

## **Effects of Stress and Procrastination on The College Application Process in High School Students Belonging To Elite Schools**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The primary research has been conducted on 11th and 12th-grade students from higher socio-economic strata in India planning to apply for further studies outside the country. The methodology involved a survey conducted on 60 high school students from elite (top-ranked) schools in New Delhi, India. The results indicated that the students experienced high stress levels during the application process, leading to procrastination. This conformed to various research studies that were conducted on students of the same age in other countries of the world. To reduce these high levels of stress for these students various steps have been identified.*

**Keywords:** Stress, anxiety, procrastination, college application, professional degrees, academic procrastination, university destinations, coping strategies, recommendation letters, essays, socio-economic status, university applications, elite high schools.

**Research Question:** Analysis will be attempted with the help of primary data to understand the stress levels, levels of procrastination, and effects that Indian high school students face while completing their college applications.

### **1. Introduction**

University admissions outside and within the country are always an extremely stressful process for all stakeholders, but more so for children in the age group 16-18 years and their parents. The whole process is exhausting, at times, leading to fatigue. Students from several private schools in Indian metropolitan cities coming from middle-class, upper-middle-class, and high socioeconomic status backgrounds are seen applying to universities abroad. They are aspirational and therefore look at undergraduate programs across the globe. Their education is either completely funded by their parents, or they apply for educational loans for the same. Several factors influence student decisions to apply to universities outside India. Some of them have been highlighted below :

- **Quality of Education:** Some students may feel that universities abroad offer a higher quality of education or more specialized programs in their field of interest. Students also feel that the variety of programs offered by colleges abroad helps them choose what is best suited to them. The learning is more hands-on and practical which is different from the Indian system where a lot of learning is based on memorisation instead of practical training.
- **Quality of life and exposure:** Studying abroad can provide students with a global perspective and exposure to different cultures, languages, and ways of thinking. This also gives better employment opportunities to students.
- **Enhanced career prospects:** Some students may believe that studying abroad will enhance their career prospects by providing access to international job markets or better networking opportunities.
- **Research Opportunities:** Universities abroad may offer more opportunities for undergraduate research or internships in students' fields of interest. Students applying to the United States of America, Canada, and the United Kingdom also get Co-op opportunities where they gain work experience during their 4-year undergraduate program. This helps them get the future-ready sooner.
- **Independence:** Studying abroad can be a valuable experience for personal growth and independence, as students learn to navigate new environments and cultures.
- **Availability of Resources:** Some students may feel that universities abroad offer better facilities, resources, and support services for students.
- **Matter of Prestige:** Attending a prestigious university abroad can be seen as a status symbol and may open doors to future opportunities.
- **Enhanced Language Skills:** Studying abroad can improve students' language skills, especially if they choose to study in a country where English is not the primary language.
- **Personal Reasons:** Some students may have personal reasons for wanting to study abroad, such as family connections or a desire for a change of location. Students are also seen choosing destinations based on ease of staying back and gaining a permanent residency option in the country.

### **1.1. Process of College Admissions**

The college application process varies around the world, but students from the schools that we

have worked with as a sample are applying to countries like India, the USA, the UK, Canada, Europe, and Singapore. The various college applications are explained below briefly.

### ***1.1.1. India***

The Indian system has three broad types of colleges students apply to;

- Professional degrees like Law, Medicine, Engineering, Bachelor of Business Administration, and Design have entrance examinations that students need to prepare for and take between December and July of grade 12.
- Government college options like Delhi University and other state universities like Mumbai, Karnataka, etc have examinations like CUET (Common University Entrance Test) (under the New Education Policy (NEP)) or are based on the merit of the students. The merit-based ones look at the CBSE/ICSE or other state board results.
- Liberal arts (being able to choose their course of study in the second year of university, this is a more flexible way of education) and other private colleges have entrance examinations and are more holistic (similar to the USA system explained below) in their selection process. For example; Ashoka University, Krea University, O.P Jindal University, etc

### ***1.1.2. USA***

The college application process is more tedious and lengthier; it requires the student to complete various elements before they can apply, these being;

- Conducting Research: Students research potential colleges and universities to find the best fit for their academic and personal goals.
- Standardised Testing: Most colleges require students to take standardized tests like the SAT (scholastic assessment test) or ACT (American College Testing), and sometimes additional subject tests.
- Application forms: Students complete and submit applications, usually through a centralized system like the Common Application or Coalition Application.
- Essays: Many colleges require students to write personal statements or essays for their application. There is one common CommonApp essay that is sent to all universities, and other than this, the universities also have supplemental essays the students need to complete.

