Maladaptive Daydreaming and Academic Procrastination: The Effects on Memory

Dominic Tomasi[1] and Changiz Mohiyeddini, Ph.D.[2]

1. Oakland University William Beaumont School of Medicine
2. Department of Foundational Medical Studies, Oakland University William Beaumont School of Medicine

Introduction

- Maladaptive Daydreaming (MD) is a relatively new psychological phenomenon, described as excessive daydreaming that results in personal distress and/or impaired cognitive and social functioning[1]
- Given its newness, MD remains under investigated in its association with certain populations, other psychopathological conditions, and maladaptive processes
- To our knowledge, MD has not yet been studied in medical students, a group where academic performance can be affected by time consuming maladaptive behaviors, otherwise known as procrastination[2]
- Previously, academic procrastination has been associated with impairments in both prospective and retrospective memory[3] in students, as well as other negative outcomes, including poor academic performance and increased levels of stress[2,4]

Aims and Objectives

- Aim 1: Investigate if maladaptive daydreaming is a relevant phenomenon that medical students experience.
- Aim 2: Investigate the association between maladaptive daydreaming and academic procrastination in medical students
- Aim 2: Explore the relationship between academic procrastination and prospective and retrospective memory in medical students.
- We hypothesize that medical students who engage in maladaptive daydreaming will also endorse higher levels of academic procrastination and likely some poor performance in either prospective or retrospective memory, or both.

Methods

This project utilized a cross-sectional survey analyzing a mediation model that seeks to investigate the relationship between maladaptive daydreaming, procrastination, and prospective and retrospective memory. As part of the cross-sectional survey, we administered validated and reliable surveys; including the Maladaptive Daydreaming Scale 16 (MDS-16), Academic Procrastination Scale – Short Form (APS-S), and the Prospective and Retrospective Memory Questionnaire (PRMQ). The survey also included self-reported data centering around the student's academic performance during the M1 year. Data was collected via Qualtrics over the span of four months. Participants were all medical students currently enrolled at Oakland University William Beaumont School of Medicine and were at least 18 years of age. Participants were recruited via email.

Results

At a n=25, a mediation analysis showed that maladaptive daydreaming had a significant association with academic procrastination (r=0.533, p <0.01). In addition, higher endorsement of academic procrastination was significantly associated with both decreased prospective (r=-0.429, p<0.05) and retrospective memory (r=-0.448, p<0.05) performance. Our results show that maladaptive daydreaming is a process that is relevant amongst medical students. Further, our data further supports previous studies showing that academic procrastination is associated with lower memory performance, both on measures investigating the prospective and retrospective components of memory.

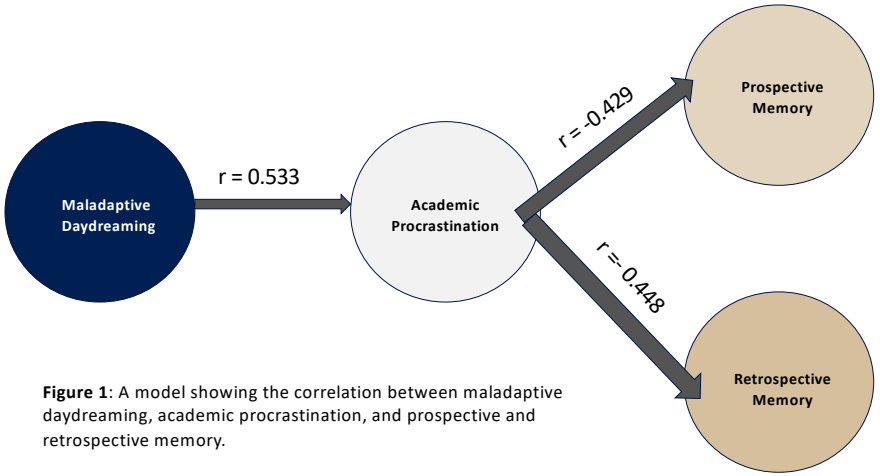

Figure 1: A model showing the correlation between maladaptive daydreaming, academic procrastination, and prospective and retrospective memory.

Conclusions

This study shows that medical students who endorse maladaptive daydreaming behaviors are correlated with academic procrastination and hence, overall academic performance. Further, students who engage in academic procrastination report to have both lower prospective and retrospective memory performance. In a highly rigorous academic environment such as a medical school, procrastination can lead to high levels of stress and may leave students feeling overwhelmed.

These findings suggest that in order to be able to procrastinate, students must remove elements of their memory (both retrospective and prospective) in order to reduce the stress associated with procrastination. Given the stressful nature of procrastination, these results lend support to providing tailored intervention to students to refrain from maladaptive daydreaming, which might positively impact procrastination, stress, and overall memory performance.

References

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