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## **The relationship between motivation and procrastination at work**

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**Abstract.** This paper aims to examine the relationship between motivation and procrastination in the workplace. Motivation is addressed as a key factor in determining individual and organisational performance and its impact on commitment, productivity and job satisfaction is investigated. The paper also focuses on various motivational theories and how they can be applied in the specific context of the work environment. In the organizational context, procrastination can lead to decreased workforce effectiveness and thus decreased organizational productivity focusing on the behaviors associated with procrastination in the work environment which can be classified into two main categories: the first involving engaging in non-work activities during working hours such as long discussions, prolonged breaks or cleaning the workspace and the second category of procrastination which refers to the extensive use of technology, especially the internet and mobile devices, known as „cyberslacking”.

**Keywords.** Procrastination, Motivation, Employee, Manager, Job

### **1. Introduction**

In today's dynamic work environment, motivation and effective time management are becoming crucial to career success. Motivation is the driving force that pushes us to achieve our goals, while procrastination is often perceived as a hindrance to optimal performance. In a hectic and competitive work environment, understanding the mechanisms behind motivation and addressing procrastination become key to achieving professional excellence.

Motivated employees are not only more productive but also more engaged in their activities, contributing to a positive work environment. However, many professionals face the challenge of procrastination, delaying tasks and thus affecting the quality of their work. Understanding the connection between motivation and procrastination is essential to develop effective time management strategies and to create an environment conducive to workplace performance.



## **1.1. Motivation**

There is no doubt that the field of human motivation is a complex one, rich in explanatory paradigms and empirical modelling. Definitions of motivation vary widely, from definitions that insist on the foundation of inner tensions ("act or set, system of impulses, internal pressures, energizations or activations, tensional states or mobilizations of actions and conduct"; Popescu-Neveanu, 1994), to cognitive definitions ("motivation is a cognitive process governing the choices made by the subject between alternative types of voluntary activity", Vroom, 1964), behavioural definitions ("motivation occurs when adequate reinforcement takes place, the behaviour being dependent on its consequences", Skinner, 1969) or to definitions made in terms of rational choices ("a process involving two interdependent psychological systems: goal choice and goal effort, Rynes et al. , 2002).

It is evident that there is a great diversity of both conceptual models, explanatory paradigms and procedures or tools for operationalising motivation. However, beyond this richness and diversity, a review of recent research (Leonard, Beauvais and School, 1999, Sherman and Kim, 2004; Belschak, Verbeke and Bagozzi, 2006; Link 2006; Houser-Marko and Sheldon, 2006; Eniola and Adebisi, 2007) suggests that, similar to the Big Five descriptive model for human personality structure, the diversity of motivational factors in the field of motivation can be reduced to a model with two distinct modules: A qualitative one, which includes factors defining the orientation or direction of motivational involvement, and a quantitative one, which includes factors associated with motivational strength and persistence.

### *1.1.1 Paradigms for describing motivation*

Often metaphors built on notions borrowed from physics have been used to describe motivation. For example, Kurt Lewin (in Weiner, 1980) considered that motivation acts as a "force field" in which both the subject and the objects, persons or activities performed by the subject coexist and influence each other.

To characterise motivation, the concept of "vector" has also been used, which in physics has associated concepts of direction, meaning and magnitude. Analogous to physical vectors, motivation has been considered to have three main characteristics: orientation, effort and persistence. Orientation refers to the quality and appropriateness of the behaviour adopted, the direction of a person's motivational investment. In other words, orientation defines what channels a person's attention and motivational interest, what that person is motivationally aiming for, the kind of reward or satisfaction that interests and engages them personally.

In an organisational context, the orientation adopted by the individual must lead to the satisfaction of his or her needs but must not conflict with the general interests of the group and must correspond to the general orientation of the organisation. Effort is the force or energy provided by an individual in the pursuit of his/her objectives. It is not enough for an individual to choose a particular direction, a particular motivating goal. He or she must invest effort, emotional and physical energy and initiate behaviours consistent with that orientation. Effort is influenced by both innate characteristics (e.g. temperament) and contextual characteristics (e.g. attractiveness of the motivational target or urgency of the situation).



