



Psychological Dynamics and Coping Mechanisms in Chronic Academic Procrastination Among Senior High School Students

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Keywords: Case Study; Chronic Academic Procrastination; Coping Mechanisms; Guidance and Counseling; Psychological Dynamics. Article History Received: April 20, 2026 Revised: July 12, 2026 Accepted: August 10, 2026	Chronic academic procrastination among senior high school students is increasingly understood as a self-regulatory problem involving interconnected cognitive, emotional, and interpersonal processes rather than merely poor time management. This study aimed to explore the psychological dynamics and coping mechanisms of students experiencing chronic academic procrastination. A qualitative case-study design was employed involving two eleventh-grade students purposively identified as exhibiting persistent academic task delay across multiple subjects. Supporting data were obtained from four informants consisting of a homeroom teacher, a subject teacher, a guidance-and-counseling teacher, and a peer. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, non-participant observation, and documentation and analyzed using the interactive model of data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings revealed a recurring psychological cycle involving negative task appraisal, low confidence, academic anxiety, guilt, fear of failure, and avoidance of academic accountability. Interpersonal relationships played an ambivalent role, functioning both as sources of distraction and social support. Students predominantly relied on maladaptive emotion-focused coping, including digital distraction, social interaction, avoidance, and other activities that provided temporary emotional relief but reinforced continued task postponement. Problem-focused strategies, such as help-seeking and task prioritization, were present but inconsistently applied. These findings highlight the importance of guidance-and-counseling interventions that integrate self-efficacy development, emotion regulation, cognitive restructuring, and adaptive coping skills rather than relying solely on time-management training.

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INTRODUCTION

Education is expected to develop students' academic competence while cultivating the self-regulatory capacities that allow them to meet the demands of formal schooling. Among these demands, the completion of academic assignments within a designated time frame is one of the most basic yet consistently challenging responsibilities that students face (Mahy et al., 2024). When students repeatedly delay starting or finishing academic tasks despite being aware of the negative consequences that such delay may bring, the behavior is conceptually defined as academic procrastination (Araya-Castillo et al., 2023; Ye et al., 2025).

Contemporary research increasingly frames procrastination not as a simple deficiency in time management, but as a complex form of self-regulatory failure that arises from the dynamic interaction between an individual's cognition, emotion, and behavior (Farhadi Rad et al., 2025).

This reconceptualization is important because it shifts attention from surface-level symptoms, such as late submissions, toward the underlying psychological processes that sustain the behavior over time. Schuenemann et al. (2022) further argue that procrastination functions as a short-term mood-regulation strategy: individuals delay aversive tasks to avoid the negative affect the tasks provoke, even though this strategy ultimately transfers the burden, together with compounded stress, to their future selves.

When procrastination is not isolated to a single task but recurs persistently across various academic activities, becomes resistant to change, and is accompanied by chronic emotional distress, the behavior can be considered chronic rather than situational. Unlike situational delay, which is triggered by specific and transient circumstances, chronic academic procrastination reflects a stable behavioral pattern that is deeply embedded in a student's cognitive appraisal of tasks, emotional regulation capacity, and habitual coping style. The present study operationalizes this chronic-situational distinction through four converging criteria duration, breadth, resistance to change, and documented consequence detailed in the Method section below. Fear of failure and task aversiveness are frequently reported as central correlates of procrastination among students more broadly (Li et al., 2024), reflecting the relevance of this problem within educational contexts such as Indonesia.

Empirical evidence consistently links procrastination with adverse academic outcomes. Students who habitually postpone their assignments tend to obtain lower grades than their non-procrastinating peers (Mahy et al., 2024), a pattern explained partly by the compressed and hurried nature of last-minute task completion, which curtails deep information processing and undermines long-term retention. Beyond academic performance, procrastination is also associated with heightened psychological costs. A recent three-wave longitudinal study demonstrated that procrastination predicts subsequent depressive and anxiety symptoms directly, with perceived stress not emerging as a significant mediator of this relationship, underscoring that the consequences of procrastination extend well beyond the classroom into students' broader psychological well-being (Jochmann et al., 2024).

Explaining why students persist in a behavior that they know to be harmful requires attention to the coping strategies students adopt when facing the emotional discomfort generated by unfinished academic tasks. Coping refers to the cognitive and behavioral efforts individuals use to manage the internal and external demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding their resources (Mulyana et al., 2022). Coping can be broadly classified as problem-focused, which is oriented toward resolving the source of the stressor, or emotion-focused, which is oriented toward regulating the distress the stressor produces (Kinman & Wray, 2020); this problem-focused/emotion-focused framework is used consistently throughout the present study, including in the analysis of the Results. Within this framework, procrastination itself can be understood to function as a maladaptive, emotion-focused coping response: rather than confronting the source of academic pressure, students disengage from the task and redirect their attention toward more immediately gratifying activities, thereby obtaining short-term relief while reinforcing the very behavior that produces long-term harm.

