

Academic Petsa-de-Peligro: A study on deadline terror and sudden academic brilliance among the Computer Engineering students of Bulacan State University

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ABSTRACT

Academic Petsa-de-Peligro refers to the practice of completing all schoolwork at the last minute, despite the risk of failing. The study has examined how the deadline terror left 50 Computer Engineering Students at Bulacan State University in panic. The panic created a Survival Reflex that compelled them to begin working, finally. Through surveys and interviews, the students could gather information. The responses indicated that none of the students began the work by the deadline, and 64 percent of the students believed that academic procrastination would help them achieve good Academic Performance. The adverse effects were significant: 74 percent of respondents reported failing to eat or sleep to complete their task. The respondents explained that it is all due to peer pressure, not because they like studying, not due to a lack of time, and not due to fear of failure. Overall, cramming brought them into a frenzy of stress and fatigue. This study concludes that the university should

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implement a more effective mental health support and time management strategy to help students study more healthily.

Keywords: Academic performance, Computer Engineering Students, deadline terror, academic procrastination, survival reflex

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INTRODUCTION

The idea of doing a task until the last minute is not new in the academic world. This act is called academic procrastination. Academic procrastination is the act of delaying academic tasks despite knowing the consequences, such as a lack of time to do the task. This behavior is not recommended, as if it is left unresolved, it might result in a complex habitual cycle (De Guia et al., 2024). For this reason, a study was conducted among the computer engineering students at Bulacan State University to explore the root cause and effect of academic procrastination.

The researchers referred to this type of behavior, Academic Petsa-de-Peligro, as the students relied on the panic created by the approaching deadline as a means of survival (Dela Cruz & Mendoza, 2020), creating an acute physiological stress response that enabled the students to concentrate intensely, which is known as the Deadline Effect (Zhu & Zhang, 2022). This biological phenomenon was supported by the Yerkes-Dodson Law (Yerkes & Dodson, 1908), which showed performance improved with increasing levels of acute stress. Furthermore, based on the Temporal Motivation Theory (Steel & König, 2006), students' effort actions during this time were driven by the amount of time remaining prior to submitting their assignments. Students were able to experience the focused and energized concentration described by Flow Theory (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975), which could occur when a student was experiencing extreme time constraints.

Based on the above-mentioned theories, the researchers characterized the students' behaviour of intentionally delaying their completion of assignments as active procrastination (Hsin & Liu, 2024), using the countdown to the deadline as a time frame for cognitive incubation, while simultaneously activating their survival mechanisms (Bai et al., 2023). However, students' reliance on this method hurts them. Eventually, emotional labour resulted in physiological exhaustion and increased stress, which could ultimately result in burnout in the long term. Cramming was a common practice among students as documented in past studies. However, academic institutions lacked sufficient qualitative data to gain insight into the internal logic of these computer engineering students. Thus, there was a need to gather empirical evidence regarding how students rationalized the cycle of the Academic Petsa-de-Peligro. To adapt their teaching strategies and implement structural interventions, administrators needed this study. Therefore, this study sought to investigate the underlying reasons and the rationales for the cycle of the Academic Petsa-de-Peligro of computer engineering students at Bulacan State University.

Statement of the problem

This study aims to understand the behavior and logic of Computer Engineering students who works best under pressure and perform survival reflex. To breakdown this process, our research aims to do the following:

1. To be able to explain the internal logic or “survival reflex” that delays task initiation until an approaching deadline triggers a shift in academic behavior among Computer Engineering students.
2. To be able to identify the psychological and behavioral markers that signal the students' transition from an “avoidance” phase to a “panic” phase in the academic process.
3. To be able to interpret and give meaning to the social anxiety and interpersonal conflicts that arise from the students' deadline-dependent performance style.
4. To be able to determine what aspects of successful academic outcomes reinforce students' belief that Academic Petsa-de-Peligro is an effective or even superior strategy compared to conventional study and work habits.