- Recommendation letters: Students typically need to submit letters of recommendation from teachers, counsellors, or other mentors.
- High School Transcript: Students must submit official high school transcripts (this needs to include grades from the previous four years)
- Additional Interviews: Some colleges require or offer optional interviews as part of the application process.

Students need to check each college's specific requirements and deadlines, as they can vary significantly.

### **1.1.3. UK/Canada/Singapore/Netherlands**

The systems are nearly the same but only have a few differences laid out below;

- These countries are more academically inclined (mainly focusing on the four-year transcript) to make offers to the students. The students apply through separate portals like UCAS (Universities and Colleges Admissions System), Studielink, and OUAC (Ontario University Application System). They are required to submit letters of recommendation, transcripts, and other basic documents.

Overall, the decision to study abroad is personal, and students and parents carefully consider their goals and priorities before making such an important decision.

**Figure I: College applications**



Source: Illustration: Colored Lights / Shutterstock

## **2. Definition**

In researching the impact of applying for higher studies to Universities abroad, on 17-to 18-year-old students, it is imperative to understand the words ‘stress’ and ‘procrastination’ and their impact on the students.

### **2.1. Stress**

According to the WHO, stress can be defined as a state of worry or mental tension caused by a difficult situation. Stress is a natural human response that prompts us to address challenges and threats in our lives.

**Lazarus and Folkman (1984)** have defined psychological stress as “a particular relationship between the person and the environment that is appraised by the person as taxing or exceeding his or her resources and endangering his or her wellbeing”.

Stress can affect both the mind and the body. Some amount of stress is needed to function in daily life and can lead to feelings of being motivated. On the other hand, however, if the stress levels are high and remain so for longer periods they lead to both physical and mental health concerns.

High school students experience higher stress due to many factors. Some of them could be social expectations, expectations from self, unpredictability related to the future, fear of transitions/failure, social relationships, tougher academics, and increased responsibilities.

Response to stress, the four basic ways:

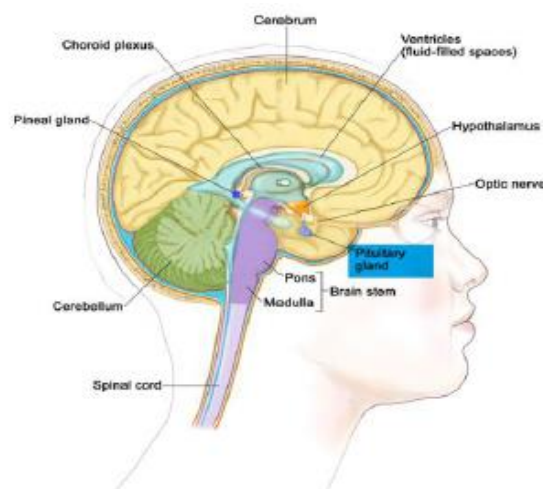
1. Fight response- In this response to actual or perceived stress, the individual may engage in an actual fight mode either physically or verbally. There is an oppositional reaction between the stressor and one’s reaction.
2. Flight response- Occurs in response to a perceived stress and the body either flees the situation or makes an attempt to escape it.
3. Freeze stress response- In this, the body reacts by going into a blank or a freeze state by not being able to respond to the stress stimulus for hours together. it is a highly triggered sympathetic state of response.
4. Fawn - Fawning is when you try and make yourself agreeable to the stress. Instead of either fighting, escaping, or being incapable of dealing with it, one goes into a state of over-explanation, flattery or even taking blame even if they are not at fault.

- Emotional and physical responses result in autonomic responses related to stimulation and response in the hypothalamic pituitary adrenal axis that leads to mineralocorticoids and glucocorticoid secretion from the adrenal gland and prepares the body for fight-escape reactions. (Lopata C, Volker MA, et al. Effect of social familiarity on salivary cortisol and self-reports of social anxiety and stress in children with high functioning autism spectrum disorders, 2008; Deire E. Study of stress rate and stress source in high school students of Shiraz, Shiraz University of Medical Science; 1995.)

There are several symptoms that one can be aware of that are indicative of stress. The external symptoms of stress are indicated by;

- Worry
- Increased Heart rate
- Fear
- Chills
- Feelings of sadness
- Headaches
- Tiredness/fatigue

**Figure II: Image of the brain and the pituitary gland**



Source:healthjade.com

Coping strategies: some of the known ways to cope with stress are;

- Eating Healthy
- Exercising
- Enough Sleep and rest
- Meditating
- Stretching

The five main guidelines for coping with stress are;

Step 1: Identify whether one is stressed

Step2: Try and identify your stressor

Step 3: Try and identify the reason for the stressor

Step 4: Identify and apply an appropriate stress management strategy. This might require professional help that could be suggested by the school, teachers, and/ or parents.