Persistence refers to the notions of perseverance and consistency in adopting a behaviour or accomplishing a task. It is not enough for a person to choose a particular direction of their motivational engagement and initiate behaviours consistent with achieving the goals that mark that direction. It also requires the ability to persist in that motivational choice over the long term, despite routines, obstacles, fatigue or disappointments (greater or lesser). Motivational persistence is not only about behavioural persistence in the determinants of work motivation, achieving predefined goals, but also about the ability to remain motivated (motivationally committed) in the long term, to find interest and satisfaction even when accomplishing the task is no longer novel and no longer brings the same satisfaction as at the beginning. In a slightly different paradigm, with cognitiveist overtones, most recent studies have associated motivation with three psychological processes: activation, targeting and persistence (Bandura, 1986; Ford, 1992; Kanfer, 1990; Mitchell, 1982; Pinder, 1998). Thus, most researchers view activation (arousal) as a consequence of a need or desire that cannot be immediately and automatically gratified, leading to the initiation of a seeking action. Researchers argue that there is a directional component, personal goals being the strongest element guiding human behaviour, "goal-directedness is a cardinal aspect of all living organisms" (Locke and Latham, 1990).

The third dimension of human motivation is intensity, with motivation determining intensity and effort and, through this, motivational persistence. The more motivated a person is, the more prolonged and intense will be the effort devoted to a given task. Moreover, the more important, personally significant, specific or difficult the goals to be achieved, the more intense or more difficult the motivational persistence will be (Pinder, 1998).

From another perspective, that of defining the forces underlying motivation, most analysts agree that motivation refers to a set of forces that provoke or mobilise the individual to engage in a given behaviour, internal (personality or intrinsic) or external (environmental or extrinsic) forces. There are many credible, well-known and consistent theories of motivation in terms of theoretical support or empirical evidence, which converge towards the above and towards the analysis of motivational involvement or what is called motivational orientation or the direction of motivational commitment (Constantin et al., In contrast, there are few motivation analysts proposing theoretical models and psychological assessment tests capable of capturing the other two essential components of motivation: effort - the component that represents the force or energy provided by an individual in pursuit of his or her goals, and persistence - the component that refers to the notion of perseverance and constancy in adopting a motivational behaviour or act. Ticu Constantin (coord.)

A derivative of the studies of Bandura (1986), Ford (1992), Kanfer (1990), Mitchell (1982) and Pinder (1998) is also the functional theory, according to which work motivation is best represented as a process involving two interdependent psychological systems: goal choice and goal striving.

The first system involves the development of intentions or goals/objectives. These represent future states desired by the individual and to which the individual feels committed. The choice of goal or objectives affects the direction of action. Cognitive theories of motivation for example describe goal choice as a rational decision-making process that is determined by the meeting of personality factors and the individual's perception of the situation.

The second system, goal striving, refers to internal self-regulatory processes (including self-monitoring, self-assessment of personal progress and self-regulation of reactions to that progress) that enable the employee to invest time and effort in achieving the goal (in the absence of boss



constraint and/or when encountering obstacles to goal achievement). Recent research shows that goal striving is related to self-confidence, personal motivational skills/characteristics, the influence of the practices of the work group in which the employee works, etc. (Constantin T, 2004).

From the perspective of the two systems presented, the motivation process involves two potential difficulties of motivation in organizations (Kanfer, 1999): (1) one at the level of employees' commitment or willingness to adopt/interiorize organizational goals (the will do component, operationalized by us as motivational commitment) and (2) another at the level of employees' competencies to sustain over time and persist in actions directed towards the achievement of accepted goals (the can do component, operationalized by us as motivational persistence).

### **1.2 Procrastination**

Procrastination is broadly defined as a voluntary and intentional delay in starting or completing a work task (Abbasi & Alghamdi, 2015). This procrastination can extend indefinitely, even though the work task might have been completed on time.