A growing body of recent research reinforces the centrality of emotional and self-regulatory processes in explaining procrastination. Vlachopanou et al. (2025) found that students' motivational and adjustment difficulties, rather than planning deficits alone, help explain their subjective experience of procrastination, extending beyond concerns about social relatedness and perceived task competence. Similarly, Farhadi Rad et al. (2025) reported that low academic self-efficacy and difficulty regulating emotion are central predictors of students' tendency to postpone academic tasks, consequences of which include heightened stress and diminished well-being. Notably, when anxiety and perfectionism have been examined together as competing predictors, anxiety rather than perfectionism has emerged as the more consistent correlate of

procrastination (Rezaei-Gazki et al., 2024), suggesting that perfectionistic standards may contribute to procrastination chiefly through the anxiety they generate rather than as an independent driver. Low self-efficacy has likewise been shown to be one of the strongest predictors of procrastination among adolescents (Cutipa-Flores et al., 2025), and a recent study among Chinese adolescents found that anxiety and weak self-control sequentially mediate the relationship between unmet psychological needs and academic procrastination (Ye et al., 2025). Collectively, these studies indicate that chronic academic procrastination is best understood as an interaction between negative cognitive appraisal, unregulated emotional distress, and a habitual reliance on avoidance-based coping.

Despite this growing body of evidence, at least four distinct gaps remain. Methodologically, most existing studies rely on cross-sectional, variable-centered designs that quantify the strength of association between procrastination and its correlates rather than describing how these processes unfold within individual students' lived experience. Population-wise, this qualitative, in-depth evidence is concentrated among university students; even large cross-sectional studies that do include secondary-level students, such as Touloupis and Campbell (2024) and Ragusa et al. (2023), remain variable-centered rather than offering an in-depth, qualitative account, leaving senior high school students comparatively underexamined at this level of depth. Contextually, qualitative case studies situated specifically within the Indonesian secondary-school setting remain scarce relative to the volume of quantitative, cross-national evidence. Theoretically, while self-regulatory failure, negative emotion, and avoidance-based coping are individually well documented, fewer studies have integrated these cognitive, emotional, interpersonal, and coping dimensions within a single bounded case to show how they interlock in practice.

Preliminary screening informal observations and conversations with subject teachers, homeroom teachers, and the guidance-and-counseling teacher at a senior high school in Klaten Regency identified two eleventh-grade students who persistently delayed academic tasks across nearly all subjects. This preliminary screening took place in March of the 2025/2026 academic year, several weeks before the formal data-collection period reported in the Method section (May 2026). These preliminary findings suggested that the students' procrastination was intertwined with academic anxiety, fear of failure, and low confidence in their own abilities, rather than being attributable to time-management deficits alone, indicating that the phenomenon warranted deeper, contextualized investigation.

Based on the description above, this study aims to describe the psychological dynamics experienced by senior high school students with chronic academic procrastination and the coping mechanisms they use when confronting the academic pressure that arises from this behavior. The findings are expected to enrich the theoretical understanding of chronic academic procrastination as a psychological phenomenon and to provide an empirical foundation for guidance-and-counseling teachers in designing interventions that address the cognitive, emotional, and coping dimensions of procrastination rather than time-management skills alone.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a case-study design (Yin, 2018). The qualitative approach was selected because the study sought to explore, in depth, the subjective meaning that students attach to their own experience of chronic academic procrastination, rather than to measure the prevalence or statistical association of predefined variables. The case-study design was chosen because chronic academic procrastination is a phenomenon that is deeply embedded in the individual and contextual circumstances of each student; a bounded, in-depth exploration of specific cases was therefore considered the most appropriate way to capture the complexity of the phenomenon within its real-life context (Assyakurrohim et al., 2023). This study was conducted at a senior high school in Klaten Regency, Central Java, Indonesia, during the even

semester of the 2025/2026 academic year. The research site was selected purposively based on preliminary observations and information from school personnel indicating the presence of students exhibiting chronic academic procrastination.

