomic class status of M40 and 13 people (10.3%) from T20 family backgrounds, with a monthly income of more than RM11,820.

*Level of Procrastination, Self-Defeating Behavior, Learned Helplessness and Locus of Control*

The study also looked at the average mean level for all variables used to identify the overall findings of the measurement tools used. The mean level was measured based on determining the level of the measurement scale for each variable separately. For the PPS variable using five levels of the measurement scale, overall only two items in the PPS received a mean score in the low procrastination level, which is from 2.48 to 2.56. There were four items in the PPS received a mean score in the medium level, which is in the range of 2.71 to 3.31. Six items in the PPS received a mean score in the high level, which is in the range of 3.44 to 3.68. The overall mean average for the respondents' procrastination in this study was 3.20. Interpretation of the overall mean score of the PPS according to the determination of the

level of procrastination after adaptation shows that the respondents' procrastination level is at a medium level in this study.

Next, for the SELF-DISS variable, the level assessment is based on ten measurement scales (1 to 10) and overall, two dimensions in self-defeating behavior have obtained a moderate level, namely insecure attachment has the highest mean score of 5.56 among the three dimensions, followed by self-sacrificing traits with a mean score of 5.19. The dimension of unfavorable self-image has the lowest mean score, which is 4.06, at a low level in the population studied. In essence, the three dimensions form the overall mean of self-defeating behavior of 4.94 in SELF-DISS, which is at a low level. The next finding looks at the level of LHS which is measured based on five measurement scales. Overall, only the first item in the LHS has a mean score in the low-moderate helplessness level, which is 3.02. There are 19 items in the LHS that have low mean scores, which are in the range of 2.30 to 3.00. According to Table 4.8, the interpretation of the overall mean score of the LHS according to the determination of the level of procrastination after adaptation shows the level of procrastination of the respondents at a low level, which is 2.65 in this study.

Next, the results of the study for the level of Rotter's Internal-External Locus of Control Scale (LCS). are based on 29 items presented. The original manual of the LCS Scale does not set a specific cut-off point to categorize respondents into internal or external locus of control. Instead, the LCS scale is designed to provide a continuous measure of locus of control, with higher scores indicating a more external locus of control and lower scores indicating a more internal locus of control. The overall mean average to determine the LCS score cut-off point or median is 12.75. Referring to this context, respondents' scores in the LCS at a score of 12 or below 12 were categorized as external locus of control respondents, which is 65 people. There were 61 respondents who scored 12 or above and were considered as respondents with an internal locus of control referring to the LCS in this study. Overall, all variables showed a moderately high level. These findings need to be refined for the purpose of additional input in an effort to provide effective intervention measures to individuals.

#### *Analysis of the Relationship between Procrastination, Learned Helplessness, Locus of Control and Self-Defeating Behavior*

Pearson Correlation Analysis was used to test the relationship between the level of learned helplessness, procrastination, self-defeating behavior and locus of control among study respondents. Pearson correlation was used to assess the strength of the relationship between two variables with the value of the correlation coefficient,  $r$  between -1 to +1. The value of the correlation coefficient  $r = -1$  represents a completely negative correlation relationship,  $r = +1$  indicates a completely positive correlation and  $r = 0$  means that no correlation relationship was detected between the variables (Williams et al. 2020). Table 3 shows the determination of the level of strength of the correlation relationship based on the value of the correlation coefficient based on The Odum Institute (2015).

Table 3

*Determination of the Level of Correlation Strength Based on the Value of the Correlation Coefficient*

Correlation Coefficient Value	Correlation Strength
± 0.71 to 1.00	Strong
± 0.31 to 0.70	Average
± 0.01 to 0.30	Weak

Source: The Odum Institute (2015)

In this study, Pearson correlation test was conducted by analyzing the relationship between variables divided into their respective dimensions. Table 4 shows the correlation relationship between the variables studied in this study as a whole.

Table 4

*Correlation Analysis Between Learned Helplessness, Procrastination, Self-Frustrating Behavior Dimensions and Locus of Control*

	Learned helplessness	Locus of control	Procrastination	Self-defeating behavior		
				Insecure attachment	Improper self-image	The nature of self-sacrifice
Learned helplessness	1.00	0.09	0.21*	0.13	0.24**	0.21*
Locus of control	0.09	1.00	0.00	0.08	0.02	0.13

\* Correlation is significant at the  $p < 0.05$  level (2-tailed)

\*\* Correlation is significant at the  $p < 0.01$  level (2-tailed)

Based on Table 4, Pearson correlation analysis showed a positive and weak significant relationship between learned helplessness with procrastination ( $r = 0.21$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and the dimensions of self-defeating behavior, namely negative self-image ( $r = 0.24$ ,  $p > 0.001$ ) and self-sacrificing traits ( $r = 0.21$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Learned helplessness and insecure attachment showed a weak positive correlation ( $r = 0.13$ ) but was not statistically significant,  $p > 0.05$ .

In this context, locus of control did not show any relationship with procrastination ( $r = 0.00$ ) and had a very weak positive correlation with learned helplessness ( $r = 0.09$ ) and the dimensions of self-defeating behavior, namely insecure attachment ( $r = 0.08$ ), negative self-image ( $r = 0.02$ ), and self-sacrificing traits ( $r = 0.13$ ). However, all of these relationships were found to be insignificant in this study,  $p > 0.05$ . Therefore, the null hypothesis failed to be rejected because there was a significant relationship between learned helplessness and procrastination and between procrastination and two dimensions of self-defeating behavior,  $p < 0.05$ .