Defense mechanisms

To cope with stress the protagonists use the following defense techniques;

- 1) Rationalisation
- 2) Denial
- 3) Repression
- 4) Projection
- 5) Rejection
- 6) Reaction formation

## **2.2. Procrastination**

“Procrastination is the art of keeping up with yesterday” — Don Marquis

Procrastination simply means to delay or try and put off doing undesirable tasks, almost till the last moment, or sometimes even crossing or jumping deadlines. Some researchers define it as a

“form of self-regulation failure characterised by the irrational delay of tasks despite potentially negative consequences”, (*Prem. R et al*, 2018).

It is also conceptualised “as an irrational tendency to delay tasks or assignments despite the negative effects of this postponement on the individual and organisation,” (*Lay*, 1986; *Steel*, 2007; *Klingsieck*, 2013).

The Oxford Dictionary defines procrastination as, “the act of delaying something that you should do, usually because you do not want to do it.”

The word comes from the Latin word ‘Pro’ meaning forward and ‘Crastinus’ meaning tomorrow. It can involve either avoiding a task completely or delaying it to a later, undetermined time.

Procrastination is delaying a task that was originally planned despite expecting to be worse off the delay (*Van Eerde*, 2003). All conceptualisations of procrastination recognise that there must be a postponing, delaying, or putting off a task.

One procrastinates when one delays beginning or completing an intended course of action (*Beswick & Mann*, 1994, *Ferrari*, 1993; *Lay & Silverman*, 1996; *Milgram*, 1991; *Silver & Sobini*; 1981)

Procrastination is a common behaviour, in school settings. Procrastinate is a derivative of the Latin word *procrastinare* meaning to put off, delay performing a task. It implies performing an alternative activity rather than the one supposed to be done, but is devoid of idleness (*Schouwenburg*, 2004).

Procrastination is seen as an unfavourable activity around the globe as it affects one’s daily routines or tasks in unwanted ways (*Letham*, 2004; *Hoover*, 2005; *Morelli*, 2008; *Schitt*, 2008).

*Milgram* (1991) proposed that procrastination is defined as a series of delayed tasks which result in an unfavourable behavioural product leading to emotional upheaval. Academic procrastination which occurs in the academic setting is the most dominant form of procrastination.

Academic procrastination encompasses the understanding that one needs to fulfill either one or many tasks for example, solving a term paper, preparing for exams, completing a class project, but lacks motivation to do so in a given period of time (*Ackerman & Grass*, 2005).

The failure to achieve academic goals during a destined timeline leads to development of psychological distress in individuals (*Ell*, 1977; *Ferari*, 1995).

Academic procrastination may also lead to inefficient behavioural outcomes and the individual may feel problems in dealing with environment productively (*Milgram*, *Mey-Tal*, & *Levison*,



1998)

### **Theories on Procrastination**

According to the **emotion regulation theory**, procrastination happens when people put their short-term happiness ahead of their long-term well-being and goal-achieving. This generally occurs when people find a task unpleasant because it is tedious, difficult, perplexing, or unpleasant in some other way. a strategy for delaying the accompanying unpleasant feelings; this behaviour is sometimes referred to as "giving in to feel good". This can also occur, though, when people put off chores to generate, intensify, or maintain pleasant feelings rather than to avoid their absence.

Since the behaviour outlined in the theory impedes long-term development and may worsen one's emotional and psychological well-being, it is regarded as a maladaptive coping mechanism.

**The temporal motivation theory** states that procrastination occurs when people's motivation is low, which can happen because of some low-value outcomes, low expectations of achieving outcomes, high delays before achieving outcomes, and high sensitivity to the delay of the outcomes.

### **2.3. Academic Procrastination**

This relates directly to students' propensity to put off or delay finishing assignments, which is typically accompanied by anxiety. One of the most blatant and well-known examples of academic procrastination is putting off studying until the night before the test, which is invariably accompanied by worry.

This problem seems to be more pronounced among undergraduates than adults.(*Ferrari Eur J Pers*, 2001). There seem to be different levels of anxiety that undergraduate students seem to suffer from ranging right up to serious and chronic procrastination.

