

# The Influence Factors and Treatment Interventions for Procrastination

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## Abstract

Procrastination, which refers to the behavior of voluntarily delaying an intended course of action despite expecting to be worse off for the delay, is a prevalent problematic behavior that diminishes procrastinators' fitness, work efficiency, academic performance and psychological well-being. The current paper seeks to provide a theoretical and clinical understanding of procrastination by reviewing prior research. Based on previous studies, here, the present review interprets effects of personality traits (like conscientiousness and neuroticism), aversiveness of tasks and negative emotions on procrastination. Furthermore, we suggest that making proper plan and emotion regulation strategies could attenuate procrastination. For investigating psychological mechanism of procrastination further, specific experiment design and neuroimaging techniques, such as fMRI and fNIRs, should be engaged in future research.

## Keywords

Procrastination, Personality Traits, Negative Emotion, Task Characters, Treatment Intervention

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# 拖延行为的影响因素和干预措施

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## 摘要

拖延指的是尽管预见到延迟行为会带来不利后果, 人们仍然自愿推迟开始或完成某一计划中的任务。拖

延在生活中普遍存在,而且会影响到人们的学习、工作、幸福感、身心健康等各个方面。在前人研究的基础上,本文阐述了人格特质(比如尽责性和神经质)、负性情绪和任务厌恶等因素对拖延行为的影响。此外,大量的研究发现,对任务进行合理的规划以及情绪调节训练有助于减少个体拖延行为。为了进一步研究拖延行为的心理机制,未来的研究采用神经影像学技术并设计具体的实验任务。

## 关键词

拖延,人格特质,负性情绪,任务特性,干预治疗

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## 1. 引言

拖延是一种广泛存在而且会对人们生活的诸多方面造成不良影响的行为。有研究表明在不同的文化背景下,大约有10%~15%的成年人受到慢性拖延的困扰(Ferrari, O'Callghan, & Newbegin, 2005; Ferrari, Diaz-Morales, O'Callaghan, Diaz, & Argumedo, 2007)。而在大学生群体中,拖延行为则更为普遍和严重。国外的研究表明,约有85%~95%的大学生认为自己经常拖延(Ellis & Knaus, 1977),50%的学生认为自己存在持续性拖延(Day, Mensink, & O'Sullivan, 2000; Haycock, 1993),40%~60%的学生表现出了中等或重度程度的拖延(Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Rothblum et al., 1986)。在国内,也有研究表明75%以上的大学生承认自己学业上存在拖延行为(楚翘,肖蓉, & 林倩, 2010)。大量的研究指出,拖延行为是有害且愚蠢的(Briody, 1980; Steel, 2007)。研究结果表明,拖延者的学业成绩较差(Tan et al., 2008; Van Eerde, 2003),身体状况欠佳(Sirois et al., 2003),比非拖延者有更高的焦虑和压力水平(Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Rothblum et al., 1986; Stead, Shanahan, & Neufeld, 2010),生活幸福感也更低(Knaus, 1977)。

Steel (2007)在查阅了300多篇与拖延有关的研究文献之后,认为拖延的含义应该包含以下三个方面:①最初的行为意向与实际行动之间存在差距;②个体心境的变化;③不良的行为表现。虽然研究者们对拖延的定义进行了大量的讨论和补充,但正如Van Eerde (2000)所说:对拖延进行定义是比较困难的,因为它是个体内部的活动进程,依赖于个体对时间、任务特性等信息的内部参照标准。尽管如此,对拖延的定义大部分都包含了延迟、不合理性和消极结果这三个主要特征(Procee et al., 2013)。因此,最被人所接受的拖延定义是“尽管预见到消极结果,仍然自愿推迟既定任务的行为”(Procee et al., 2013; Steel, 2007)。

在综合了大量前人研究的基础上,Steel (2007)认为拖延的影响因素可以分为两类:客体因素和主体因素。客体因素主要包括影响具体拖延行为的任务环境和任务特性,以及影响个人拖延特质形成的外部成长环境;影响拖延的主体因素则包括人格特质和个人能力两个方面(宋梅歌,苏缙, & 冯廷勇, 2015)。

## 2. 客体因素

### 2.1. 任务特性

影响拖延任务特性主要包括奖惩时间、外界诱惑、任务厌恶、任务呈现方式和任务结构。Lewin (1935)认为如果事件距离当下时间较远,那么它对人们的影响较弱。人们的决策过程常常受到延迟折扣(delay discounting)的影响,即与当前的获益(或损失)相比,人们总是倾向于赋予将来获益(或损失)更小的权重