Delay has also been defined as a delay in making or implementing a decision, often referred to as a failure. Van Eerde (2003) speaks of procrastination as a trait, being considered a behavioural disposition to "procrastinate" on accomplishing a task or making a decision.

Harris and Sutton (1983) disagree. For them, procrastination is a mode of manifestation in relation to a specific given task. It manifests itself in actions or behaviours that negatively affect individuals' productivity. Manifestations of procrastination can be classified into several categories, such as intentional/unintentional and active/passive.

- Active procrastination occurs when the employee prefers to work under pressure and thus postpone the completion of the work task closer to the deadline. Studies have identified the association of this type of procrastination with emotional stability, sense of time control and life satisfaction.

- Passive procrastination is also called maladaptive and is often associated with lack of autonomy, strained relationships and a less well-defined ideal in life. It predicts procrastination in behavior, whereas active procrastination does not (Wessel et al., 2019).

In an organisational context, procrastination means shirking job duties and engaging in activities unrelated to the job (Metin, Taris & Peeters, 2016). It is considered an undesirable behaviour because it leads to increased employer costs as a result of decreased workforce efficiency and thus decreased organisational productivity (Abbasi & Alghamdi, 2015).

In organizational settings, procrastination-related behaviors can be divided into two broad categories. The first refers to the behavioural or cognitive engagement of individuals in non-work activities during working hours (van den Berg & Roosen, 2018). Taylor (1911/2014) called this type of procrastination soldiering behaviour. Some examples of soldiering are reverie, gossiping or long discussions with colleagues, prolonged coffee breaks or even cleaning the workspace. In other words, any activity more enjoyable than work at the time.

According to Paulsen's (2015) theory, task procrastination occurs in people with a lower sense of work ethic and in situations where employees feel that the obligations of the job exceed their ability to perform. This type of behaviour is largely associated with negative outcomes. Steel (2007) is of the opinion that soldiering reduces self-efficacy, creating a vicious cycle of poor performance.



The second category of procrastination behaviours is related to the widespread use of technology, especially mobile technology. Procrastination online is labelled as cyberslacking. This is a recent and widespread concept that refers to any use of the internet or mobile technology for personal purposes during working hours (van den Berg & Roosen, 2018). On the one hand, the internet allows employees to perform their work tasks faster and more safely than before. On the other hand, it facilitates the consumption of time in the wrong way, outside the requirements of the job (Metin et al., 2019).

Unlike soldiering, the phenomenon of cyberslacking is harder to observe or measure because employees give the impression that they are working, when in reality they are doing something else entirely. Studies by Garrett and Danziger (2008) associate frequent cyberslacking behaviors in senior employees with high levels of autonomy, income, and education. The results are unclear in terms of productivity. No relationship was found between personal internet use at work and contextual performance or task performance. However, there are links between unproductive behaviour and cyberslacking (Metin et al., 2016).

## **2. Methodology**

### **2.1. Objectives and assumptions**

The overall objective of the research is to assess employees' procrastination and the different sources of motivation they have, i.e. whether there is any correlation between them.

The specific objectives of this research are as follows:

Objective 1: The research aims to analyse the differences between procrastination and all types of motivation of employees in different fields of work.

Objective 2: Construct a set of recommendations to counterbalance the motivation types for a balance on this level.

The hypotheses of this research are as follows:

Hypothesis 1: It is assumed that there is a strong negative correlation between procrastination and extrinsic material motivation of employed people.

Hypothesis 2: It is assumed that there is a strong negative correlation between procrastination and extrinsic social motivation of employed people.

Hypothesis 3: It is assumed that there is a correlation between procrastination and intrinsic motivation of employees.

### **2.2. Sample**

The sample of this paper consists of 84 participants, of which 40 are boys (47.61%) and 44 are girls (52.39%). The majority marital status is unmarried, 60 (71.42%), with only 24 (28.57%) married. The background is also unbalanced, with only 10 (11.9%) of the participants living in rural areas and the remaining 74 (88.1%) in urban areas. In the case of age, the average is 26.6 years, with scores ranging from 21 to 41 years.