Academic procrastination is a type of behavior that describes students' tendency to put off or delay finishing assignments that have a deadline, such as writing an essay, doing their homework, or preparing for an exam, even though they are aware that they should be doing these things. This is most commonly associated with anxiety. A study by *Barratt* was carried out to determine the experience of procrastination behaviour in students, and it was seen that students most often commit this behaviour to avoid criticism. (*Hossein Karimi Moonaghi; Tahereh Baloochi Beydokhti*, 2017).

“Academic procrastination, which can be called a reflection of the daily postponement of schoolwork, is defined as delaying duties and responsibilities related to school or saving them to

the last minute (*Haycock, 1998*)). “Procrastination behaviour occurs as not completing the given assignments or delaying preparation for examinations (*Beck, Koons, & Milgram, 2000*).”

Procrastination and stress have a strong positive correlation. Academic procrastination leads to academic stress in students and thus impacts their academic performance in a negative way.

### **3. Review of Literature**

“The relationship between procrastination perceived stress, saliva alpha-amylase level, and parenting styles in Chinese first-year medical students; by *A. Khalid et al (2019)* published *Psychology Research and Behavior Management*”, has shown a positive association between procrastination and stress among MBBS students, indicating that procrastination increases stress in young adulthood as a result of unfavourable parenting methods, such as being punished and rejected.

*Visita Paliwal (2021)* in her research on (“Impact of stress and anxiety on procrastination among adults: A correlational study) concluded that there has been an immense increase in the levels of stress factors like depression, burnout, stress, anxiety, and sleepiness. Her sample was in the age group 18-30. Her findings indicated that the impact of stress and anxiety on procrastination was more in the male sample than in the female sample.

*Sirois et al (2014)*, in their article “Procrastination and Stress: Exploring the Role of Self-Compassion, Self and Identity”, where the sample size consisted of undergraduate students. They concluded that procrastination and stress were accompanied by self-compassion. Procrastinators' higher levels of stress may be explained by low levels of self-compassion; hence, therapies that increase self-compassion may be helpful for them.

A study conducted by *Peachyessay.com (2022)* (“Correlation between stress and academic procrastination”), on the other hand, concluded that the correlation between stress and procrastination was caused due to factors like anxiety. Procrastination has effects on academic focus and increases the stress on the students. The study also suggested that parents should work on the parent-child relationships to help students feel more comfortable during times of stress. *Nayak et al (2019)* in their essay (“Impact of Procrastination and Time-Management on Academic Stress among Undergraduate Nursing Students: A Cross-Sectional Study”) concluded that pre-planning their studies had been beneficial for their academic performance. The study recommended better sleeping patterns and to-do lists, which could lead to high academic achievement.

*Elena V. Kuftyak (2021)* studied “Procrastination, Stress and Academic Performance in Students”, and concluded that students who delay their homework are more prone to stressors

and their response is more acute. It was also seen that low-performing students were more prone to procrastination, laziness, and impulsive decision-making when trying to manage their time.

*Kieron Walker (2023)* in his article “Procrastination on college applications: 5 Ways it hurts you” says Procrastination in the college application process can be very dangerous. Colleges have different deadlines for different courses that could be missed, other than that, financial aid, document uploading, and recommendations also need to be sent in by a certain time and a delay in the same could leave you with an incomplete application that will not be reviewed. A lot of times the seats of various colleges will get filled up if they have rolling admissions, therefore it is important to try and finish everything as early as possible and then wait for the university to get back to you. Overall, procrastination could have a lot of negative effects on college applications.

*Goher et al (2022)* in their research “Exploring the relationship between academic procrastination, academic stress and academic performance of students studying in BS (Hons.) final semester at university in Gilgit-City” concluded that there is a strong correlation between academic procrastination, academic stress and academic performance of students. Further, he also stated that task confusion, overburdening, poor information on the work and social distractions lead to increased procrastination.

*Shine et al (2023)* in their research “Perceived stress, self-efficacy and academic procrastination among college students” looked into the correlation between perceived stress and academic procrastination, which was seen to be high.

*Christopher Rim (2022)* in his article “ How Students Can Manage Stress While Awaiting A College Decision” has indicated that months of hard work and patience lead to the time of college application decisions. It is extremely stressful for the students when they wait for the college results to come in as they don’t know how it will go. It is not just about the fear of failure but also the social pressure to get into a reputed university, to be able to achieve the dreams that they have worked towards for nearly four years of their high school. All these factors lead the students to feel overwhelmed with the process. Students should prioritize themselves, rest, self-reflect, and communicate with their parents and peers.