(Frederick, Loewenstein et al., 2002; 孙彦, 2011)。根据拖延决策模型(张顺民 & 冯廷勇, 2017)的解释, 任务的积极结果由于距离当下时间较远, 其积极效用被折扣; 而个体在即将面对任务的时候, 为了减少任务负性过程的体验, 会主动推迟任务, 使负性体验发生折扣, 由此导致拖延行为的产生。也就是说在延迟折扣方面, 任务的负性过程距离当下更近, 对人的影响也更大。而完成任务的积极结果距离当下时间比较遥远, 其价值更容易被折扣。个体在面对任务或者进行任务时, 可能会受到外界诱惑的影响, 用其他行为代替当下行为, 但是这并不利于目标的完成。外界诱惑越多, 个体越容易拖延(Steel, 2007)。此外, 任务本身令人厌恶的程度越高, 越容易引起个体的回避倾向, 进而导致拖延(Procee et al., 2013; Van Eerde, 2000)。影响任务厌恶的因素有任务挫折、任务的趣味性、个人意义和自主动机: 遭遇挫折会使个体难以集中注意于任务, 个体会倾向于进行一些其他的活动来减少受挫带来的负性情绪(Blunt & Pychyl, 2000); 任务本身越乏味, 没有趣味性, 个体越容易拖延(Wyk, 2006); 个人意义指的是任务对自身来说值得追求的程度(Little, 1983), 任务对个体的自身意义越大, 个体越不容易拖延(Blunt & Pychyl, 2000); 想要完成任务的自主动机越强, 越不容易拖延(Deci & Ryan, 2008; Vansteenkiste et al., 2009)。Steel (2007)还强调, 任务厌恶对拖延行为的影响是以具体的奖惩时间为前提的, 如果不考虑具体时间期限, 任务厌恶只能预测回避行为而非拖延。就任务特性而言, 除了任务厌恶以外, 任务的呈现方式也会影响拖延行为, 比如用低建构水平(具体的)的方式呈现任务会让被试更快地给实验者回复邮件(McCrea et al., 2008)。Ferrari 和 Tice (2000)的实验结果表明, 把与能力测验有关的任务描述成轻松有趣的游戏可以减少拖延者的拖延行为, 因为这种描述方式会让拖延者认为该任务不会威胁到自己的自尊、暴露自己能力不足。还有任务的结构性也会影响拖延, 如果任务缺乏完整的结构, 那么个体在进行任务的时候需要不断地评估和决策, 这会增大拖延的概率(Blunt & Pychyl, 2000)。

## 2.2. 成长环境

Steel (2007)认为拖延是一种稳定的人格特质, 在其形成过程中会受到家庭教养方式和学校教育的影响。一项针对大学生拖延行为的研究发现, 被教养方式为参与型和心理自主型的学生的学业拖延水平较低, 而接受严格/监督型教养方式的学生学业拖延水平较高(Zakeri, Esfahani, & Razmjooe, 2013)。在教育方面, 受教育程度越高的个体拖延水平越低, 这可能是因为他们有更多更好的资源, 而且了解自我监控和时间管理的方法(Ferrari, Özer, & Demir, 2009; Steel & Ferrari, 2013)。教育水平不仅影响自身的拖延行为, 还会影响子女。父母的受教育水平越高, 孩子们的拖延水平较低, 因为孩子可以在学习生活中获得更多的支持, 在一定程度上有利于减少拖延(Ferrari et al., 2009; Rosário et al., 2009)。

## 3. 主体因素

### 3.1. 人格特质

关于影响拖延的主体因素, 研究最多的是拖延与大五人格之间的关系。拖延与神经质存在中等程度的相关(Steel, Brothen, & Wambach, 2001; Steel, 2007; Van Eerde, 2003; Watson, 2001), 而高神经质的个体更容易感受到负性情绪, 倾向于把困难的任务视为一种威胁和挑战(Costa & McCrae, 1992; Hettema et al., 2006), 因此在神经质的作用下个体更容易产生焦虑、厌恶等情绪进而表现出拖延行为(Rozental & Carlbring, 2014)。神经质包含不合理信念、低自尊、低自我效能感、自我设障、冲动和抑郁等内容, 这些组成因素与拖延之间也存在联系。比如拖延者总是保持一些不合理的信念, 比如认为自己能力不足、外界要求过于苛刻等(Knaus, 1977)。持有这些不合理信念的个体通常自我效能感和自尊水平较低, 会进一步增加拖延行为(Burka & Yuen, 2012; Judge & Bono, 2001)。在不合理信念、低自我效能感等神经质因素的作用下, 拖延个体通常认为自己无法改变自身的处境, 他们主要考虑的是如何调节自身情绪而不是解决

