

Key messages:

- Defense mechanisms play a crucial role in students' adaptation at the university as well as in their mental health.
- Emphasis should be given on the design of intervention on students' procrastination involving non-conscious processes and more structural elements of personality.

Association among defense mechanisms, causes of procrastination and well-being; Gender differences

Thomas Tsiampalis

P Vlachopanou², E Karagiannopoulou², T Tsiampalis¹

¹Institute of Preventive Medicine, Environmental & Occupational Health, Amaraouion, Greece

²Philosophy Pedagogy Psychology section of Psychology, University of Ioannina, Ioannina, Greece

Contact: t.tsiampalis@prolepsis.gr

Background:

Defense mechanisms have been a central concept in the field of mental health and psychotherapy. Recently, there has been some research interest in defence mechanisms in empirical psychology. Causes of procrastination are shown to be related to defence mechanisms in terms of students' dilatory behaviour. Furthermore, the causes of procrastination seem to affect students' well-being. The aim of the present study is to investigate the effect of defence mechanisms and causes of procrastination on well-being, separately for each gender.

Methods:

A cross-sectional study was conducted in Greece with 628 college students at the University of Ioannina (490 females and 138 males). Specially designed and validated instruments were used to record students' sociodemographic characteristics, defence mechanisms (DM), causes of procrastination (CP) and well-being (WB). Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and Covariance (ANCOVA) was used to investigate the effect of DM and CP on students' WB separately for each gender.

Results:

Students' defence mechanisms and causes of procrastination had a statistically significant effect on their well-being. More specifically, female students with a lower percentage of fear of success/ influence of peers ($p < 0.001$) and maladaptive defense style ($p < 0.001$) as well as those with higher image-distorting ($p < 0.001$), self-sacrificing ($p = 0.004$) and adaptive defense styles ($p < 0.001$) seemed to have a significantly higher percentage of well-being. On the other hand, male students with a lower percentage of lack of duty/ tolerance of frustration ($p = 0.039$) and maladaptive style ($p < 0.001$) but a higher percentage of image distorting ($p < 0.001$) and adaptive defence styles ($p < 0.001$) had a significantly higher percentage of well-being.

Conclusions:

Students' causes of academic procrastination in the combination with the use of defence mechanisms significantly affect their well-being despite, being differentiated according to their gender.