*Yong (2010)*, examined the illogical inclination to put off starting or finishing an academic assignment as academic procrastination. Many students want to finish their assignments on time, but they are either unmotivated or have other problems getting started.

*Ellis and Knaus (2002)* consider procrastination to be a dysfunctional behaviour interacting with an avoidance process that is typified by the wish to put off doing something, the assurance that it will be done later, and the fabrication of excuses to shield oneself from responsibility and justify the delay. It may frequently be validated by success following impromptu planning, which fosters

confidence in this strategy as a workable tactic.

All the work done so far agrees that there is the fear of the unknown, amongst young adults. Various studies have been done with primary data on young adults at various stages of their admission process. All of them have indicated that the levels of stress are much higher for children seeking admission than at any other time in their life span. These levels are accentuated when there are inherent issues with the respondents regarding fear, low grades, unhappiness, and peer and parental pressure to name a few.

#### **4. Areas of Present Study & Methodology Adopted**

The present study aims to work on primary data collected from school-going children who are aiming for studies within and outside India. These children come from elite families, where payment of tuition fees is not a major impediment and neither is their boarding or lodging. The major source of stress is admission to a good university both in India and abroad. The stress is from peers, the school, and parents as well as siblings. Comparison and social pressure to achieve a named university have become a major issue in the lives of these young children.

The review of the literature reveals that studies have not been done to understand the stress and level of procrastination and the effects it has on the college application process. The overall mental state of students is greatly affected during this process, and a lot of time it goes unnoticed. We need to recognize the effects of this process so that we can be better prepared to help out future generations during the process. It is surprising to note that nearly no studies have been done focussing on high school students applying to college and the effect on their mental health regarding the same.

The present study aims to spread awareness and understanding about the array of emotions and states students go through during this process to help others be better prepared to take on this challenge.

##### **4.1. Methodology**

A survey was conducted on 60 mixed-gender high school students (15-18 years old) in New Delhi, India. The students had recently completed their application process to the USA, UK, India, and other parts of the world. The survey had two tests; the Perceived Stress Scale and the Procrastination Survey by Pittsburgh University, Kansas.

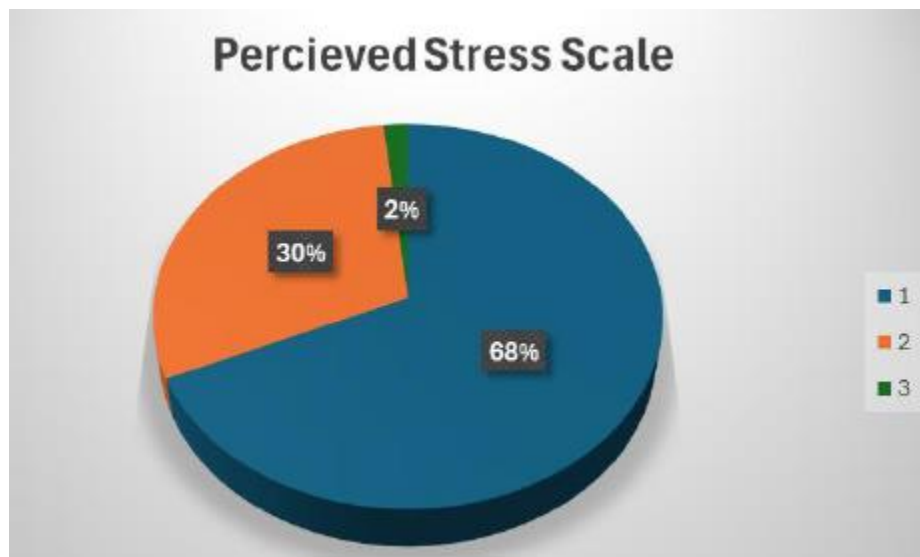
- A. Perceived stress scale- The PSS-10 by Cohen, Kamarch, & Mermelstein, 1983 is an important measure for assessing psychological stress. It works when the subject self-reports on the questionnaire that is meant to measure the degree to which situations in

one's life are stressful. The scale helps to measure how unpredictable, uncontrollable, and overloaded subjects may find their lives. Current levels of stress experienced by the respondents are also assessed.

- B. Procrastination survey- Pittsburgh University, Kansas created the survey to measure the level of procrastination in college-going students. The survey has 18 questions that help us understand if the student is managing well, is facing few difficulties, or if the student is suffering from acute/chronic procrastination.
- C. Questions on college applications- The final seven questions are part of a qualitative survey to understand how the students feel about the application process. They are centred around understanding guilt, satisfaction, and changes in self-esteem/image post the applications.