问题(Berzonsky, 1992; Flett, Blankstein, & Martin, 1995)。为了维护自尊, 拖延者常常采取自我设障行为, 他们倾向于把较差的任务表现归因于外部环境而非自身原因(Ferrari, 1991)。此外, 高拖延者比低拖延者具有更高的冲动性, 更容易感到焦虑, 这就意味着他们在面临任务时(比如学业考试)会有更强的回避倾向并会更主动地寻求一些娱乐活动以调节情绪(Johnson & Bloom, 1995; Rothblum, Solomon, & Murakami, 1986; Walsh & Ugumba-Agwunobi, 2002)。抑郁也是导致拖延的一个因素, 抑郁会使个体难以感受到快感, 缺乏生活力和能量(Steel, 2007)。除了神经质以外, 尽责性这种人格特质对拖延行为也具有重要影响。尽责性高的人做事坚决果断, 更能够按照计划坚持完成目标, 成就动机较强, 这些特点有助于个体减少拖延行为(Costa & McCrae, 1992; Ozer & Benet-Martínez, 2006; Steel, 2007)。尽责性及其组成因子(自我控制、注意、组织性和成就动机等)与拖延之间也成显著的负相关关系(Johnson & Bloom, 1995; Lee, Kelly, & Edwards, 2006)。比如自我控制和组织能力都与拖延成负相关关系, 自我控制能够保证个体按照计划坚持朝向目标前进并抵御诱惑、克服困难(Ferrari & Emmons, 1995; Steel, 2007); 组织能力意味着合理有序地制定计划, 是自我控制的重要技巧, 也有利于减少拖延(Bargh & Barndollar, 1996; Latham & Locke, 1990; Steel, 2007)。在临床研究方面, 有研究者指出宜人性与拖延行为之间有负相关的关系, 那些宜人性得分较低的个体倾向于把外在的时间安排视为厌恶性刺激并表现出抗拒和回避的态度(Burka & Yuen, 2012; Knaus, 1977)。

除了大五人格所代表的人格特质之外, 恐惧失败、完美主义等特质也会影响个体的拖延行为。恐惧失败与拖延之间的关系受到自我效能感的影响, 对于高自我效能感的人来说, 恐惧失败与拖延之间呈负相关, 对失败的恐惧会促使他们更好更快地完成任务, 而对于低自我效能感的人来说, 恐惧失败与拖延之间成正相关关系(Haghbin, McCaffrey, & Pychyl, 2012)。Ellis 和 Knaus (1977)认为, 完美主义者对自己要求过高, 希望把每件事情做得尽善尽美。所以完美主义者为了把事情做到最好, 通常会推迟任务, 直到他们认为万事俱备才会采取行动。另一方面, 完美主义者过于注重细节、吹毛求疵, 根本就没有采取实际行动。然而, 关于完美主义对拖延行为的影响, 研究结果并不一致。Walsh 和 Ugumbaagwunobi (2002)的研究结果表明, 完美主义与拖延之间存在正相关关系, 而有的研究结果表明两者之间呈负相关关系(Sadeghi et al., 2011)。

### 3.2. 个人能力

个人能力也是影响拖延的重要主体因素。研究表明, 未来时间洞察力与拖延行为存在显著负相关(Sirois, 2014; 宋梅歌, 2016), 而主观时距和压力知觉与拖延之间具有显著的正相关关系(王芬芬, 2013)。情绪调控能力、归因方式以及情商也会影响拖延, 高情商、内归因方式、情绪调控能力较强以及负性情绪忍耐度较高的个体拖延行为较少(Deniz, Traş, & Aydoğan, 2009; Eckert et al., 2016; Hampton, 2005)。运用有效的学习策略, 比如元认知的学习方法, 也可以减少拖延(Schraw, Wadkins, & Olafson, 2007; Vahedi, 2011; Wolters, 2003)。还有研究指出, 高拖延者的预期想象能力较弱, 无法有效地构建未来自我, 因此更多地关注当下的情绪状态而不是未来的长远利益(Blouin-Hudon & Pychyl, 2015; Rebetez, et al., 2016)。