### **2.3. Instruments**

#### *2.3.1. Procrastination at Work Scale*

Procrastination at Work Scale (PAWS) is a measurement tool designed to assess procrastination tendencies, particularly in the workplace context. It was developed by Sirois and





Pychyl in 2013. This scale aims to assess the frequency and nature of procrastination behaviors related to workplace tasks and responsibilities.

The PAWS consists of 12 items or statements that individuals respond to based on their experiences and behaviors in the work environment. Respondents rate how frequently they engage in specific work-related procrastination behaviors. These items cover various aspects of work-related procrastination, such as procrastinating on tasks, difficulty initiating tasks, and struggling with time management.

The scale typically includes statements such as „I put off starting work projects even when they are important”, „I find it hard to start work tasks” or „I often put off tasks until it is too late”. Respondents rate these statements on a Likert scale, often from „Strongly disagree” to „Strongly agree”.

### 2.3.2. *Scala Multidimensională a Motivației la Locul de Muncă*

The Multidimensional Work Motivation Scale (MWMS) is a psychometric instrument developed to assess different dimensions of motivation in the work environment. It was developed by Gagné et al. (2015) to provide a comprehensive measure of the different types of motivation that influence individuals' workplace behaviours and performance.

The MWMS is based on Self-Determination Theory (SDT) and comprises different subscales, each targeting distinct motivational constructs:

- Intrinsic motivation: this subscale measures the degree to which individuals engage in work tasks because they find them inherently enjoyable, interesting, or satisfying.

- Introjection-regulated motivation: This dimension assesses the extent to which individuals have internalized the value of their work goals and find alignment between their personal values and work-related activities.

- Identification-regulated motivation: assesses motivation driven by recognition of the importance of specific work tasks, where individuals engage in work because they recognize the significance or value of these tasks.

- Extrinsic motivation: This dimension assesses motivation that stems from external factors such as rewards, punishments (material) or pressure from others (social).

- Amotivation: The scale also includes an assessment of amotivation, which is the absence of motivation or lack of intention to engage in work tasks.

Respondents typically rate items on a Likert-type scale, indicating the degree to which they relate to the statements provided.

## 2.4. Ethical standards

As far as ethical requirements are concerned, this paper has been prepared in accordance with ethical norms and principles in psychological research. The following ethical issues have been taken into account:

**Informed consent of participants:** before participating in the study, participants were informed about the nature of the research, its purpose, the duration of their involvement and any other relevant issues. By completing the questionnaire, they gave their consent to participate in this research.

**Data confidentiality:** The data collected in the research were treated confidentially and anonymously. Participants were assured that the information provided would be used solely for the



purpose of the research and that their identity would be adequately protected, namely by the use of a code consisting of a few letters relating to their name.

**Right of withdrawal:** Participants were informed that they have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without incurring negative consequences or penalties. This right was respected throughout the research.

**Presentation of results:** Participants were given the opportunity to receive explanations of their results. They had the right to receive feedback and to be informed of the implications of the research findings.

## 2.5. Statistical and psychological interpretation

### 2.5.1. Hypothesis 1

A first step in checking the validity of the first hypothesis is to apply the Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test.

Table 2.1. Test of normality of distribution of scores

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Procrastination	.123	84	.003	.952	84	.003
Extrinsic-material motivation	.114	84	.009	.956	84	.006

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

As can be seen from Table 2.1, the normality of the distribution is respected for both variables. Since Sig. crosses the .05 significance threshold, a parametric method of correlation, namely the Pearson test, will be applied.

The histograms below represent the distribution of Procrastination and Extrinsic-Material Motivation scale scores.

