

# The Effect of Workload, Time Orientation on Procrastination Behavior of New Generation Employees

Jialiang He<sup>1</sup>, Quan Zhou<sup>1</sup>, Yaxi Yang<sup>2</sup>, Cong Wu<sup>3</sup>, Xia Qin<sup>4\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>School of Management, Beijing Union University, Beijing, China

<sup>2</sup>School of Music, Hunan Normal University, Changsha, China

<sup>3</sup>School of Biochemical Engineering, Beijing Union University, Beijing, China

<sup>4</sup>Graduate Studies Office, Beijing Union University, Beijing, China

Email: \*qinxia@buu.edu.cn

**How to cite this paper:** He, J. L., Zhou, Q., Yang, Y. X., Wu, C., & Qin, X. (2024). The Effect of Workload, Time Orientation on Procrastination Behavior of New Generation Employees. *Open Journal of Social Sciences*, 12, 11-19.

<https://doi.org/10.4236/jss.2024.127002>

**Received:** May 24, 2024

**Accepted:** July 6, 2024

**Published:** July 9, 2024

Copyright © 2024 by author(s) and Scientific Research Publishing Inc.

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0).

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>



Open Access

## Abstract

Procrastination behavior is one of the common troubles faced by new generation employees, and finding the causes of procrastination behavior and how to improve procrastination behavior effectively are the focus of attention of organizational managers and academics. Based on the resource conservation theory, this paper takes new generation employees as the research object, and explores the influence mechanism of workload on the procrastination behavior of new generation employees on the basis of understanding the current situation of employees' workload and procrastination behavior. The results of the study show that there is a significant positive effect of workload on procrastination behavior, and there is a masking effect of time orientation between workload and procrastination behavior. The findings of the study provide reference for improving the procrastination behavior of new generation employees.

## Keywords

New Generation Employees, Workload, Time Orientation, Procrastination Behavior

## 1. Introduction

Procrastination is a common phenomenon in work and life. Surveys show that 15% - 20% of adults have chronic procrastination, and 70% of college students have academic procrastination (Feng, Wang, & Su, 2021), and the percentage is still increasing with the rapid development of society. In enterprises, employees'

procrastination is even more common. Zhiliang recruitment has 2000 employees for research, found that they think they have procrastination behavior of more than 80% of the total number of employees surveyed (Teng, 2020). Although employee procrastination is the subjective will of employees to delay the completion of existing work tasks, there is no intention to harm the interests of the organization, but studies have shown that employee procrastination can lead to the organization's annual output reduced by three to four percent, resulting in economic losses of up to 85 billion U.S. dollars per year (Yu, Zeng, & Kang, 2022). Given the prevalence of employee procrastination and the severity of its consequences, organizational managers and academics are concerned about the causes of employee procrastination and measures to improve it.

Regarding the causes of employees' procrastination behavior, existing studies have mainly focused on individual factors such as dutifulness and impulsivity (Saddler & Sacks, 1993) and situational factors such as individual-organizational matching and team relationship conflicts (Teng, 2020). Although existing studies have sorted out many antecedent variables of employee procrastination, there are still fewer studies on the effect of workload on procrastination. Workload, as an excessive work stressor, is likely to trigger employees' procrastination behavior. According to the resource conservation theory, when facing excessive work tasks and stressors, employees are very prone to resource depletion, and in order to conserve and acquire resources, employees will reduce the input of resources in order to reduce the loss of resources (Hobfoll, 1989). Then, how workload affects employees' procrastination behavior and what is the mechanism of action, need to be further explored.

With the development of the times, the new generation of employees has become an important force for enterprise development. At present, China's economy maintains a steady momentum of development, but with the increasingly severe requirements of transformation and upgrading, structural optimization, and innovation-driven development, the overall situation of employment is not optimistic, and the new generation of employees is facing considerable work pressure and work burden. Therefore, it is necessary to clarify the mechanism of the role of work burden on the procrastination behavior of the new generation of employees, in order to improve the procrastination behavior of the new generation of employees, which in turn will help the development of the enterprise and improve the economic efficiency of the enterprise.