METHODOLOGY

The research design utilized in this study is a mixed-methods research design, which simply implies that it integrates two methods of acquiring information (quantitative) and personal anecdotes (qualitative). The researchers chose the mixed method since the survey cannot answer the question of why students tend to leave their schoolwork until the last minute. A combination of both approaches will allow the study to quantify the degree of stress experienced by students and also to comprehend individual causes that motivate them to behave in such a manner. It also allows the researchers to determine whether the beliefs of the students regarding their habits are consistent with their actual grades. In order to collect all this information, the research implements surveys and questionnaires to quantify the level of stress experienced by the students and see precisely how frequent academic procrastination is among the students. Then the researchers conduct the so-called recall interviews that pose a question to the students to recall when they felt the impetus to move on and begin their work.

The researchers targeted undergraduate computer engineering students at Bulacan State University, Malolos campus. The study specifically selected individuals who identified themselves as deadline-driven learners, who habitually delayed their academic tasks until deadlines neared while also consistently producing high-quality academic outputs despite the pressure. The researchers used purposive sampling to choose fifty participants, thus reaching the necessary data saturation for the mixed-methods phenomenological study. The sample consisted of ten first-year students, ten second-year students, fifteen third-year students, and fifteen fourth-year students. The researchers allocated the respondents to reflect the progressive difficulty of the computer engineering curriculum. Students in higher year levels managed complex major subjects. Consequently, the upper-year students possessed a richer and more established experience of the Academic Petsa-de-Peligro phenomenon. Furthermore, the researchers obtained explicit informed consent from all participants before data collection. The survey form included a clear explanation of the research objectives. The respondents participated voluntarily and retained the right to withdraw at any time without penalty. The researchers maintained strict confidentiality by anonymizing all personal responses to protect students' identities.

A validated research instrument of 25 items was used for this study. The first part of the survey consists of a 20-item 5-point Likert-scale survey as the quantitative component to gauge the frequency and severity of behavioral stress indicators as well as the shift from the

"avoidance" to the "panic" phase. Additionally, the underlying logic of the "survival reflex," as well as certain psychological triggers and the subjective significance students attach to their performance style, were all examined through five open-ended questions on a semi-structured qualitative questionnaire. Both are translated into Filipino for a better understanding of the respondents.

The researchers organized three phases for this study. First, to guarantee alignment with study objectives, two registered psychometricians validated the questionnaire (both translated into English and Filipino) that the researchers had constructed. Second, recruitment calls were disseminated through existing Bulacan State University Computer Engineering Facebook Group Chats. The volunteers are filtered, and the researchers selected only those who met the criteria. Third and lastly, the respondents were privately briefed, and the survey was distributed through Google Forms. It included the informed consent, the instructions, and the survey itself, and was configured to close after it reached the pre-set sample quota. The responses and data were then exported and organized for statistical processing.

The researchers conducted a frequency and percentage distribution to verify that 50 Computer Engineering students participated. The average for the markers ("Deadline Terror" and "Survival Reflex") of the Likert-scale questions was analyzed using weighted mean and standard deviation. To determine significant differences in the survival behaviors of students per year level, One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used. The Pearson Correlation Coefficient was used to measure the strength of the relationship between their perceived "Survival Reflex Intensity" (Variable X) and "Academic Output Quality" (Variable Y). Finally, in order to identify recurring patterns in the ways that students justify and explain their deadline-driven actions, thematic analysis was applied to the qualitative responses.

Throughout the study, the researchers followed ethical standards to secure participant rights through digital informed consent that was mandatorily sent. Every participant who voluntarily joined this study could drop out at any time without penalty. In compliance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act No. 10173), all responses were kept strictly confidential. No face-to-face meetings were held; strictly virtual only. The researchers checked the survey questionnaire beforehand to ensure no language was offensive or included any psychologically triggering terms. No funding or source was used, and no conflict emerged.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results and discussion of this study are grounded in data collected from 50 Computer Engineering students of Bulacan State University, utilizing a mixed-method research design that integrates quantitative and qualitative approaches. The respondents were selected to represent different year levels, and data were gathered using a structured survey questionnaire designed to measure behavioral, cognitive, and emotional dimensions of the Academic Petsa-de-Peligro phenomenon. Quantitative data were analyzed using weighted mean and standard deviation for descriptive interpretation, one-way ANOVA to determine differences across year levels, and Pearson correlation to examine relationships between variables, while qualitative responses were analyzed through thematic analysis. The discussion that follows is firmly anchored in the data gathered and interpreted in direct relation to the objectives of the study, ensuring that all statistical values, frequencies, and thematic insights are preserved and meaningfully explained.

