Procrastination affecting the Work at Workplace

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Abstract

Procrastination in workplace is an emerging topic of research as it has a major impact on individual and its organization’s growth. It equally affects the employee’s performance and productivity, job satisfaction and organizations productivity and growth. Very less literature is available which makes this topic important to be studied. This review tries to focus on the current research in work settings for procrastination as a behaviour and highlights the research gap in the studies reviewed.

Keywords: procrastination, workplace, productivity, job-satisfaction.

Introduction –

Procrastination means to put off work for later or delaying a work/thought intentionally which is undesired. It is originated from a Latin word procrastinat- “deferred for next day”, pro means “ahead” and crastinus means “belong to tomorrow” (Apple, 2005). Thus, procrastination is putting forward any work for next day which an individual does voluntarily. Procrastination is characterized as an intentional wilful deferral in starting or completing a work until the latest possible time or after the foreordained cut-off time, or inconclusively that would have been unmistakably finished in right now (Freeman, Cox-Fuenzalida, & Stoltenberg, 2011; Gupta, Hershey, & Gaur, 2012; Rozental & Carlbring, 2013; Steel, 2007). Procrastination leads to low self-confidence, low efficiency, low productivity and failure to do a task (Ferrari, 2001).

Majority of the literature can be found studying procrastination in academics or the types of procrastination found in people. Very few researches have been done in knowing the fact how procrastination affects workplace settings. The paper studies such researchers who have investigated the predictors/causes of procrastination and its effect in the work-setting or the company they are employed in. Procrastination has a major impact on individuals’ performance at work as it reduces work efficiency, decreases their speed and accuracy at work. (Ferrari, 2001) which makes it crucial to study the causes, consequences and moderators of procrastination at workplace.

Thus, the following paper would try to summarize the researches till now in the mentioned variable and their major findings as well as what is the research gap left in the researches. The current paper gives importance to study not only the variables affecting procrastination at workplace but also what it can lead to which will give an insight to the already present research and provides more reasons to search in-depth.
Literature in review -

Pasha and Pasha (2017) did research on the causes for procrastination and found around 70% of employees are procrastinators because they are not able to set deadlines or follow a daily routine and are not able to prioritize their work. One of the important reasons for such procrastinating behavior came to be social media usage and over commitment to tasks. Multi-tasking to complete a lot of work together also becomes a reason for employees to procrastinate. Göncü and Metin (2018) tried to link such behaviour of delaying a task with the leadership provided in a company and found transformational leadership negatively related to procrastination as such leaders motivate their employees for their effort in achieving a task or a goal. Avniona and Zibenberg (2018) studied personality as one of the predictors for procrastinating behavior, their results showed that neuroticism is a significant predictor of procrastination although it can not be a stable predictor as there can be other moderating variables which affect their relationship.

Extensive studies are done on chronic procrastination at workplace, Ferrari and Joseph (2005) gave chronic procrastination as one the mostly found type among professional employees and their studies reported fear of failure and poor performance as major reason for this. They were also found to be slow when compared to the non-procrastinators and they did more errors while performing a task resulting in low efficiency at a given work. They were found to be having less accuracy whenever they work underpressure which clearly nullifies the saying by chronic procrastinators that they work better under pressure (Ferrari, 2001). Sedláková, 2014 in his doctoral thesis concluded that out of 94% procrastinators 55% were active procrastinators and rest accounted for passive procrastinators major reason being lack of motivation and dislike the work.

Research methodology –

As the current paper is a review paper thus only secondary sources were taken into account for which research articles were studied which included research on the predictors, causes, implications and behavioural tendencies of the procrastinators at workplace, Dissertations, doctoral thesis, ongoing papers were also included in the literature studied. Very few researches have dedicated themselves in the topic concerned and thus following review has been focussed on procrastinating behaviour only at workplace/work-settings.