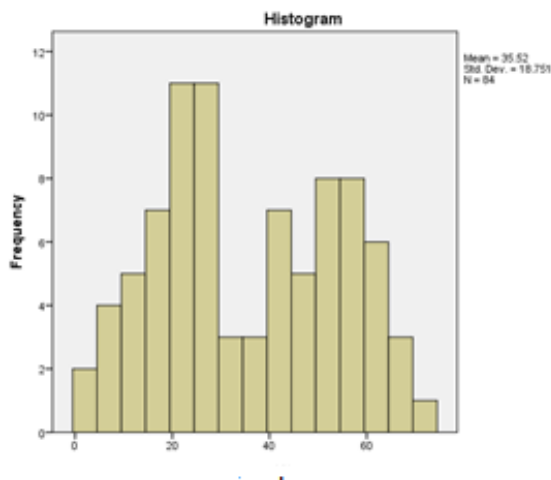


Figure 2.4. Distribution of scores for Procrastination

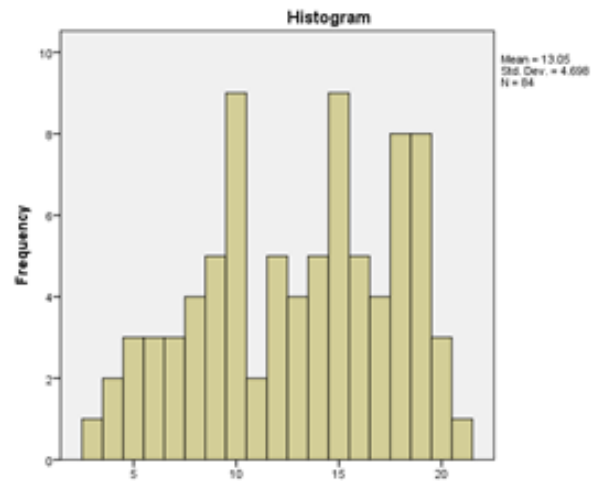


Figure 2.5. Distribution of scores for Extrinsic-Material Motivation





Table 2.2. Correlation

		Procrastination	Extrinsic-material motivation
Procrastination	Pearson Correlation	1	-.735**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	85	84
Extrinsic-material motivation	Pearson Correlation	-.735**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	84	84

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

From Table 2.2 we can conclude that there is a good negative correlation between procrastination and extrinsic-material motivation, which shows that people who are financially motivated have less procrastination at work.

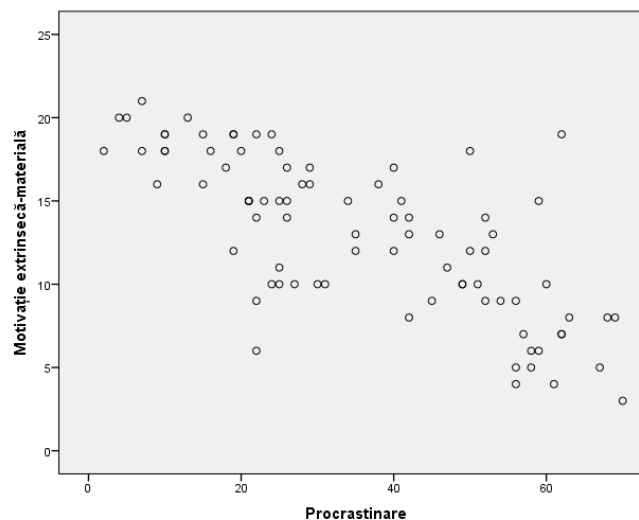


Figure 2.5. Point cloud for Procrastination and Extrinsic-Material Motivation

The link between procrastination and extrinsic material motivation can be complex and vary from individual to individual. Some research (Steel, 2007) suggests that individuals who are more oriented towards material rewards may be more likely to postpone tasks or procrastinate in situations where these rewards are not immediate or are difficult to obtain. Thus, in the case of tasks that do not provide an immediate or clear material reward, individuals oriented towards extrinsic material motivation may delay those tasks or postpone them because they do not provide that immediate reward.

However, it is important to keep in mind that the link between procrastination and extrinsic material motivation can be influenced by a number of other factors, such as the type of task, the work environment, the individual's degree of involvement in the task, and other individual and circumstantial factors.



It has been observed that when material rewards are associated with tasks, they can influence the individual's level of motivation and procrastination, reducing these aspects.

### 2.5.2. Hypothesis 2

For the verification of the second hypothesis, we applied the same method as in the previous one, namely we started by verifying the normality of the distributions.