The descriptive results reveal a pronounced tendency among students to engage in procrastination behaviors while simultaneously relying on pressure-induced performance. The weighted mean values across the 20 indicators demonstrate that students generally agree with statements associated with delayed task initiation and heightened productivity under pressure.

The highest weighted mean of 4.56 with a standard deviation of 0.81 for Q3, interpreted as Strongly Agree, indicates that students experience an “adrenaline rush” that significantly contributes to overcoming inertia. This is further supported by Q14 with a weighted mean of 4.38 and standard deviation of 0.90, also interpreted as Strongly Agree, suggesting that students perceive their brains to work faster under pressure. Similarly, Q15 with a mean of 4.22 and standard deviation of 0.97, and Q8 with a mean of 4.38 and standard deviation of 0.95, both interpreted as Strongly Agree, indicate that students associate time pressure with improved output quality and a recurring cycle of promising to start early. Other indicators such as Q2 with a mean of 3.98 and standard deviation of 1.15, Q5 with 4.08 and 1.11, Q7 with 3.84 and 1.17, Q10 with 4.00 and 1.16, Q11 with 3.96 and 1.25, Q13 with 3.88 and 0.92, Q16 with 4.18 and 0.90, Q17 with 3.94 and 1.20, and Q18 with 3.76 and 1.21, all interpreted as Agree, reinforce the pattern that students consciously engage in behaviors such as underestimating time, experiencing anxiety, sacrificing basic needs, and depending on urgency to achieve focus. In contrast, neutral responses were observed in Q4 with a mean of 3.38 and standard deviation of 1.29, Q6 with 3.30 and 1.34, Q9 with 2.94 and 1.39, Q12 with 2.98 and 1.22, Q19 with 2.80 and 1.33, and Q20 with 2.84 and 1.50, indicating ambivalence regarding reinforcement of grades, physiological stress responses, distractions, early initiation comfort, misunderstandings, and interpersonal impacts. These findings collectively demonstrate that students are highly aware of their reliance on pressure-induced arousal, which aligns with the Yerkes-Dodson Law, suggesting that optimal performance is achieved at moderate to high levels of physiological arousal.

The analysis of weighted total scores across year levels further reveals variations in the intensity of Academic Petsa-de-Peligro tendencies. First-year students obtained a group mean of 3.69 with a weighted total of 36.9, while second-year students recorded the highest group mean of 4.25 with a weighted total of 42.5. Third-year and fourth-year students showed group means of 3.67 and 3.73 with weighted totals of 55.05 and 55.95, respectively, contributing to an overall weighted total of 190.4 across all 50 respondents. The consistently high mean scores across all year levels indicate a “High” to “Very High” tendency toward Academic Petsa-de-Peligro. The peak observed in second-year students at 4.25 suggests that transitional academic demands intensify reliance on last-minute performance strategies. The subsequent stabilization of means at 3.67 in third year and 3.73 in fourth year indicates that students develop an adaptive balance, refining their ability to perform under pressure as they progress through the program. This pattern reflects a developmental adjustment in coping mechanisms, where initial academic recalibration evolves into a normalized performance strategy.

The inferential analysis using one-way ANOVA confirms that differences in Academic Petsa-de-Peligro tendencies across year levels are statistically significant. The between-groups sum of squares of 2.47 with 3 degrees of freedom resulted in a mean square of 0.82, while the within-groups sum of squares of 13.01 with 46 degrees of freedom yielded a mean square of 0.28. The computed F-ratio of 2.91 with a p-value of 0.044 indicates a significant result at the 0.05 level of significance, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. This finding demonstrates that year level significantly influences students’ reliance on pressure-driven performance. The non-linear trend, beginning at 3.69 in first year, peaking at 4.25 in second year, and stabilizing at 3.67 and 3.73 in third and fourth years, respectively, suggests that increased academic complexity triggers a “survival reflex” consistent with Temporal Motivation Theory. As task difficulty increases, students become more sensitive to deadlines, thereby increasing motivation through urgency. This supports the Yerkes-Dodson framework, where heightened arousal enhances performance up to an optimal level, particularly evident among second-year students experiencing intensified academic demands.