In summary, this paper takes the new generation of employees in Beijing media enterprises as the research object, based on the theory of resource preservation, explores the causes of procrastination of new generation employees from the perspective of workload, and introduces time orientation as the intermediary variable to explore the intermediary role of time orientation in the workload and procrastination of the employees, and clarifies the relationship between the variables to improve the procrastination behavior of the new generation of employees and improve the employees' passion for work and work efficiency.

## 2. Research Hypothesis

### 2.1. Workload and Procrastination Behavior

Based on the theory of resource preservation, when employees are overburdened with work, the continued depletion of resources can cause stress. In order to preserve and acquire resources, employees will take a variety of measures to avoid further loss of resources, or through learning to solidify resources when resources are sufficient, in order to better cope with the possible loss of resources. DeArmond et al. (2014), in analyzing the relationship between workload and work procrastination, found that psychological detachment and fatigue mediate the relationship between the two. In other words, the higher the workload, the lower the level of psychological detachment and the easier it is to fatigue, so in order to reduce the consumption of resources, employees will choose to take a break in order to restore resources, which directly leads to procrastination at work. Based on this, this paper proposes:

H1: Workload has a positive effect on procrastination behavior of new generation employees.

### 2.2. The Mediating Role of Time Orientation

Time orientation is used to describe an individual's time allocation preference, which refers to a general cognitive response bias to time, where the individual's perception and behavior is a preference for the past, present or future (De Volder, 1979), and can be subdivided into single-task time orientation and multi-task time orientation (Hall, 1983). In this paper, we define and measure time orientation from a multitasking perspective, which is defined as an individual employee's preference to interrupt an unfinished task and switch to other tasks, or a tendency to complete more than one task in the same period of time. Employees with multitasking time orientation can usually work on two or more tasks at the same time in a certain period of time in the workplace, and can freely switch between different tasks to ensure the smooth progress of each task, and they have a strong sense of time. It has been found that employees with a higher degree of time orientation are able to cope more comfortably with complex and diversified work tasks and work environments. Even when faced with a sudden large number of tasks, employees with a high level of time orientation can easily solve them, complete their work on time, reduce work delays, and improve work efficiency (Hu & Ma, 2021). Based on this, this paper proposes:

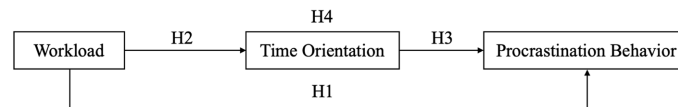
H2: Time orientation has a negative effect on procrastination behavior of new generation employees.

H3: The workload of new generation employees has a positive effect on their time orientation.

Based on the support of the above theoretical and empirical studies, this paper further infers that time orientation plays a mediating role in workload and procrastination behavior of new generation employees. Based on this, this paper proposes:

H4: The mediating role of time orientation in the relationship between workload and procrastination behavior among new generation employees is manifested as a masking effect.

The model for this study is shown in **Figure 1**.



**Figure 1.** Theoretical model diagram.

### 3. Research Design

#### 3.1. Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire is divided into two main parts: the first part is the basic information, including gender, age, educational level, years of experience and so on; the second part is the measurement of the relevant variables, including the three scales of Workload, Time Orientation, and Procrastination Behavior.

**Workload.** In this paper, the scale developed by [Liu & Zeng \(2021\)](#) was used to measure workload, which consists of three dimensions with a total of 10 items. The items in the work intensity dimension include “My work often requires overtime work”, “I often cannot complete all my work during normal working hours”, “I often need to work overtime”, and “I have a heavy workload”; questions in the work difficulty dimension include “I have to use a variety of knowledge and skills in my work”, “I often have to do multiple tasks at the same time” and “I have to work on a variety of jobs”. Questions in the work support dimension include “I receive guidance and support from my supervisor (reverse scoring)”, “I receive support and assistance from my colleagues (reverse scoring)”, and “I am able to obtain relevant resources such as materials, equipment, and funds for my work (reverse scoring)”. The Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  for this study was 0.78.