## 4. 干预措施

由于拖延行为的普遍性和诸多弊端已经影响到了人们生活的方方面面, 因此研究者从行为、认知和情绪的角度提出了许多干预措施。

### 4.1. 行为干预

拖延的行为干预主要涉及到任务安排、目标明确、任务暴露和外部奖赏等方面。Silver (1974)认为拖延是几种行为之间竞争的结果, 因此限制影响个体任务表现的事件的数量, 减少个体的决策选项可以降低拖延。

比如在进行任务时, 远离那些干扰任务的即时奖赏(智能手机, 电脑等); 或者制定任务计划并在特定的、专一的环境下进行任务(Mulry, Fleming, & Gottschalk, 1994; Ziesat, Rosenthal, & White, 1978)。合理地建立任务计划十分重要, 这有利于个体获得正常的生活节奏、减少心理疲惫, 进而提高工作绩效、养成合理的社会生物钟(Ehlers, Frank, & Kupfer, 1988)。从自我损耗的角度来看, 有合理规划的生活让人更有精力, 可以避免因自我损耗导致的自我控制下降, 从而减少拖延行为(Baumeister, Bratlavsky, Muraven, & Tice, 1998)。由于拖延者常常在临近任务最终期限的时候开始行动, 短时间内工作量剧增, 这也会加剧个体的自我损耗, 可能会导致更多的拖延行为(Digdon & Howell, 2008)。让拖延者多接触负性任务也可以减少拖延行为, 因为个体对任务有一段时间的接触并熟悉之后可以降低对任务最初的厌恶感(Brown, 1991; Schraw, Wadkins, & Olafson, 2007)。因此, 有学者认为确定任务的“最低努力限度”十分必要, 比如先工作 15 分钟然后决定要不要继续, 对任务有了短时间的接触和了解之后可以减少一些导致拖延的负性情绪(Burka & Yuen, 2008)。此外, 明确任务目标很重要, 不清晰的目标设置不利于问题解决而且会降低行动动机, 增加拖延倾向(Locke & Latham, 2002)。Norcross (2012)认为目标不明确会导致行为的迟滞, 明确目标并突出其重要性可以提升目标导向行为的表现。在明确目标的同时, 细化目标也有利于减少拖延, 因为这有利于个体及时获得行为反馈, 支持个体坚持完成目标(Lindsley et al., 1995)。当面对的目标需要付出较多意志努力且周期较长时, 把大目标划分为多个子目标有利于个体的时间管理, 进而减少拖延(Steel & König, 2006)。从根本上讲, 拖延或者不拖延是一个动机问题, 涉及到个人对奖赏的偏好以及任务奖赏的延迟(Steel, 2007)。在外部动机方面, Eisenberger (1992)认为个体完成规定的任务之后, 持续不断地给予额外奖赏有利于提高个体的积极性, 他把这种方法称之为“习得性勤勉”(learned industriousness)。在内部动机方面, 提高个体对任务本身的认识, 了解完成任务对个人的意义, 可以提高完成任务的主动性(Hayes, Luoma, Bond, Masuda, & Lillis, 2006)。

## 4.2. 认知干预

在认知层面, 对拖延行为的干预主要针对的是纠正不合理信念(Pychyl & Flett, 2012)。纠正不合理信念、进行认知重建有利于矫正个体的不合理行为, 促使个体对具体任务作出正确反应, 比如“按照要求完成任务是必要的”(Bennett-Levy, 2003; McDermott, 2004)。认知重建还可以帮助个体认清现状与目标以及目标价值之间的距离, 从而增强个体动机, 改善行为(Hayes et al., 2013)。个体在纠正自己不合理信念的同时, 还可以重新审视自己的行为动机, 了解拖延的利弊, 做出更合理的决策和行为(Miller & Rollnick, 2002)。目前常用的纠正不合理信念的方法是理性情绪疗法(Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy, REBT) (Ellis & Knaus, 1977)。理性情绪疗法会先要求拖延者想象自己在某事件中不拖延的场景, 并预期自己将会体验何种情绪, 这样能够让拖延者意识到自己先前信念的不合理性。然后给拖延者设置具体可行的目标, 以此为导向执行任务, 因为目标是合理且可行的, 所以也会减少拖延者企图拖延的借口。第三是要求拖延者做出承诺, 承诺忍受一时的不适来实现长期的目标, 促进合理信念的形成。最后是巩固形成的合理信念, 并坚持与不合理信念斗争。有研究结果表明, 理性情绪疗法确实可以有效减少个体的拖延行为(Dryden, 2012; Neenan, 2008)。另外, 提升自我效能感也是减少拖延的有效方法(Van Eerde, 2000)。个体通过不断地完成任务获得积极反馈, 提高动机, 有利于坚持完成任务(Lindsley, Brass, & Thomas, 1995)。Oettingen 等人(2005)认为“心理对比”(mental contrasting)也能够增强个体的任务动机。“心理对比”是通过可视化的想象来构建未来目标, 突出当下情景与未来目标之间的差距, 既可以增强动机又可以具体化达成目标的步骤。