Data Sources

The primary data source consisted of two eleventh-grade students who were purposively identified, through preliminary observation and information provided by subject teachers, homeroom teachers, and the guidance-and-counseling teacher, as exhibiting chronic academic procrastination across multiple subjects over at least one semester. Subject A was a 16-year-old male student who habitually delayed submitting assignments in nearly all subjects and typically began working only as the submission deadline approached. Subject B was a 16-year-old female student who tended to postpone tasks until they accumulated, after which she experienced anxiety and difficulty determining which task to prioritize. Secondary data were obtained from four supporting informants who had direct, sustained interaction with both focal students in the academic context: ND, the homeroom teacher of Subject A and Subject B; AR, the subject teacher (English) who taught both students; DT, the guidance-and-counseling teacher who provided services to both students; and EV, a peer who maintained a friendship with, and regularly interacted with, both students in academic and daily activities (Table 1). Because all four supporting informants had contact with both focal students, they served as a common corroborating source across the two cases rather than as case-specific informants. In total, the study therefore drew on six participants: two focal students and four supporting informants.

The two focal students were classified as exhibiting chronic, rather than merely situational, academic procrastination on the basis of four converging operational criteria applied prior to selection: (1) duration, task delay recurring across at least one full semester rather than an isolated assignment; (2) breadth, delay documented across nearly all subjects rather than being confined to a single course; (3) resistance to change, continuation of the pattern despite informal reminders and leniency from teachers; and (4) documented consequence, corroboration through assignment-submission logs, attendance records, academic scores, and guidance-and-counseling case notes, in addition to the independent reports of subject teachers, homeroom teachers, and the guidance-and-counseling teacher. Because no standardized procrastination instrument was administered prior to selection, this classification should be read as a triangulated, informant- and record-based judgment rather than a psychometrically validated diagnosis, and this is noted as a limitation of the study. Table 2 summarizes how each case met the four criteria individually.

Table 1. Supporting Informants Involved in Data Triangulation

Name (Initials)	Gender	Age	Role	Status	Relationship to Subject A / B
ND	Female	37	Homeroom Teacher	Key Informant 1	Homeroom teacher of both Subject A and Subject B
AR	Female	41	Subject Teacher (English)	Key Informant 2	Teaches English to both Subject A and Subject B
DT	Female	30	Guidance and Counseling Teacher	Key Informant 3	Provides counseling services to both Subject A and Subject B
EV	Female	16	Peer	Significant Other 1	Friend of, and regularly interacts with, both Subject A and Subject B

Table 2. Case-Selection Matrix: How Subject A and Subject B Met the Four Chronicity Criteria

Criterion	Subject A	Subject B
Duration (≥ 1 semester)	Assignment-submission records for the English subject span five tasks due between 20 January and 21 May 2026, covering the full even semester of 2025/2026, with a delay recorded on every task.	Assignment-submission records for the English subject span the same five tasks (20 January–21 May 2026), with a delay recorded on every task.
Breadth (nearly all subjects)	Delay reported by the homeroom teacher and subject teachers across nearly all subjects; quantified submission logs are available for English (Table 2, Documented consequence row).	Delay reported by the homeroom teacher and subject teachers across nearly all subjects; quantified submission logs are available for English (Table 2, Documented consequence row).
Resistance to change	Pattern persisted despite reminders and leniency from teachers, per homeroom- and subject-teacher reports and the guidance-and-counseling case notes.	Pattern persisted despite reminders and leniency from teachers, per homeroom- and subject-teacher reports and the guidance-and-counseling case notes.
Documented consequence	English-subject submission log: 5 assignments, each submitted 8–31 days late (13, 10, 31, 8, and 13 days), with scores of 78, 78, 76, 80, and 80; corroborated by a guidance-and-counseling case report (24 May 2026).	English-subject submission log: 5 assignments, each submitted 7–29 days late (11, 7, 29, 7, and 10 days), with scores of 78, 78, 76, 80, and 80; attendance was generally good, but the homeroom teacher's notes record instances of tardiness to class, and a guidance-and-counseling case report is on file.

Data Collection Techniques and Validity

Data were collected through three complementary techniques: in-depth semi-structured interviews, non-participant observation, and documentation, drawing on all six participants the two focal students and the four supporting informants listed in Table 1 who were purposively selected based on their relevance to the research objectives and their direct involvement with the phenomenon under investigation. Data collection was originally planned to span the full even semester of the 2025/2026 academic year, but was compressed to approximately one month because of concurrent school examinations and other academic activities, a constraint noted as a limitation of the study; interview sessions with the six participants were conducted between 6 and 24 May 2026.