The Pearson correlation analysis further establishes the relationship between survival reflex and academic output. With a total of 50 respondents, the cumulative values of Variable X ($\Sigma X = 195.36$) and Variable Y ($\Sigma Y = 190.00$) produced a product sum (ΣXY) of 751.55, with $\Sigma X^2 = 783$ and $\Sigma Y^2 = 748.64$. The computed Pearson r value of 0.40 indicates a moderate positive correlation between survival reflex and academic output. This suggests that as students' reliance on pressure and urgency increases, their academic performance also tends to improve to a moderate extent. The positive direction of the relationship indicates that high-pressure conditions are perceived as beneficial, reinforcing the behavioral pattern of procrastination. This finding aligns with the Self-Worth Theory of Achievement Motivation, wherein students attribute success to innate ability demonstrated under pressure rather than sustained effort. The moderate strength of $r = 0.40$ indicates that while the relationship is meaningful, other factors may also influence academic performance, highlighting the complexity of the phenomenon.

The qualitative findings provide deeper insight into the mechanisms underlying task initiation and behavioral reinforcement. Thematic analysis revealed that students rely heavily on external triggers rather than intrinsic motivation. Under the theme of Social Synchronicity, responses such as "I don't move alone; I need someone to suffer with me" illustrate the Bandwagon Effect, indicating that peer behavior serves as a catalyst for action. The theme of Calculated Risk, represented by "I calculate in my mind that the remaining time is just exactly enough," reflects The Numbers Game, where students rationalize procrastination through time estimation. The theme of Consequence Avoidance, captured in the statement "The fear that I might fail is the only thing that makes me move," highlights the Fear Factor as a primary motivator. These findings align with the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping, which emphasizes the role of cognitive appraisal and social context in managing stress, as well as Temporal Motivation Theory, where perceived time constraints directly influence motivation.

Further qualitative analysis of concentration shifts and behavioral reinforcement demonstrates a cyclical pattern of procrastination and performance. The theme of Distant Deadline Stagnation, illustrated by "I'm totally spaced out until it's night and the deadline is close," reflects a transition from inactivity to intense focus, coded as Paralysis to Flow. The theme of The "Success Trap," expressed through "It validates that it's like a 'hack' to the system," corresponds to Ego Reinforcement, where successful outcomes reinforce maladaptive behaviors. Additionally, the theme of False Repentance, represented by "Relief and a false promise to start early next time," reflects Cycle Repetition, indicating a persistent loop of procrastination and last-minute effort. These patterns are consistent with Flow Theory, where optimal engagement occurs under challenging conditions, and with Self-Worth Theory, where success under pressure reinforces perceived competence, thereby perpetuating the cycle.

The self-perception of academic brilliance further reveals the dual nature of the phenomenon. The theme of Cognitive "Diskarte," expressed in "This isn't intelligence, just survival instinct," reflects Strategic Resilience, where students view their behavior as adaptive rather than problematic. The theme of Adrenaline Competence, captured in "I feel it is a unique skill... I seem to improve," aligns with the Superpower Effect, indicating that students perceive their ability to perform under pressure as a distinct advantage. Conversely, the theme of The "Curse" of Dysregulation, reflected in "It's not a sign of intelligence; it's a sign I can't self-regulate," highlights Dependency on Fear, where students acknowledge the negative implications of their behavior. These contrasting perspectives illustrate the complexity of Academic Petsa-de-Peligro, encompassing both adaptive and maladaptive dimensions, and align with the concept of active procrastination as well as challenges in self-regulation.

In synthesis, the findings demonstrate that Academic Petsa-de-Peligro is a multifaceted phenomenon characterized by a consistent reliance on pressure-induced arousal to achieve