Table 2.3. Test of normality of distribution of scores

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Procrastination	.123	84	.003	.952	84	.003
Extrinsic social motivation	.142	84	.000	.959	84	.008

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

As can be seen from Table 2.3, the normality of the distribution is respected for both variables. Since Sig. crosses the .05 significance threshold, a parametric method of correlation, namely the Pearson test, will be applied.

The histograms below represent the distribution of Procrastination and Extrinsic-Material Motivation scale scores.

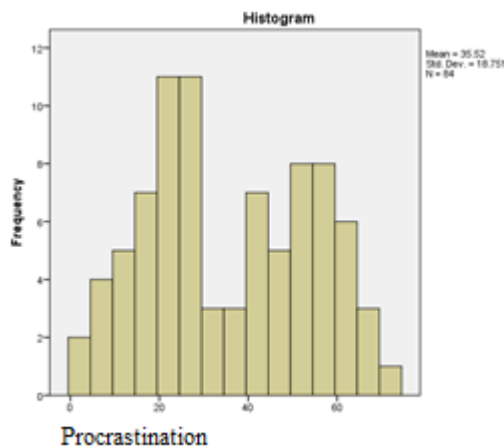


Figure 2.6. Distribution of scores for Procrastination

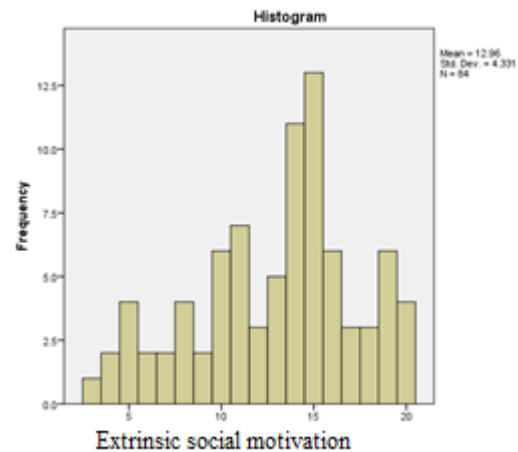


Figure 2.7. Distribution of scores for Extrinsic-Social Motivation

Table 2.4. Correlation

		Procrastination	Extrinsic social motivation
Procrastination	Pearson Correlation	1	-.621**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	85	84
Extrinsic social motivation	Pearson Correlation	-.621**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	84	84

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).



From Table 2.4 we can conclude that there is a negative, but only average, correlation between procrastination and extrinsic-social motivation, which shows that people who are motivated in terms of social influence have a lower level of procrastination at work.

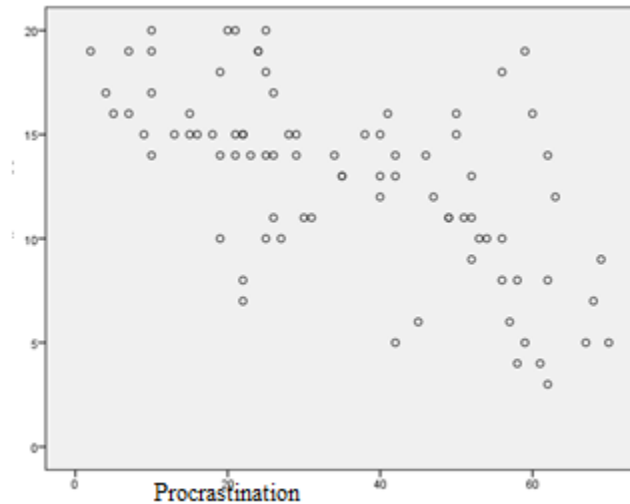


Figure 2.8. Point cloud for Procrastination and Extrinsic-Social Motivation

In certain social and especially competitive professional contexts, procrastination can be influenced by the desire to gain an advantage from comparing oneself with others. This social comparison can influence the level of motivation and procrastination. On the other hand, a social environment that offers support, encouragement and the sharing of common goals can reduce the tendency to procrastinate.