In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with all six participants once each: Subject A and Subject B on 6 May 2026, the subject teacher (AR) on 11 May 2026, the peer informant (EV) on 11 May 2026, the homeroom teacher (ND) on 7 and 14 May 2026, and the guidance-and-counseling teacher (DT) on 11 and 16 May 2026. Each interview lasted approximately 30–45 minutes and followed a semi-structured interview guide developed around the cognitive, emotional, and interpersonal dimensions of psychological dynamics, as well as problem-focused and emotion-focused coping. Interviews were conducted in Indonesian; the quotations presented in the Results were translated into English by the researchers. With participants' consent, the interviews were audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed verbatim. The interview process allowed the researchers to explore participants' experiences,

perceptions, and responses to the phenomenon under investigation while providing flexibility to pursue relevant issues that emerged during the interviews.

Non-participant observations were conducted during the same data-collection period. Each focal student was observed for approximately 30–45 minutes in relevant school settings, focusing on observable behaviors, interactions, responses to academic demands, and other behaviors relevant to the research objectives. Observation notes were recorded systematically and subsequently compared with the interview findings to strengthen the credibility of the data through method triangulation. Documentation was collected throughout the data-collection period as a complementary source used to support and verify information obtained through interviews and observations. The documentation included assignment-submission logs, attendance records, academic scores, and guidance-and-counseling case reports for both focal students. Documentary evidence was used to cross-check participants' accounts and observed behaviors and to provide additional contextual information concerning the phenomenon under investigation.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, comprising four interrelated stages data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification applied iteratively rather than as a single linear sequence, consistent with Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014). Data collection functioned simultaneously as an initial stage of analysis, as the researcher began identifying recurring patterns and emerging themes while interviews were still being conducted. Data reduction involved summarizing and focusing the transcripts, observation notes, and documentary material on the cognitive, emotional, interpersonal, and coping dimensions that structure the Results, assigning codes to relevant segments of the data. Data display involved organizing the coded material into the matrices presented as Table 4 and Table 5, which allowed patterns within and across the two cases to be compared systematically. Conclusion drawing and verification proceeded iteratively: provisional interpretations formed early in data collection were checked against subsequent interview, observation, and documentary evidence, and were revised where they were not consistently supported.

Coding and analysis were conducted by the first author. The supervising author (the second author) reviewed emerging codes, categories, and interpretations at intervals throughout the analysis, and disagreements in interpretation were resolved through discussion; this arrangement reflects standard supervisory oversight of a single-researcher qualitative thesis rather than formal, blinded dual-coder inter-rater analysis, and it is described here at that level rather than as an independent-coding procedure. Analysis proceeded within-case before cross-case: data for Subject A and data for Subject B were each summarized separately across the four thematic dimensions before the two case summaries were compared to identify convergent patterns and case-specific differences. This within-case, then cross-case, sequence underlies the presentation of the Results, which addresses each dimension for both subjects before turning to an explicit comparative subsection.

Trustworthiness and Reflexivity

The trustworthiness of the data was established through source triangulation, comparing accounts across the two focal students and the four supporting informants, and method triangulation, comparing findings derived from interviews, observations, and documentation. This process enabled the researcher to identify convergent patterns and discrepancies across different sources of evidence, thereby strengthening the credibility and consistency of the findings. This study did not employ a formal audit trail, structured peer debriefing beyond ongoing consultation with the supervising author, or member checking, and it does not include a

formal researcher-positionality statement; these are acknowledged as limitations of the trustworthiness procedures used, and future studies on this topic, particularly given that the participants were minors and the material psychologically sensitive, are encouraged to incorporate them.

Ethical Considerations

The study was conducted with the approval of the research site and relevant school authorities, documented through an official research permit (Surat Izin Penelitian) obtained prior to data collection. Because participants were minors, the study proceeded on the basis of school-level permission and the participants' voluntary cooperation; participants were informed about the voluntary nature of their participation, the confidentiality of their responses, and their right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence. Participant identities were protected through the use of codes throughout data collection, analysis, and reporting.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings derived from the triangulation of in-depth interviews, non-participant observation, and documentation involving Subject A, Subject B, and four supporting informants. The findings are organized around two research questions: (1) the psychological dynamics experienced by students with chronic academic procrastination, examined through cognitive, emotional, and interpersonal dimensions; and (2) the coping mechanisms the students used when confronting the academic pressure produced by their procrastination.

Research Setting and Subject Profile

The research site is a public senior high school in Klaten Regency, Central Java, that provides both classical and individual guidance-and-counseling services alongside its regular academic program. Table 1 (above) summarizes the four supporting informants who provided corroborating data on the two focal students' academic behavior, while Table 3 below summarizes the demographic and behavioral profile of the two focal subjects.