### 5. Analysis of Primary Data collected from elite schools in Delhi

Figure III: Results of the Perceived stress scale show that 68% of the students felt a high amount of stress during the application season.



Source: Authors own

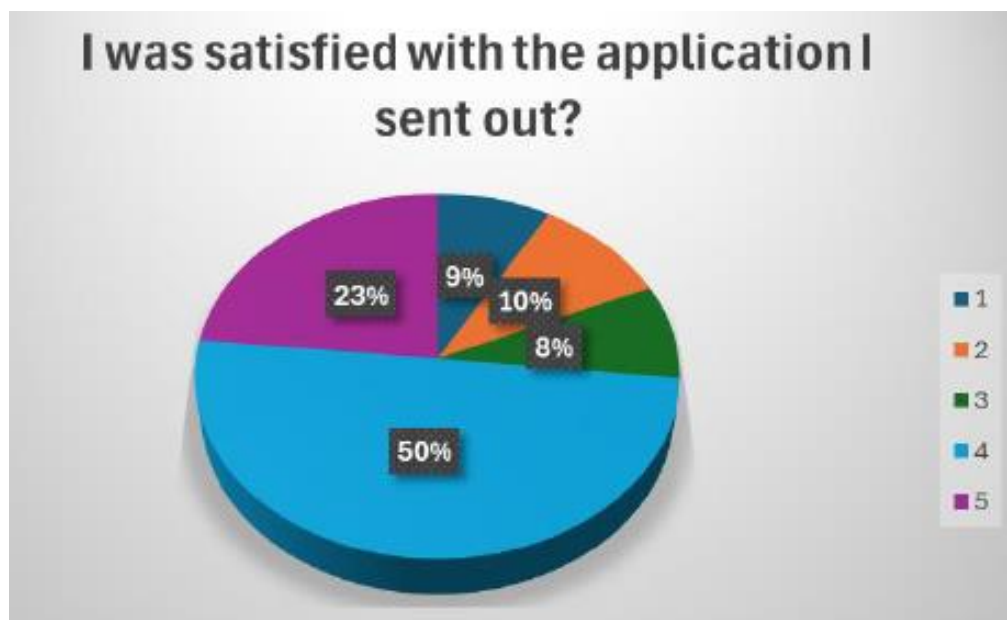
Figure IV: Results of the Procrastination scale show that 50% of the students were highly procrastinating, and 42% of the students felt that they were procrastinating but it did not affect their applications. Only 8% felt that they were able to manage the workload without procrastination.



Source: Authors own

Figure V: The author wanted to know how happy the students were with the application they sent out. (Scale: 1 - Not at all & 5- Yes for sure)

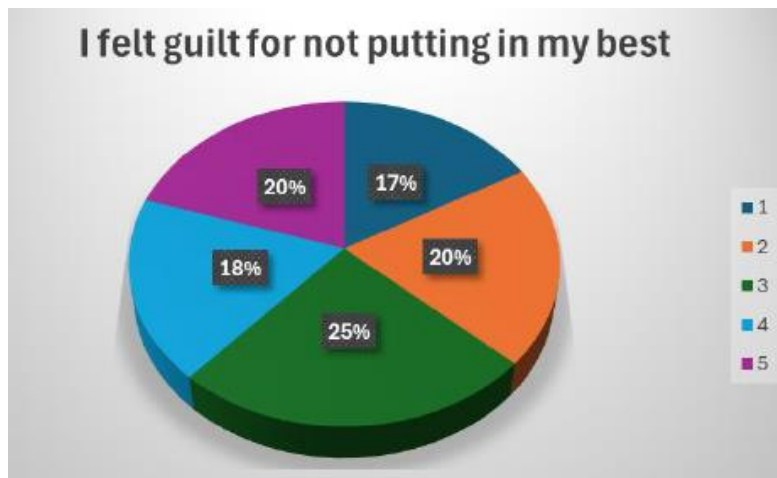
It was seen that even though the stress levels were high (mentioned previously), the students were quite happy and satisfied with the applications they sent out.



Source : Authors own

Figure VI: Guilt in students post the application process. (Scale: 1 - Not at all & 5- Yes for sure)

38% of the students felt some amount of guilt for not putting their best foot forward for the application process.