**Time Orientation.** The time orientation scale developed by [Lindquist & Kaufman-Scarborough \(2007\)](#) was used in this paper, with a total of five items, including “I like to do two or more things at the same time”, “I usually do two or more things at the same time”, “Doing two or more things at the same time is the most efficient use of my time”, “Doing two or more things at the same time makes me feel comfortable”, and “I like to juggle more than one activity at the same time”. The Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  for this study was 0.93.

**Procrastination Behavior.** Drawing on Chen’s approach ([Chen, 2014](#)), this paper uses the Tuckman Procrastination Scale to measure procrastination behaviors, including “I put off completing tasks even though they are important”, “I put off making difficult decisions”, “I can’t avoid wasting time”, “I waste time but I don’t seem to be able to do anything about it”, “I promise to do the work myself but I still don’t act”, “I’m stuck in neutral even though I know it’s important to start”. The Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  for this study was 0.85.

### 3.2. Data Sources and Sample Characteristics

This paper takes the new generation of employees in Beijing media enterprises as the research object, the so-called new generation of employees usually refers to the employees born after 1980. A total of 360 questionnaires were returned during the research process, of which 309 were valid questionnaires, and the effective recovery rate of the questionnaires was 85.8%. The characteristics of the sample distribution are shown in **Table 1**.

**Table 1.** Distribution table of sample characteristics.

Variable	Categorization	Numbers	Percentage %
Gender	Male	102	33.01
	Female	207	66.99
Age	18 - 25 years	71	22.98
	26 - 30 years	128	41.42
	31 - 35 years old	72	23.31
	36 - 40 years old	23	7.44
	Above 40 years old	15	4.85
Educational level	High school/secondary/technical school and below	6	1.94
	College	69	22.34
	Undergraduate	200	64.72
	Master and above	34	11.00
Years of experience	Less than 1 year	10	3.24
	1 - 3 years	160	51.78
	4 - 5 years	79	25.57
	6 - 10 years	40	12.93
	11 - 15 years	10	3.24
	More than 15 years	10	3.24

## 4. Empirical Analysis

### 4.1. Relevant Analyses

In this paper, SPSS 26 was used to correlate the variables. The results are shown in **Table 2**. The results showed that the workload of new generation employees was significantly and positively correlated with procrastination ( $r = 0.192$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ); the time orientation of new generation employees was significantly and positively correlated with procrastination ( $r = 0.025$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ); and the workload of new generation employees was significantly and positively correlated with time orientation ( $r = 0.198$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). The results of the correlation analysis laid the foundation for the subsequent regression analysis.

**Table 2.** Relevant analyses.

Variable	Workload	Time Orientation	Procrastination Behavior
Workload	1		
Time Orientation	0.198**	1	
Procrastination Behavior	0.192**	0.025**	1

Note: \*\* $p < 0.01$ .

### 4.2. Regression Analysis

In order to further investigate the relationship between the variables, this part will use SPSS26 to test the direct effect of workload on procrastination and the mediating effect of time orientation between workload and procrastination. In the main effects test section, the results of Model 2 in **Table 3** show that the regression coefficient of new generation employees' workload on procrastination is 1.239 and significant at 1% level, indicating that there is a positive effect of new generation employees' workload on procrastination and H1 is supported.

In this paper, a regression equation is constructed with workload as the independent variable, procrastination behavior as the dependent variable and time orientation as the mediating variable to test the mediating effect of time orientation. The test results are as follows. Firstly, according to the previous analysis, workload has a significant positive effect on procrastination behavior. Secondly, regression tests were conducted on workload and time orientation and procrastination behavior respectively, and the results showed that there was a significant positive effect of workload on time orientation ( $\beta = 0.236, p < 0.001$ , model 1), and a significant negative effect of time orientation on procrastination ( $\beta = -0.225, p < 0.001$ , model 3), and H2 and H3 were verified. Further, the mediating effect of time orientation was examined with workload as the independent variable, time orientation as the mediating variable, and procrastination as the dependent variable, and the results, as shown in Model 4 of **Table 3**, showed that the regression coefficient of workload was 1.506 and significant at the 1% level, suggesting that multi-temporal task orientation did not fully mediate the effect of workload on procrastination, and partial mediation was needed with the "masking effect" judgement.