Table 3. Profile of the Two Focal Subjects

Subject	Gender	Age	Grade	School	Key Characteristics
Subject A	Male	16	XI	SHS, Klaten Regency	Reserved, withdrawn about academic difficulties, habitually delays tasks, fears an unsatisfactory outcome.
Subject B	Female	16	XI	SHS, Klaten Regency	Reserved, easily anxious about academic tasks, habitually delays tasks, struggles to manage study time.

Psychological Dynamics of Students with Chronic Academic Procrastination

a. Cognitive Dimension

The cognitive dimension emerged as one of the most consistent drivers of procrastination for both subjects. Both students appraised academic tasks as inherently heavy, difficult, and demanding, a perception that eroded their confidence in their own ability to perform well. As Subject A explained, "tasks are actually important, but sometimes there are too many and they are hard to understand; once it feels hard, I start thinking the task is heavy and end up putting it off." [A] Subject B expressed a parallel appraisal, describing tasks as burdensome undertakings that had to be completed to a satisfactory standard, which generated pressure well before the task itself was begun.

This pattern is consistent with the rigid, absolutist cognitive-emotional appraisals described in recent research on emotional regulation difficulties and procrastination (Farhadi Rad et al., 2025): convictions such as "the task must be done perfectly" or "I am not capable" generate anticipatory distress that the individual then avoids by postponing the task altogether.

For Subject B specifically, this pattern also reflects a perfectionistic orientation, in which unrealistically high personal standards make the prospect of an imperfect outcome so aversive that avoidance becomes preferable to attempting the task, a pattern consistent with qualitative accounts of self-identified perfectionist high school students, who describe both self-imposed and others' expectations as motives for delaying tasks they fear they cannot complete to standard (Saltürk, 2022). Subject A additionally displayed a systematic underestimation of the time required to complete a task, believing that "there is still plenty of time" until the deadline was imminent, a pattern that mirrors temporal-miscalibration mechanisms identified in prior procrastination research and is consistent with low self-efficacy for academic self-regulation more broadly.

b. Emotional Dimension

Emotionally, both subjects reported a recurring cluster of negative affective states, namely anxiety, stress, guilt, and academic-related fear of failure, that intensified as the deadline for an assignment approached. Subject A recounted persistent rumination about unfinished tasks: "sometimes I keep thinking about the task that isn't done yet, worried my grade will be bad or the teacher will scold me; once tasks pile up I get anxious and find it hard to calm down." [A] Subject B expressed a similar pattern, coupled with uncertainty about the quality of her own work: "I have felt anxious and afraid I would not be able to finish a task well, especially when time is tight and there is a lot to do; sometimes I am scared the result will be bad because I am not confident in my own answers." [B] The guidance-and-counseling teacher corroborated these accounts, noting that in counseling sessions the students "often feel burdened when the given tasks are quite numerous and close together in time. They usually feel pressured, confused about where to start, and end up putting the task off."

This emotional profile aligns closely with the mood-regulation account of procrastination advanced by Valenzuela et al. (2020), who argue that procrastination is best understood as a form of emotion-regulation failure rather than a purely cognitive or motivational deficit: individuals delay tasks specifically to escape the negative affect the tasks provoke, obtaining short-term relief at the cost of intensified distress later. The pattern observed here also parallels the anxiety-mediated pathway to procrastination documented among adolescents by Ye et al. (2025), in which unmet psychological needs elevate anxiety, which in turn undermines the self-control required to initiate a task. As deadlines neared, both subjects reported panic, difficulty concentrating, and, after the task was eventually submitted, feelings of guilt and regret over the hurried, suboptimal quality of their work, illustrating a self-perpetuating affective cycle in which avoidance is followed by only momentary relief before the distress resurfaces with greater intensity.

c. Interpersonal Dimension

The interpersonal dimension showed that chronic academic procrastination reshaped the way both subjects related to teachers and peers. Both students reported actively avoiding interaction with teachers when a task remained unfinished. Subject A stated, "I become afraid to be asked by the teacher if I haven't finished a task; sometimes I would rather stay quiet or avoid it so I'm not called on or asked about the task." [A] The subject teacher confirmed this pattern from the teacher's vantage point: "they usually look quieter and avoid contact with the teacher; when asked about a task, their response is also slow or they don't answer right away."