Source: Authors own

Figure VII: The author wanted to know if the students would do things differently if they had the chance. (Scale: 1 - Not at all & 5- Yes for sure)

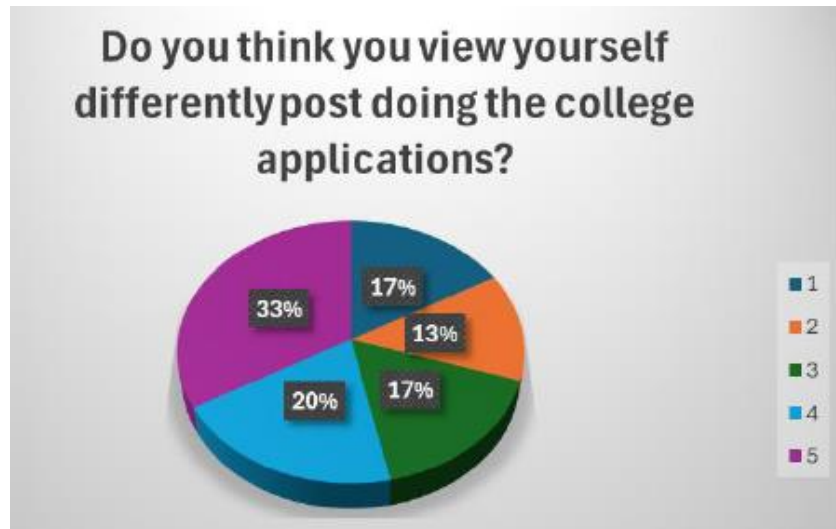
It is important to note, that even though most students said they were happy with their applications, a majority of them said they would do things differently if they had the chance. which means that they would have done things differently if the stress levels and procrastination levels were different.



Source: Authors own

Figure VIII: Understanding if the students viewed themselves differently post the application process. (Scale: 1 - Not at all & 5- Yes for sure)

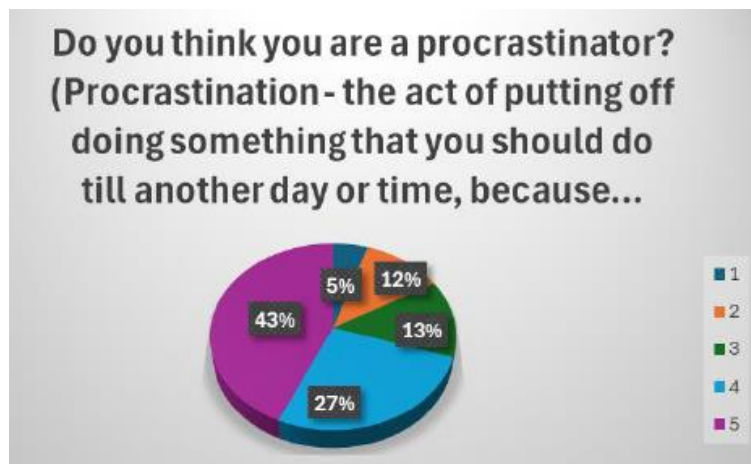
It can be seen that the college application has made the students view themselves differently. a majority of the students (33%) mentioned the same.



Source: Authors own

Figure IX: How many students viewed themselves as procrastinators (Scale: 1 - Not at all & 5- Yes for sure)

The majority (43%) of the students viewed themselves as procrastinators.



Source: Authors own



Figure X: How students viewed themselves about stress during the application season. (Scale: 1 - Not at all & 5- Yes for sure)

Even though it can be seen through the perceived stress scale that most students were stressed during the application, the students of the survey did feel a moderate amount of stress during this period.



Source: Authors own

## 6. Summary

Table I- The scores for all the students on the perceived stress scale\* and the procrastination scale\*.

Test Name	Total Students	High scores	Medium Score	Low Score
Perceived Stress Scale	60	41	18	1
Procrastination Scale	60	30	25	5

Source : Authors own

\*The perceived stress scale and the procrastination scale have been defined in the methodology section.\*

It was seen that the students were very highly stressed during the application season, and they perceived themselves to be high on the procrastination scale.

Table II- The table below indicates the scores on various questions that were posed around the effects of stress and procrastination on college applications.

Score	1 (Not at all)	2	3	4	5 (Yes, for sure)
I was satisfied with the application I sent out.	5	6	5	30	14
I felt guilty for not putting in my best	10	12	15	11	12
Would you do things differently if you had another chance?	2	7	15	9	27
Do you think you view yourself differently after doing the college applications?	10	8	10	12	20
Do you think you are a procrastinator? (Procrastination - the act of putting off doing something that you should do till another day or time because you do not want to do it)	3	7	8	16	26
Do you think you were very stressed during the application process, and that could have been a reason for you to not give your best?	10	12	16	9	13

Source: Authors own

## 7. Conclusion

The paper aimed to study the effects of stress and procrastination on high school students during the college application process. The scales on stress and procrastination determined that the students' levels of stress were high during the application season. Results of the perceived stress scale indicated that 68% of students felt a high amount of stress during the college application process. 50% of the students felt they were high procrastinators highlighting the relationship between college applications and procrastination that usually peaked at this stage.