**Table 3.** Results of regression analyses.

Variable	Time Orientation	Procrastination Behavior		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Gender	0.086* (0.070)	0.007*** (0.001)	0.007*** (0.001)	-0.150*** (0.019)
Age	0.076 (0.043)	0.776*** (0.084)	-0.091*** (0.022)	0.008 (0.001)
Educational level	-0.031** (0.001)	-0.115* (0.018)	0.089 (0.223)	-0.150 (0.019)

**Continued**

Years of experience	-0.006 (0.017)	0.029 (0.220)	1.071*** (0.079)	0.023 (0.220)
Workload	0.236*** (0.010)	1.239*** (0.129)		1.506*** (0.138)
Time Orientation			-0.255*** (0.265)	-1.130*** (0.220)
F	178.698***	139.579***	103.795***	124.310***
Adj.R <sup>2</sup>	0.241	0.198	0.176	0.204

Note: \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ ; standard errors in parentheses.

This paper uses Bootstrap method to partially mediate and “mask effect” judgement, the sampling number is set to 5000, the results are shown in **Table 4**. The results show that the indirect effect of workload on procrastination through multi-temporal work orientation is  $-0.267$ , which is significant at the 0.001 level, and the 95% confidence interval  $[-0.364, -0.178]$  does not contain 0, indicating that the indirect effect is significant. However, the sign of the indirect effect ( $-0.267$ ) is opposite to the sign of the direct effect (1.506), indicating that the indirect effect of task orientation between workload and procrastination behavior manifests itself as a masking effect, and thus H4 is verified.

**Table 4.** Bootstrap test result.

Direct effect	Estimated value	Standard Deviation	Significance	95% confidence interval
Workload → Time Orientation → Procrastination Behavior	-0.267	0.047	0.000	-0.364, -0.178

## 5. Conclusion

### 5.1. Research Implications

This paper explores the influence mechanism of workload on the procrastination behavior of new generation employees in Beijing media enterprises. The results of the study show that: firstly, there is a positive effect of workload on the procrastination behavior of new generation employees; secondly, there is a mediating effect of time orientation between workload and procrastination behavior, and this indirect effect is manifested as a masking effect. Based on the research results, this paper puts forward the following countermeasure suggestions.

Firstly, the company can create a good working environment so that its new employees can quickly adapt to the company’s environment and avoid psychological problems. In the face of veteran employees, the company can provide appropriate career planning and more room for development, so that they are more motivated to work. Leaders should also communicate an optimistic approach to work to new employees so that they feel confident about their future careers. Develop different work styles for employees in different positions and

reduce the workload of employees in an appropriate amount. The company set up work nodes, so that employees in the specified time to submit on time, but also can set up incentives, in the face of on-time completion of the work of the staff to provide small gifts, etc., so that the new generation of employees to improve the integrity of the personality as well as the overall development of the role of reinforcing the new generation of employees, which will reduce the new generation of employees to a certain extent, the level of negative rumination thinking, effective reduction of procrastination behavior occurs.

Secondly, when the new generation of employees faces excessive workload, they should be given timely help and psychological counselling and treatment, so as to form positive incentives to enhance the mental health of employees. When faced with pressure or major setbacks, employees can alleviate their stress in appropriate ways, organize their work in a rational manner, and approach their workload with an optimistic and positive mindset. To cultivate the ability of the new generation of employees to correctly face their workload, the company can organize different types of group building actions in the form of games to enable them to learn a variety of skills and correct their own deficiencies, to learn positive coping strategies, and to improve their self-care and problem-solving abilities. In addition, the new generation of employees can also master some strategies to regulate negative emotions, such as diversionary method, rational emotion therapy, music therapy and muscle relaxation training, to enhance the level of positive mental health and effectively improve procrastination and other undesirable behaviors.