In contrast to this avoidance of academic accountability, both subjects' relationships with peers functioned as a channel for distraction rather than academic support in daily practice, even though peers and teachers also served as an important source of encouragement. Subject A explained that "once I'm with friends I usually forget about the task it starts as just a short hangout but ends up going until night, and the task gets delayed again," [A] while the peer informant corroborated that "they usually invite me to chat or joke around so they don't think about the task;

sometimes they also say they'll just do it later because there's still time." At the same time, teachers and peers continued to provide meaningful social support: the homeroom teacher reported trying to "give direction and motivation slowly so that they don't feel pressured," and the peer informant described reminding the subjects about deadlines and occasionally studying together with them. This dual pattern simultaneous avoidance of accountability-bearing relationships and reliance on distraction-oriented peer relationships alongside continued receipt of social support indicates that interpersonal dynamics in chronic procrastination are not unidirectional but reflect an ambivalent negotiation between shame, avoidance, and the need for connection.

Table 4 summarizes the cognitive, emotional, interpersonal, and behavioral indicators identified for both subjects, while Figure 1 offers an interpretive model, derived from the two subjects' retrospective accounts rather than from longitudinal observation of a complete cycle, of how these dimensions may interlock: a negative cognitive appraisal of the task generates emotional distress, which is regulated through avoidance-based coping that provides only temporary relief, allowing tasks to accumulate and the deadline to approach, which in turn regenerates cognitive distress and renews the cycle through rushed, suboptimal task completion. This sequence should be read as the pattern suggested by participants' own narratives rather than as an empirically tested causal chain.

Table 4. Thematic Matrix of Psychological Dynamics

Dimension	Key Indicator	Subject A (Male)	Subject B (Female)
Cognitive	Appraisal of academic tasks	Perceives tasks as heavy and difficult; doubts his own ability to complete them well.	Perceives tasks as a heavy burden requiring a good result; feels uncertain of meeting expectations (perfectionistic orientation).
Cognitive	Time estimation	Believes there is still "plenty of time," leading to underestimation of the time actually required.	Struggles to prioritize among accumulated tasks, leading to confusion and further delay.
Emotional	Response upon receiving a task	Feels pressured, burdened, and less enthusiastic.	Feels both challenged and pressured simultaneously.
Emotional	Anxiety and fear of failure	Preoccupied with unfinished tasks; worried about poor grades or reprimand.	Anxious about not finishing tasks well, especially under time pressure; feels exhausted and overwhelmed as tasks accumulate.
Behavioral	Response as tasks accumulate	Waits to be reminded or pressured by the teacher before starting (external-prompting dependence).	Begins working only once the deadline is close, rather than earlier or in response to reminders; reports panic as the unfinished task and the approaching deadline converge.
Interpersonal	Relationship with teachers	Avoids eye contact and questions about unfinished tasks; prefers to stay silent.	Reluctant to face teachers when tasks are unfinished; answers briefly out of embarrassment.
Interpersonal	Relationship with peers	Loses track of time and tasks while socializing with friends.	Prefers chatting or spending time with friends to relieve academic pressure.

Interpersonal	Social support received	Receives reminders and motivation from teachers to be more responsible.	Receives leniency on submission deadlines and study companionship from peers.
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Coping Mechanisms of Students with Chronic Academic Procrastination

The second research question concerned the coping mechanisms used by the two subjects to manage the academic pressure produced by their procrastination. Following the problem-focused/emotion-focused classification introduced in the theoretical framework (Kinman & Wray, 2020), coping responses were analyzed as problem-focused, oriented toward resolving the source of the stressor, or emotion-focused, oriented toward regulating the distress the stressor produced; this is consistent with the same framework used in the Introduction. Table 5 summarizes the specific forms of coping identified for each subject within these two broad categories.

Table 5. Comparative Matrix of Coping Mechanisms

Coping Category	Form of Coping	Subject A (Male)	Subject B (Female)
Problem-focused	Seeking information / help	Searches the internet or asks peers when a task is difficult.	Asks peers to explain unclear material so the task can be finished sooner.
Problem-focused	Prioritizing tasks	Prioritizes tasks from teachers who frequently check on progress.	Prioritizes tasks perceived as more urgent or important.
Emotion-focused (maladaptive)	Behavioral avoidance	Plays with a phone, socializes with friends, or plays sports to feel relaxed.	Sleeps or spends time with friends to feel calmer.
Emotion-focused (maladaptive)	Digital entertainment / distraction	Uses a phone and enjoys hobbies to reduce boredom and stress.	Listens to music or scrolls through social media to reduce stress.
Emotion-focused (maladaptive)	Cognitive-emotional avoidance	Believes there is still time, leading to repeated postponement.	Overthinks possible failure, which triggers further postponement.

a. Problem-Focused Coping

Both subjects demonstrated an awareness of their academic responsibilities that was reflected in intermittent problem-focused efforts, including searching for information online, asking peers for clarification on difficult material, and prioritizing tasks assigned by teachers who frequently checked on their progress. Subject A explained, "I usually start working on a task close to the deadline; sometimes I look for the answer online or ask a friend so the task gets done faster," [A] while Subject B reported, "if a task is difficult I usually ask a friend or look at an example online so I understand better and can finish it quickly." [B]