academic performance. Quantitative results confirm high levels of agreement with procrastination-related behaviors, significant differences across year levels as evidenced by $F = 2.91$ and $p = 0.044$, and a moderate positive relationship between survival reflex and academic output with $r = 0.40$. Qualitative insights further reveal that task initiation is driven by social cues, fear of consequences, and calculated risk, while behavioral reinforcement is sustained through a cycle of success and repetition. These findings collectively support theoretical frameworks such as the Yerkes-Dodson Law, Temporal Motivation Theory, Flow Theory, and Self-Worth Theory, highlighting the interplay between psychological arousal, motivation, and academic behavior. The results contribute to a deeper understanding of how students navigate academic demands through adaptive yet potentially unsustainable strategies, thereby providing a foundation for developing interventions that promote healthier and more effective learning behaviors in subsequent sections of the study.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that Academic Petsa-de-Peligro is a pervasive and shared behavioral pattern among the 50 Computer Engineering students, characterized by a consistent reliance on last-minute task completion driven by deadline proximity. The results reveal that all 50 students reported completing their academic requirements only when the deadline was imminent, indicating that procrastination is not an isolated behavior but rather a collective norm within the group. This tendency is further reinforced by the observation that 32 out of 50 students were still able to achieve good or even outstanding academic performance despite cramming, while 18 acknowledged that their performance was not excellent. These outcomes suggest that the perceived effectiveness of last-minute work contributes to the persistence of this behavior, as successful academic results validate the practice and reduce the perceived need for early preparation.

The study also highlights that procrastination among the respondents is often intentional and behaviorally reinforced. Specifically, 30 students admitted that they deliberately postponed their tasks, while 36 reported being distracted until they were left with no alternative but to act. Although many expressed intentions to begin earlier in future tasks, the cycle of delay and urgency continued to repeat, indicating a pattern of behavioral inconsistency and weak self-regulation. This recurring cycle reflects a complex interplay between intention and action, where awareness of better study habits does not necessarily translate into behavioral change. The findings align with the broader understanding of procrastination as a self-regulatory challenge, wherein immediate gratification and perceived time sufficiency override long-term planning.

Physiological and cognitive responses to deadline pressure further illustrate the mechanisms underlying Academic Petsa-de-Peligro. A total of 45 students reported experiencing an adrenaline rush when deadlines approached, while 44 indicated that their cognitive functioning improved under pressure. Additionally, 26 students noted an increase in heart rate, and 33 reported that panic enabled them to achieve heightened focus on their academic tasks. These responses suggest that deadline proximity triggers a state of heightened arousal that enhances concentration and task engagement, thereby enabling students to complete their work efficiently within a limited time frame. However, these short-term cognitive benefits are accompanied by significant physical and psychological costs, as evidenced by 37 students who reported staying up late and skipping meals to meet academic demands. Despite these negative effects, 36 students perceived this level of stress as a normal and inherent aspect of student life, indicating a normalization of high-pressure academic environments.

Taken together, these findings confirm that Academic Petsa-de-Peligro operates as a cyclical survival mechanism in which procrastination, pressure-induced arousal, and perceived academic success reinforce one another. While the phenomenon may yield acceptable or even high academic outcomes for some students, it simultaneously promotes unhealthy work habits, disrupts well-being, and perpetuates dependency on stress as a motivator. The study therefore contributes to a deeper understanding of how students navigate academic demands through adaptive yet potentially unsustainable strategies, highlighting the need for interventions that balance performance and well-being.

In light of these findings, several recommendations are integrated to address the challenges associated with this phenomenon. Students are encouraged to adopt structured time management strategies such as the Pomodoro Technique to gradually reduce their dependence on last-minute pressure and to foster more consistent study habits. Educators are advised to consider implementing flexible submission policies or designated periods that reduce rigid deadline pressures, thereby minimizing burnout while maintaining academic standards. At the institutional level, school administrators should develop targeted stress management programs, particularly for engineering students who are exposed to demanding academic workloads, in order to promote healthier coping mechanisms and improve overall student well-being. Furthermore, future research is recommended to examine the quantitative relationship between procrastination behaviors and general weighted average to determine whether reliance on deadline-driven performance significantly affects academic outcomes. Expanding the scope of investigation to include other academic disciplines may also provide valuable insights into whether the survival reflex observed in this study manifests differently across fields of study.

Overall, this study underscores the dual nature of Academic Petsa-de-Peligro as both a functional coping strategy and a potential risk factor for student health and long-term academic development. By synthesizing the empirical findings and proposed recommendations, the conclusion establishes a foundation for subsequent inquiry and intervention, emphasizing the importance of fostering balanced academic practices that support both performance and well-being.

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