Discussion –

Procrastination has now gained importance in the eyes of contemporary researchers especially for workplace procrastination. It has a large impact not only on individual but also on the company they are working for. The employees many times are not able to submit their tasks on time leading to decreased efficiency and low performance at work, low self-confidence and poor performance and they lack the desire to rise within the organization which may lead to effect the organization’s productivity overall. (Ferrari & Joseph, 2005; Pasha & Pasha, 2017; Ferrari, 2001). Pasha and Pasha (2017) in their study concluded that 70% of employees in their study had tendency to procrastinate till the last minute of the deadline to complete a task which makes a large share of company employees who procrastinate. The result of this procrastination is poor performance at work (Ferrari, 2001).
The major causes found which lead to procrastinating behaviour in an employee is the inability to set a deadline, follow a time table, not able to work according to the priority, social media usage, multi-tasking, lack of interest, dissatisfaction with the package for work done, shorter duration of employment stress, boredom, guilt, aversion to task, neurotic personality, and many other are the correlated of procrastination affecting it in negative way (Pasha & Pasha, 2017; Ferrari, 2001; Sedláková, 2014; Nguyen and Ferrari, 2013; Metin and Peeters, 2016). There are situational factors also which affect the procrastination level of an individual. These factors are autonomy, job-satisfaction, no rewards for punctual performance, perceived lack of time and means. Among these autonomy and job satisfaction were significantly related to procrastination at workplace as former one is linked to passive aggressiveness in procrastination and later is to work withdrawal, both of which leads to procrastinating tendency at workplace (Metin & Taris, 2018, Ferrari, 2001).

The types of procrastination also play a major role in having a healthy or non-healthy procrastination like active and passive procrastination. The active procrastinators did it relief the stress of the work and perform better at task and it was found that active and passive procrastinators usually delay work majority on the work which is related to personal life and health whereas only minor work procrastination could be seen at workplace (Sedláková, 2014). One more type found is chronic procrastination on which lot of research can be found as it is more found in professional employees rather than unskilled employees.

Such procrastinators are habitual of procrastinating from a long period of time thus it becomes a routine for them to miss a deadline or follow a time-table. They are usually slow and do not care much about value of time. Their efficiency is low and are less accurate when they have to perform under pressure and when the cognitive loads are high, characterized by low self-confidence which make them perform poorly not only in the task at hand but also the work which comes in future. They usually blame outside forces for their failure at work rather than their own efforts (Ferrari & Joseph, 2005; Ferrari, 2001).

Procrastination can also result from the imitating behaviour of humans as when they are with peers or seniors who themselves procrastinate motivate others to do the same negative habit of procrastinating. Yanmin Yang (2018) concluded in his study that the juniors are more likely to procrastinate when they are in an environment in which others are procrastinators at a large level; it is process which is done thorough imitation. It shows that leadership has a effect on procrastination at work setting. Paternalistic leadership can lead to increased procrastination at workplace whereas transformational leadership can decrease it to a significant level as they are motivated by their leaders whenever they achieve some goal rather it be a personal or professional, they are always motivated by them (Göncü & Metin, 2018).

Personality is another significant predictor of procrastination. Higher in neuroticism can increase an individual’s tendency to procrastinate at work whereas higher agreeableness and conscientiousness can decrease the level one can procrastinate to. Although as it is not a stable predictor as it is always affected by other moderators and mediators being in the role at an individual’s context (Avniona & Zibenberg, 2018; Woods, 2014). Gender also determines delaying behavior; women are low at procrastinating compared to men. In a study it was found that women procrastinators blame a procrastinator for their low performance and missing a target and demand for harsh punishments (Ferrari, 1992; Nguyen and Ferrari, 2013).
Procrastination can cause distraction in pleasurable activity outside the work-related tasks such as problematic internet usage for window shopping or playing games, social media usage, surfing internet (Wretschko, 2006; Pasha & Pasha, 2017; Metin and Peeters, 2016). Procrastination can adversely impact a company’s productivity, poor running of company, poor communication and relation between employees (Ferrari, 1992; Sedláková, 2014). Procrastination can be resolved by increasing motivation by appraisal from superiors, increase in pay scale, team building, self-regulation, good sleep, future orientation increasing experience of good-fit as it increase higher levels of energy at work and they consider it more meaningful making them more engaged to a task (Sedláková, 2014; Metin & Taris, 2018, Gupta & Gaur, Kühnel & Feuerhahn, 2016).

Conclusion –

It can be concluded that procrastination impacts not only an employee’s performance but also the overall productivity of the company. Gap in above studies could be found that procrastination at work-setting is not clearly researched with various present variables as well as they are not studied with any role of moderators or mediators. Studies on procrastination in academics required to be validated in work-settings. The environment, situational factors, age, gender, personality, etc. all play an important role in determining the degree of procrastination which totally differ in an organizational setting. Thus, investigation is necessary for growth at personal and professional level of employees, increasing the productivity of organization and increasing the output at a larger level in an economy.

References –