However, these problem-focused efforts were neither consistently applied nor embedded within a stable study routine; neither subject reported maintaining a regular study schedule, and both acknowledged that their planning intentions were frequently not translated into timely action. This intention-action gap in which the students possessed adequate problem-solving knowledge but lacked the self-regulatory capacity to convert that knowledge into consistent behavior meant that adaptive coping was activated only under acute time pressure rather than functioning as a default response. Rather than treating the absence of a study schedule itself as a coping strategy, this absence of planning is understood here as a deficit in self-regulatory routine that left both subjects reliant on reactive, deadline-driven coping.

b. Emotion-Focused Coping

In contrast to the intermittent nature of problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping was the dominant and most consistently reported response for both subjects, and it was overwhelmingly maladaptive in character. When facing a difficult or accumulating workload, both subjects turned to activities that provided immediate psychological comfort but did not address the source of the pressure: Subject A reported that “when I feel tired or pressured because of tasks, I more often play with friends, do sports, or play with my phone first so my mind feels more relaxed,” [A] while Subject B stated, “when I’m tired or stressed because of tasks, I usually sleep or play first so my mind feels calmer,” [B] and later added that she would “listen to music or scroll through social media so it feels calmer and I don’t think about the task too much.” [B]

This pattern corresponds closely to what Ye et al. (2025) describe as the short-term mood-repair function of procrastination: engaging in an enjoyable, low-effort activity supplies immediate relief from the discomfort a difficult task provokes. The guidance-and-counseling teacher observed this pattern directly across both students, noting that “when they feel pressured or overwhelmed by tasks, both subjects tend to look for other activities to reduce their discomfort rather than immediately finishing the task.” Yet because the underlying source of pressure, the unfinished task, remained unaddressed, the relief obtained was necessarily temporary; both subjects subsequently reported that the postponed task simply accumulated further, regenerating the very distress the coping response had been intended to relieve.

Each of the distraction activities reported above sport, music, hobbies, sleep, social interaction, and smartphone use is classified as maladaptive here specifically where the interview and observation evidence indicated it systematically prolonged avoidance of, or displaced, the pending academic task (as in the quotations above), rather than because engaging in the activity itself is inherently problematic; the same activities could plausibly function adaptively for these students in contexts unrelated to task avoidance.

c. Comparative Analysis of Subject A and Subject B

Although both subjects exhibited a similar overall reliance on maladaptive, emotion-focused coping, a qualitative comparison of the two cases reveals a difference in how that avoidance was manifested. Subject A’s maladaptive coping was primarily externalized through behavioral avoidance, redirecting attention toward socializing, sport, and gadget use in ways that were directly observable in his interactions with peers and his environment. Subject B’s maladaptive coping, by contrast, was more internalized, characterized by overthinking, rumination about possible failure, and self-soothing through music and social media rather than overtly social distraction. Despite this difference in manifestation, both patterns converged on the same functional outcome: temporary emotional relief purchased at the cost of prolonged task postponement, indicating that the core mechanism sustaining chronic academic procrastination in these two cases was not a deficiency in problem-solving knowledge but a habitual reliance on avoidance as the default strategy for regulating academic-related distress.

It should be emphasized that, because each sex is represented by only one participant in this study, the contrast between Subject A’s more externalized coping and Subject B’s more internalized coping is reported as a case-specific difference rather than as evidence of a generalizable gender difference in coping style; a larger, purposively sampled group of male and female students would be required to draw any such conclusion.

Alternative and complementary explanations should also be considered. Both subjects’ accounts point to a heavy and sometimes poorly staggered workload across subjects, teacher practices around deadline enforcement and leniency, peer norms that normalized delay, and habitual digital use, consistent with evidence linking adolescent internet use to procrastination through reduced self-control and heightened anxiety (Wu et al., 2025), as contextual factors that

plausibly contributed to procrastination alongside the psychological mechanisms emphasized above. The direction of influence between avoidance and task accumulation is also unlikely to be one-way: while avoidance clearly allowed tasks to accumulate, the accumulation of tasks documented in the assignment logs may equally have intensified the anxiety and negative appraisal that then triggered further avoidance, suggesting a reciprocal rather than strictly linear relationship. Because this study did not include parents as informants and did not systematically examine family processes, the possible role of family expectations could not be evaluated and is noted here only as a direction for future research rather than as an established influence.