### Discussion of Study Findings

This study aims to identify the relationship between procrastination, learned helplessness and self-defeating behavior among residents in Kuala Lumpur and Selangor. As stated by Vendola (2023), aspects of procrastination, learned helplessness and self-defeating behavior are

important issues because they are closely related to various important aspects of life such as a student's academic performance, mental health and individual quality of life. Investigating the relationship between procrastination, academic performance, and behavioral attitudes plays a crucial role in enhancing student well-being (Yan & Selamat, 2025). Several significances of the study results can be obtained that help various parties to ensure that student productivity and academic performance are guaranteed towards excellence. Not only that, other parties can also get a positive impact from the study input.

This study provides valuable insights at the national level, particularly for policymakers and educational authorities, by highlighting key issues that warrant attention in the formulation of national education policies and economic strategies. Nasharudin and Harun (2010) emphasize that fostering motivation and an internal locus of control through educational curricula and skill development can cultivate an entrepreneurial mindset among students. Similarly, Taha et al. (2015) examine the impact of peer mentoring intervention modules on self-esteem, motivation, and academic performance among low-achieving students, underscoring the significance of self-control and internal locus of control in mentoring programs as determinants of personal development and academic success. The availability of supportive resources and humanistic considerations can further enhance individual growth while simultaneously contributing to broader national development. At the community level, a deeper understanding of intervention mechanisms can facilitate the creation of more effective community development programs. Addressing procrastination among employees by mitigating feelings of helplessness may enhance organizational performance, improve workplace achievement, and foster a positive and conducive work environment. In the realm of personal development, locus of control plays a crucial role in assisting former drug addicts in their recovery process and reducing the likelihood of relapse (Ellias, 2022).

From a macroeconomic perspective, this study has implications for addressing unemployment and fostering Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth. Individuals with a strong internal locus of control believe that their actions directly influence outcomes, thereby exhibiting greater proactivity, persistence in job searching, and initiative in career development (Cobb-Clark, 2015; Galvin et al., 2018). A workforce characterized by high internal locus of control and minimal procrastination is more likely to contribute positively to national economic growth. These individuals tend to be highly motivated, goal-oriented, and proactive in their professional endeavors, thereby driving productivity, innovation, and efficiency across multiple sectors. Their contributions facilitate economic development, attract investment, and cultivate a competitive business environment, ultimately fostering national progress.

In light of these findings, governments and organizations can implement policies and programs aimed at enhancing self-efficacy, entrepreneurship, and time management skills to strengthen individual locus of control and mitigate procrastination. Initiatives such as career counseling, professional skills training, and mentoring programs can empower individuals to take charge of their career trajectories, overcome procrastination tendencies, and contribute meaningfully to the labor market.

**Conclusion**

This study aims to offer a novel perspective by examining the impact of learned helplessness on procrastination and self-defeating behavior. Learned helplessness is a significant contributing factor to these behaviors, as individuals who perceive themselves as helpless are more likely to avoid tasks or situations that pose challenges or present the risk of failure, ultimately leading to procrastination. Furthermore, this sense of helplessness fosters self-defeating thoughts and behaviors, such as a propensity to give up easily or engage in actions that hinder personal success. Individuals experiencing these patterns may struggle to break free from the cycle of procrastination, resulting in diminished motivation and missed opportunities for self-development.

Additionally, interpersonal relationships may be adversely affected by self-sabotaging tendencies, thereby reducing the likelihood of obtaining social support when needed. The present study aligns with the Procrastination-Health Model proposed by Sirois et al. (2003), which explores the relationship between procrastination and individual physical and mental health. According to this model, procrastination can exert detrimental effects on health through various mechanisms, including exposure to stressors and engagement in poor health behaviors. Given these implications, conducting empirical research on this topic is warranted, as it contributes to the advancement of psychological and human development studies while promoting personal well-being.

Moreover other theory had mentioned related the contribution factors of procrastination on motivation. Temporal Motivation Theory (TMT), developed by Steel and König, (2006), integrates time perception as a fundamental component of motivation. It postulates that motivation is influenced by four key factors which refers to value, expectancy, delay, and impulsiveness. While TMT offers a structured explanation for procrastination, it has limitations in measuring motivation beyond delayed behavior in academic tasks, lacking consideration for immediate task engagement. Nevertheless, this framework provides a novel perspective on temporal motivation and is widely applied in time management and productivity research. Findings suggest that addressing productivity-related factors can effectively mitigate procrastination.

Overall, in the context of work environment, procrastination not only impacts individual productivity but also affects the overall performance of the organization. Factors such as poor time management, lack of motivation, and lack of effective work strategies need to be addressed to increase employee self-efficacy and ensure smooth organizational operations. By adopting a more systematic work discipline and proactive approach, employees can optimize their potential, thus contributing to the overall success of the organization. These findings offer key insights into psychological well-being, emphasizing the need for adaptive coping strategies, to optimize task performance. The study's contributions support interventions aimed at enhancing resilience and self-regulation, fostering improved individual and organizational outcomes.

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