## 4.3. 情绪干预

在情绪干预方面, 基于 Folkman 等人(1986)提出的理论, 人们在面对某一情境和任务时会先对其进行评估, 如果感受到威胁(无法应对、威胁自尊等)就会产生焦虑情绪, 进而选择回避行为。在此基础上, 拖

延的情绪干预一般先利用理性情绪疗法纠正个体的不合理信念,然后帮助拖延者对抗焦虑:通过放松训练、冥想等方法减少负性情绪,或者通过回忆生活中的愉悦事件来增加积极情绪。有研究指出,在纠正认知和调节情绪的作用下,个体的拖延行为有所减少(Mirzaie, 2014)。最近有研究者(Eckert et al., 2016)在前人研究的基础上提出了干预拖延的情绪关注策略(emotion-focused strategies),该方法步骤如下:1) 要求个体选择一个生活中最拖延的事件;2) 确认该事件是不是与负性的情绪体验有关,或者说缺乏积极的情绪体验;3) 在1) 2)的基础上,鼓励个体忍受这种积极情绪的欠缺或者厌恶的情绪;4) 在以上3点的基础上,个体可以去调节他们的情绪。要想调节情绪,个体需要增强其积极情绪或者减少其厌恶情绪。对厌恶情绪的调节包括短暂的放松锻炼,然后重新考虑一下拖延的害处和潜在的威胁,最后考虑要不要执行任务;5) 前面4步完成之后,被试要评估自己在多大程度上成功地执行了情绪调节策略。这种练习每天持续10分钟,训练两周。接受情绪关注策略的个体拖延水平显著下降,而且他们对厌恶情绪的忍耐程度提升了。Berking 和 Whitley (2014)认为有策略地允许厌恶情绪的存在,可以保持个体的情绪韧性和恢复力,最终较好地完成任务。

## 5. 小结与展望

虽然研究者对拖延行为进行了细致的研究,但是大部分的研究都是笼统而且宏观的。除了“拖延是一种自我控制失败的行为”这一观点几乎没有争议以外,对于造成拖延的其他原因目前还不清楚。比如 Van Eerder (2000)认为拖延是一种动机机制,当个体面对一个困难的、需要意志努力的任务时,个体会产生厌恶、焦虑等负性情绪,暂时回避任务可以缓解负性情绪(Milgram et al., 1998)。Fiore (2007)也认为拖延行为能够给个体带来回报,那就是让个体远离威胁性事件,减少紧张感。因此,拖延行为的成因是面对任务时产生的负性情绪,拖延行为本身则可以视为是一种情绪调节的手段(Tice & Bratslavsky, 2000; Tice & Bratslavsky, 2001)。但是 Gustavson 等人(2014)利用行为遗传学方法发现拖延和冲动存在显著相关,而且在基因水平上两者的相关度达到了1。因此 Gustavson 认为拖延是冲动的副产物,人们推迟计划内的行为是因为无法有效抵抗外界的诱惑。

在研究方法上,以往对拖延的研究都是以问卷研究为主,探究拖延行为与一些人格特质的相关性。然而拖延行为是一种跨时间的复杂行为,随着时间的变化(当下时间与任务之间的距离变化)个体的决策以及自我控制与情绪之间的斗争也在不断变化。由于缺乏有效的实验设计,对拖延行为的决策过程以及随时间变化的调整过程至今还不清楚。此外,虽然已经有学者开始利用脑成像技术,比如 Fmri, 来研究拖延的认知神经机制,但是这方面的研究多以静息态和结构态研究为主,还没有有效的任务态研究。因此在未来的研究中,应当设计有效的实验范式来探究拖延行为的动态变化并利用脑成像技术来考察拖延行为深层的认知神经机制。

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**知网检索的两种方式:**

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