d. Theoretical and Practical Contributions

Rather than establishing a new theoretical explanation, these findings offer an in-depth contextual elaboration of existing accounts of procrastination in three ways. First, they provide in-depth, case-based confirmation, in an Indonesian senior high school context, of the mood-regulation account of procrastination proposed by Schuenemann et al. (2022), showing concretely how cognitive appraisal, emotional distress, and avoidance-based coping interlock into a self-reinforcing cycle rather than operating as separable, independent factors. Second, the findings extend the qualitative literature on students' own subjective accounts of procrastination, echoing Savaş et al. (2025) in showing that concerns about task competence and social relatedness, rather than motivational deficits alone, occupy a central place in how students themselves narrate their procrastination. Third, the findings carry direct implications for guidance-and-counseling practice: because the core mechanism identified here is avoidance-based emotion regulation rather than a lack of planning skill, these two cases suggest that interventions restricted to time-management training alone may be insufficient where avoidance and emotional distress are prominent. Guidance-and-counseling teachers may benefit from services, such as individual counseling, group guidance, and structured skills training, that target self-efficacy, cognitive restructuring of beliefs about task perfection, and the development of adaptive emotion-regulation and coping skills, ideally delivered in coordination with subject teachers and homeroom teachers.

CONCLUSIONS

This case study set out to describe the psychological dynamics and coping mechanisms of two senior high school students with chronic academic procrastination in Klaten Regency. The findings show that their procrastination cannot be reduced to poor time management, but is sustained by an interrelated psychological cycle. Cognitively, both students appraised academic tasks as heavy and difficult and doubted their own competence; Subject B's appraisal in particular took the form of a perfectionistic orientation toward completing tasks to a satisfactory standard, while Subject A more specifically displayed a systematic underestimation of the time his tasks required, whereas Subject B's cognitive difficulty centered on confusion in prioritizing accumulated tasks rather than on underestimating time itself. Emotionally, this appraisal generated recurring anxiety, stress, guilt, and fear of failure that intensified as deadlines approached, producing only momentary relief followed by renewed and often amplified distress once tasks were finally completed in haste. Interpersonally, both students avoided teachers when tasks remained unfinished out of shame and fear of negative evaluation, while peer relationships served an ambivalent function, acting simultaneously as a source of distraction from academic responsibility and as a channel of genuine social support alongside the encouragement they continued to receive from teachers. Facing this pressure, both students relied predominantly on maladaptive, emotion-focused coping, realized through gadget use, social media browsing, and peer socializing, which supplied short-term comfort but left the underlying tasks and distress unresolved; problem-focused strategies such as help-seeking and task prioritization were present

but applied only inconsistently, and neither subject maintained a consistent study routine, so that this cycle was rarely interrupted.

These findings indicate that chronic academic procrastination among senior high school students is best understood, and addressed, as a self-regulation and emotion-regulation difficulty rather than a simple discipline problem; these two cases suggest that guidance-and-counseling interventions restricted to time-management training alone may be insufficient where avoidance and emotional distress are as prominent as they were here. The findings suggest that guidance-and-counseling services may benefit from individual counseling, group guidance, and skills training that jointly address students' self-efficacy, cognitive restructuring of beliefs about task perfection, and adaptive emotion-regulation and coping skills, ideally delivered in coordination with subject and homeroom teachers. Because parents were not included as informants and family processes were not systematically examined in this study, family involvement is proposed here as a practical recommendation for future practice and evaluation rather than as a finding of this study. Because this study involved only two purposively selected students within a single school, and its data-collection period was six weeks, the findings should be read as an in-depth account of these two cases rather than as generalizable to the wider population of students with chronic academic procrastination. Future research is therefore encouraged to extend this inquiry across multiple schools and educational levels, and to examine the effectiveness of guidance-and-counseling interventions, such as cognitive-behavioral counseling, solution-focused brief counseling, or self-regulation training, in reducing chronic academic procrastination among senior high school students.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

Suci Tri Windari: Conceptualization, Methodology, Investigation, Data Curation, Formal Analysis, Writing – Original Draft. Sugiyanto: Conceptualization, Supervision, Validation, Writing – Review & Editing, Project Administration. Both authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

AI DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

During the preparation of this manuscript, the authors used a generative artificial intelligence (AI)-based language tool solely to assist with English-language editing, including grammar, clarity, and phrasing. The AI tool was not used to generate research data, conduct data analysis, interpret findings, or produce the scientific content or conclusions of this study. All AI-assisted text was reviewed, verified, and edited by the authors, who take full responsibility for the accuracy, originality, and scientific integrity of this manuscript.

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