Social norms and group expectations can influence the tendency to postpone or delay tasks. If procrastination is accepted in a particular community or group and there is no pressure to meet deadlines, individuals may be more likely to procrastinate. Thus, it is possible that the participants in this research have social groups that exhibit increased conscientiousness.

However, individuals who are strongly motivated to gain social approval or validation may delay certain tasks in order to complete them in a way that is considered more acceptable or to gain more attention or appreciation from others.

In particular, problems associated with procrastination and lack of self-control seem to be on the rise due to accessible online content. At the same time, workplaces are expected to become more unstructured or at least less self-structured due to employees' lack of self-control. This absence of imposed direction means that the competent worker has to create order - he has to self-manage or self-regulate). As structure continues to decline, the opportunity for workers to procrastinate will concomitantly increase. In addition, the prevalence and availability of temptation, for example in the form of computer games or internet messaging, should continue to exacerbate the problem of procrastination. There are simply more activities with desirable characteristics competing for our attention, and social influence plays a defining role in this. Thus, the literature contradicts our results, but the social influence of participants may be positive, hence the results (Kanfer & Heggestad, 1997).



### 2.5.3. Hypothesis 3

Thus, the procedure used for the other hypotheses is repeated here, the difference being only in the variable sought, namely intrinsic motivation.

Table 2.5. Test of normality of distribution of scores

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Procrastination	.123	84	.003	.952	84	.003
Intrinsic motivation	.098	84	.045	.963	84	.017

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Due to the fact that both distributions are normal, a parametric method of comparison was applied, namely the Pearson Test.

The histograms below represent the distribution of Procrastination and Intrinsic Motivation scale scores.

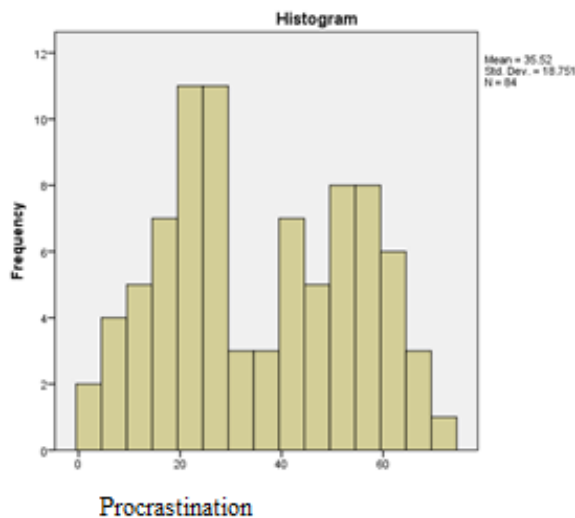


Figure 2.9. Distribution of scores for Procrastination

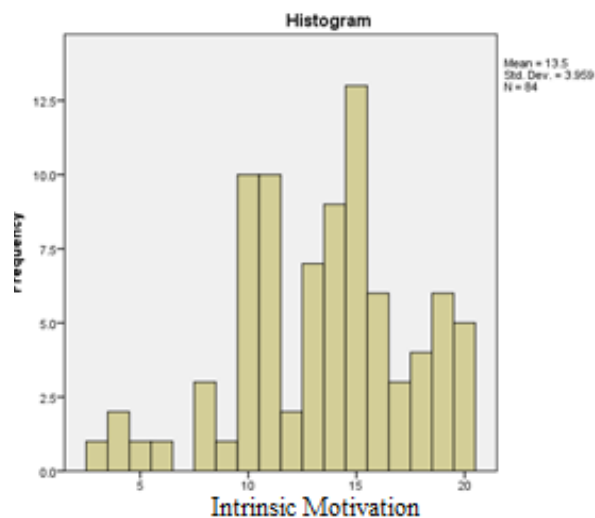


Figure 2.10. Distribution of scores for Intrinsic Motivation

Table 2.6. Correlation

		Procrastination	Intrinsic motivation
Procrastination	Pearson Correlation	1	-.473**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	85	84
Intrinsic motivation	Pearson Correlation	-.473**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	84	84

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).