This is further concluded by *Kieron Walker* (2023) in his article “Procrastination on College Applications: 5 Ways it Hurts You” which summarises that procrastination in the college

application process can be very dangerous. 38% of the students felt guilty for not putting in considerable effort at this time indicating the correlation between stress levels and anxiety among students. 60% of the students indicated that they would do things differently if they had another opportunity. This is a behavioural indication of guilt and regret that is caused due to procrastination and its detrimental effects on student life. 53% viewed themselves differently after the application process. Due to the feelings of being overwhelmed and burdened, students view themselves with lowered self-esteem accompanied by feelings of regret and guilt for not being able to start the process on time.

In the qualitative survey, 70% of the respondents viewed themselves as procrastinators indicating that they were aware of their behavioural patterns but did little or nothing to overcome them. 37% of the student respondents considered stress to be a major factor during the application process. The responses coincide with an article by *Christopher Rim* (2022), "How Students Can Manage Stress While Awaiting A College Decision" indicating that months of hard work and patience lead to the time of college application decisions.

The results of this indicate that there is a direct correlation between perceived stress, procrastination, and the college application process.

This data is especially important to realise that the college preparation process for students should start much earlier on, as both academic stress plus college application stress lead to a high level of student dissatisfaction. It is also imperative to conclude that the college application process is usually accompanied by feelings of stress, anxiety, and low self-esteem. This, in turn, leads to high avoidance behaviour and thus is enmeshed with feelings of guilt.

Apart from starting early, several techniques can be put in place to reduce the negative impact of stress and anxiety on the students.

A few strategies that can be put in place by college counsellors to support students through the application process are:

1. Start college application planning early (by grade 9 for all students). A lot of schools are now starting interventions as early as Grade 6, where they introduce students to various careers.
2. Inform students about various colleges, courses, and destinations early, so that they can plan for the application well in time.
3. Share deadlines and timelines with students (share them repeatedly). Counsellors can also display them on their bulletin boards.

4. Do regular check-ins with students to help them stay on track.
5. Track student progress on the application regularly. Conduct checkpoint meetings with students and families.
6. Conduct mock application sessions for students in Grade 11, so that they are prepared for what lies ahead. (Most students wanted a second chance, and a mock would help the students do a trial, and be better prepared)
7. Have easy access to guides and resources as ready reckoners for students.

Some strategies for School counsellors to help students cope with academic stress, anxiety, and procrastination during the college application seasons:

1. Regular counselling check-in with the well-being counsellor at school
2. Group therapy sessions for students during application season, to help with stress management and helping students develop coping strategies.
3. Interactions with students who have recently completed their applications, to share insights into what lies ahead for the students.
4. Self-help strategies like box breathing and grounding techniques to deal with stress and anxiety.
5. Self-regulation techniques include mindfulness, positive self-talk, and keeping a journal.
6. Encouraging a healthy lifestyle (dietary habits and sleep)

It is important to note that the research was conducted on students who attend school at elite private schools in Delhi. The schools have robust counselling departments that will be able to help the students if they start early interventions.

## **8. Declarations**

1. Informed consent was taken from all participants included in the present study.
2. No identifying information has been mentioned or used in the present study.
3. All data will be anonymised and shared if required. The data is readily available to the researchers.

## **9. Ethics Statement**

1. Ethical approval - The study was granted exemption as it caused no harm to the participants. No personal data or information has been used in the public domain. The appropriate permissions were taken from the participants' schools before the start of data collection. Informed Consent was obtained from all participants.
2. Guidelines followed - All guidelines set by the participants' schools were followed during the study.

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Appendix

Attachments

Attachment 1: Perceived stress scale

Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10)

Instructions:

The questions in this scale ask you about your feelings and thoughts during the last month. In each case, you will be asked to indicate how often you felt or thought a certain way.

In the last month, how often have you...

	Never	Almost Never	Sometimes	Fairly Often	Very Often
1	0	1	2	3	4
2	0	1	2	3	4
3	0	1	2	3	4
4	4	3	2	1	0
5	4	3	2	1	0
6	0	1	2	3	4
7	4	3	2	1	0
8	4	3	2	1	0
9	0	1	2	3	4
10	0	1	2	3	4

Developer Reference:

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