Finally, when employees are faced with multiple tasks, they should distinguish between primary and secondary relationships, allocate appropriate time and resources according to the priority of the matter, and customize a reasonable time management model to reduce the degree of procrastination. After reaching a small goal, it is appropriate to give them some encouragement to lay the foundation for achieving a long-term goal. Set up a team competition mechanism to increase team competition appropriately, so that employees realize that the team is greater than the individual, and strive to create a highly efficient team. Regularly organized meetings help individuals to better understand the team's objectives and plans and focus on developing time awareness among employees to complete their work efficiently in a short period of time, thus helping the team to complete their tasks efficiently. In addition, the company should provide employees with a good working atmosphere and order, and a positive working atmosphere can largely promote the improvement of employees' self-decision-making ability and self-control ability, and also reduce procrastination behaviors. In conclusion, a positive and active company environment can largely promote employees' self-determination and self-control and reduce procrastination behaviors.

## 5.2. Research Limitations and Prospects

This study has certain research limitations: Firstly, the sample size of this paper

is limited, which may lead to some bias in the research results, and thus affect the countermeasure suggestions. Secondly, this study used self-assessment of the questionnaire scales, and it is difficult to reflect the respondents' true inner viewpoints on workload, time orientation and procrastination behaviors, and the data has some bias. In future research, a multi-temporal tracking survey can be conducted to make the structure of the study more objective.

## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

## References

- Chen, W. (2014). *The Relationship between College Students' Academic Procrastination Self-Efficacy for Self-Regulated Learning and Academic Delay of Gratification*. Hubei University.
- De Volder, M. (1979). Time Orientation: A Review. *Psychologica Belgica*, 19, 61-79. <https://doi.org/10.5334/pb.642>
- DeArmond, S., Matthews, R. A., & Bunk, J. (2014). Workload and Procrastination: The Roles of Psychological Detachment and Fatigue. *International Journal of Stress Management*, 2, 137-161. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0034893>
- Feng, T. Y., Wang, X. K., & Su, D. (2021). Developmental Cognitive Mechanism and Neural basis of Procrastination. *Advances in Psychological Science*, 29, 586-596. <https://doi.org/10.3724/SP.J.1042.2021.00586>
- Hall, E. T. (1983). *Hidden Differences: How to Communicate with the Germans*. Stern.
- Hobfoll, S. E. (1989). Conservation of Resources: A New Attempt at Conceptualizing Stress. *American Psychologist*, 3, 513-524. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.44.3.513>
- Hu, X. L., & Ma, A. N. (2021). Will "All-Rounder" Employees Turn out to Be "Idlers"?—The Influence of Polychronicity on Time Banditry Behavior. *Journal of Shanghai University (Social Sciences Edition)*, No. 5, 110-122.
- Lindquist, J. D., & Kaufman-Scarborough, C. (2007). The Polychronic-Monochronic Tendency Model: PMTS Scale Development and Validation. *Time & Society*, 16, 253-285. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0961463X07080270>
- Liu, X., & Zeng, Q. (2021). Why Work Burden Does Not Necessarily Weaken Organizational Identification?—Based on the Response Surface Methodology of Work Burden and Work Reward. *Research on Economics and Management*, No. 3, 111-127.
- Saddler, C. D., & Sacks, L. A. (1993). Multidimensional Perfectionism and Academic Procrastination: Relationships with Depression in University Students. *Psychological Reports*, 3, 863-871. <https://doi.org/10.2466/pr0.1993.73.3.863>
- Teng, F. (2020). The Impact of Person-Organization Fit on the Procrastination of New Researchers—An Integrated Model. *Soft Science*, No. 5, 82-87.
- Yu, G. Y., Zeng, J. J., & Kang, Y. J. (2022). Illegitimate Tasks and Workplace Procrastination: The Effect of Ego Depletion and Proactive Personality. *Journal of Psychological Science*, No. 1, 164-170.