From Table 2.6. we can conclude that there is a negative correlation, this time weak-medium, between procrastination and extrinsic-social motivation, which reveals that there is a link between the intrinsic motivation of individuals and their level of procrastination, but not as strong as for the other hypotheses.

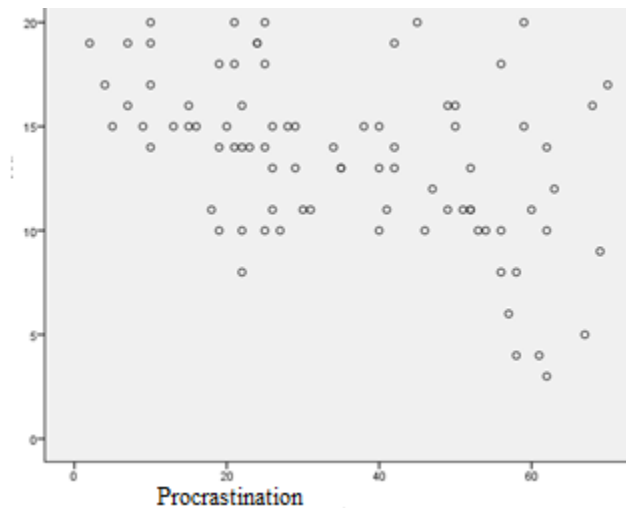


Figure 2.11. Point cloud for Procrastination and Intrinsic Motivation

When a task does not match an individual's interests or intrinsic values, they may be more likely to postpone that task, preferring activities that bring them personal pleasure or satisfaction.

Flow state is characterized by full concentration and immersion in an activity. When a task is intrinsically motivating, the individual is more likely to enter the flow state and avoid procrastination. Intrinsic motivation is closely related to autonomy and self-determination. When a person feels autonomous in choosing their tasks and is connected to their personal goals, they are less likely to procrastinate on those activities.

Conceptualizations of procrastination imply inactivity, or postponing, delaying, or deferring a decision, consistent with the Latin origins of „pro-“, meaning „before or in favor“, and „crastinus“, meaning „tomorrow“. Delaying certain actions is merely a behavioural reflex, while personality traits, cognitive and motivational processes, and contextual conditions are factors that induce procrastination in depth. Procrastination can be seen as intentional and irrational procrastination so that deadlines are not met. Procrastination is considered to be a failure of self-regulation that is associated with a variety of personal determinants, specifically lack of intrinsic motivation (Hen and Goroshit, 2018). Specifically, research suggests that task characteristics (e.g., unclear instructions, timing of rewards and punishments, and task aversiveness), personality facets (e.g., five-factor model, motivation, and cognition), and environmental factors (e.g., temptation, incentives, and responsibility) are the main determinants of procrastination, but a strong effect is provided by intrinsic motivation as a good way to complete a task without the need for an external nudge (Wpych et al, 2018).

In general, intrinsic motivation may reduce the tendency to procrastinate on tasks, while tasks that are not in line with these intrinsic aspects may be more likely to be postponed.



### **Conclusions**

Motivation is central to understanding human behaviour, and its impact on procrastination is a topic of great relevance in psychological research.

Intrinsic motivation, based on pleasure, interest and personal satisfaction, is often associated with a reduction in the tendency to procrastinate, because people are more engaged and energised when they are doing activities that bring them pleasure or are important to them.

Extrinsic motivation, whether material or social, can have a mixed influence on procrastination. In some contexts, external rewards or social approval can boost performance and reduce procrastination. However, in other situations, over-reliance on external rewards may contribute to procrastination behaviour.

Understanding the different types of motivation and how they influence procrastination behaviour is essential for developing effective time and task management strategies. A balanced approach between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation can help reduce procrastination behaviour.

Finally, approaching procrastination from the perspective of motivational diversity provides a complex and nuanced view of how individuals respond to different types of motivational stimuli in relation to task and time management. Identifying and making appropriate use of these motivations may be the key to reducing procrastination and improving individual performance and well-being.

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